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# ON THE AGRARIAN QUESTION IN INDIA

## I

**I**N view of the fundamental questions raised, the stage has arrived when the Communist Party must make a fresh analysis of the agrarian situation, assess new factors and frame a new strategy of fight and slogans on the basis of a correct estimation of the class relations in the rural areas.

The Colonial Thesis of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International analysed the situation as follows:

"Inasmuch as the overwhelming mass of the colonial population is connected with land and lives in villages, the plundering character of the forms of exploitation of the peasantry made use of by imperialism and its allies (the class of landowners and trading-usury capital), acquires a specially important significance. Owing to the interference of imperialism (imposition of taxation, import of industrial wares from the metropolis, etc.), the drawing of the village into the sphere of monetary and trading economy is accompanied here by a process of pauperisation of the peasantry, destruction of village handicraft industry, etc., and proceeds at a much more rapid rate than was the case when the same process took place in the leading capitalist countries. On the other hand, the delayed industrial development in the colonies has put sharp limits to the process of proletarianisation. This enormous disproportion between the rapid rate of destruction of the old forms of economy and the slow development of the new has given rise in China, India, Indonesia, Egypt, etc., to an extraordinary 'pressure on agriculture' and to agrarian immigration, rack-renting and extreme fragmentation of the land cultivated by the peasantry. At the same time, the whole burden of the previous feudal or semi-feudal conditions of exploitation and bondage, in somewhat 'modernised', but in no way lighter, forms, lies as before on the shoulders of the peasantry. Capitalism, which has included the colonial village into its system of taxation and trade apparatus and which has overturned pre-capitalist relations (for instance, destruction of the village commune), does not thereby liberate the peasants from the yoke of pre-capitalist forms of bondage and exploitation but only gives the

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latter a monetary expression (feudal services and rent in kind are partially replaced by money rent, while payment of taxes in kind is replaced by monetary taxes, and so on), which still more increases the sufferings of the peasantry. To the 'assistance' of the peasants in their miserable position comes the usurer robbing them under certain conditions (e.g., in some localities of India and China), even creating a hereditary slavery based on their indebtedness.

Notwithstanding the great variety of agrarian relationships in different colonial countries, and even in different parts of one and the same country, the poverty-stricken position of the peasant masses is almost everywhere the same. Partly owing to unequal exchange, and partly to direct exploitation, the peasants in these countries are not in a position to raise the technical or organisational level of their economy.... The ancient systems of artificial irrigation which in these countries is of great importance for agriculture, thanks to the interference of imperialism, first of all fell into decay, and when later they are re-established on a capitalist basis, then they were found to be too dear for the peasants to make use of....

The pitiful attempts at carrying through agrarian reforms without damaging the colonial regime are intended to facilitate the gradual transformation of semi-feudal landownership into capitalist landlordism, and, in certain cases, to establish a narrow stratum of kulak peasants. In practice this only leads to an ever-increasing pauperisation of the overwhelming majority of the peasants, which again, in its turn, paralyses the development of the internal market. It is on the basis of this contradictory economic process that the most important social forces of the colonial movement have their development."

**(Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies, PPH Edition, pp. 16-18.)**

This was two decades ago, before the great capitalist crisis, before the second world war and the economic developments preceding it—two decades before the full effects of the growth of Indian industry, despite imperialist obstacles, growth of trade, commerce and towns which led to increased commodity production, production for the market in villages, could be seen; this was two decades before the second world war, which brought every product of the Indian village into the market, transformed them into commodities and subjected the producer to the law of the market, leading to an unheard of differentiation in the villages.

However, the Communist Party has not made any fundamental analysis of the peasant problem after that made in the Colonial Thesis of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. The Party platform and the ruling conceptions of the peasant struggle have mainly been based on this analysis made two decades ago, without taking into consideration the big changes that have come over the Indian village since then.

Not only has no new analysis been made; the Colonial Thesis itself was either understood in a mechanical way or totally ignored. All the wrong reformist notions about a united national front, which were mercilessly criticised at the session of the Second Congress of the Indian Communist Party, appeared on the peasant front in the Party basing itself on this theory, i.e., on the vacillating classes who by themselves could never be the driving force of either a thorough-going agrarian revolution or even a powerful agrarian movement. The Kisan Sabha, for instance, which we have been leading, mainly based itself on the middle peasant and voiced his doubts and vacillations. Without the least desire to underestimate the work done by the Kisan Sabha, as Communists we must say that we mainly based ourselves on the vacillating middle peasant, sometimes allowed even the rich peasant ideology to dominate or influence the Kisan Sabha, neglected the poor peasant and kept the agricultural workers at an arm's length. The failure to organise the agricultural workers into a separate organisation is not an accidental one. It reflected the capitulation to the rich peasant and middle peasant, the fear of offending them, of disrupting the 'peasant' unity. It was seen in the Kisan Sabha and Kisan Fraction when the question of redistribution of land was discussed and some comrades demanded 100 acres for the rich peasant, as a matter of principle—once again in the name of peasant unity.

Today also the same capitulating reformist tendency manifests itself under the slogan of 'neutralisation' of the rich peasantry which in reality is another name to avoid open conflict of agrarian workers against the rich peasant—substitutes neutralisation for such conflict and thereby capitulates before him. Again the capitulation manifests itself by defining a rich peasant as a middle peasant and advocating alliance with him in the name of Lenin and Stalin. It unmask itself in hesitation to organise a separate agricultural workers' organisation or in bypassing the question of the fight for a living wage for the agricultural worker.

This reformist outlook was immediately strengthened in the period of anti-fascist war when the Party committed gross reformist mistakes and was guilty of a non-class reformist outlook on a number of problems. This was reflected in the anti-

hoarding, anti-blackmarketing campaigns which also were not based on the main exploited strata of the peasantry and in which the help of the upper classes was also sought. The idea of making them non-class all-people's campaigns was dominant in some of the circulars quoted in the Report on Reformist Deviation to the Second Congress. Along with this was, of course, the failure to develop struggles against land relations, etc., which marked the culminating point in the class-collaborationist reformist outlook. This last, however, was a special feature of the war period. It meant collaboration with feudal elements also—thus taking up a position of which the Party has not been guilty now or earlier.

What was the ideological postulate of this reformism, which continues now and which was there before the war itself? It was the formula, the uncritical formula, that the agrarian struggle was only against feudalism in land (a counterpart of the formulation that the national struggle was only against imperialism); it led to a failure to understand the changing class reality in rural areas, to understand the rapid class differentiation that was taking place in the villages—in ryotwari as well as zemindari areas—and, therefore, to the advocacy of collaborationist tactics with rich exploiting elements, and to the development of a conception of peasant unity in which the oppressed section, the real driving force, the agricultural workers and poor peasants, was deprived of its leading role.

The fact that the middle peasant suffered from feudal domination in landlord areas; that in ryotwari areas he suffered from the moneylender-landlord; that the rich peasant was critical of the landlord and was not averse to curbing his power, especially if it could be done by others — this was taken as sufficient reason to seek united front with him, on his own terms; in fact to base ourselves precisely on the middle peasant and make the agricultural workers and poor peasants trim their sails to suit his vacillations which opened the door to the infiltration of the movement by rich peasants. The question was not asked: how far are these classes consistently anti-feudal, how far will they stand for consistently carrying out of the democratic revolution? Nor was the question asked as to what distinguishes the rich peasants' opposition to landlordism from that of the agricultural proletariat and the poor peasants—that the one was a compromise in his own interest, etc.

The failure to judge each section, its opposition to feudalism, etc., by reference to the position it occupied in the process of production, its links with existing society, the failure to see the antagonism of new classes which was developing within the shell of feudal relations, the failure to see the class differentiation arising out of the development of capitalist relations in agriculture—which would have made it clear who was compromising

notwithstanding his critical attitude to feudalism, who was vacillating, notwithstanding his sufferings from feudal yoke and his talk about fight, who constituted the driving force because it combined the opposition to the old and new exploitation—was at the bottom of the reformism on the peasant front.

If we had adhered to classical Marxist-Leninist writings these mistakes could not have occurred. For the strategy of class combination in the democratic revolution had been repeatedly stressed in the writings of Lenin and Stalin. For at no stage of the democratic revolution does Leninism permit us to rely on the middle peasant. The reliance on agrarian proletariat and poor peasantry is incumbent for the proletariat at any stage of the revolution. The different stages may be distinguished by the attitude taken towards the middle peasant, by the classes who are considered to be the main enemy to be fought.

### 3

The Political Thesis of the Second Party Congress contains no fundamental re-estimate of the class relations in the agrarian areas. The Party Congress was busy hammering out a correct political line, rescuing the Party from collaboration with the national bourgeoisie and taking a position of opposition and struggle against the bourgeois-national Government. It could not re-estimate the agrarian situation and had to content itself with giving a general call to struggle. How the Party resolution moved within the old framework could be seen from the following:

“The central task on the peasant front is to rouse and lead the toiling peasants around the central slogan of **Land to the Tiller**. Landlordism of all forms must be liquidated without any compensation to the landlords, **khas** land of the landlords and rich peasants must be distributed amongst the toiling peasants, and all forms of feudal and semi-feudal exactions must go. The fight against eviction, against rent, against serfdom to the moneylender, for commutation of rent in kind into money, and for two-thirds share of the crop must be strengthened and developed into the fight for land to the tillers. The agricultural proletariat must be specifically organised under the All-India Kisan Sabha, either as separate organisations affiliated to it or as specially organised sections within it, for fair wages and regulation of labour conditions.

The tempo of the agrarian struggle is so sweeping and big that the Congress Ministries themselves are forced to come out with what they call anti-landlord bills. They themselves have to take up the slogan of abolition of landlordism because the bourgeoisie perceives that the peasantry can no longer be cheated except by talking about abolition of land-

lordism. We should not allow ourselves to be deceived by its legislations and must expose their real class character and show that the abolition of landlordism that they promise is fake and not real. In fact, today, bowing down to the opposition of the landlords, the Congress leaders and Ministers are holding the so-called anti-landlord bills in abeyance, so as to settle the question of proper compensation in the name of uniformity.

The proposed bills, in the first place, give compensation to the landlords, which we must oppose and fight. They do not take over the land monopolised by the landlords, and so do not provide for redistribution of land to the tillers. Sharecroppers, tenants-at-will and other tillers, who constitute the majority of the peasant population, will not gain any right on land. The proposed bills will simply acquire with compensation only that portion of the landlords' property which has been let out on a rent-basis to the tenants with occupancy rights. These measures will not abolish landlordism but retain it in a different form. Only a new load of compensation will be thrust upon the over-taxed and impoverished people for the benefit of the landlords.

For the purpose of consolidating landlordism in a new way certain Provincial Governments have produced new plans which indicate which way the wind is blowing. In these new plans (the Bengal plan, for example) it is proposed that all agricultural land in different areas will be possessed collectively by cooperatives of landlords and peasants, and the compensation money given to landlords will be invested as capital in the cooperatives. Naturally, in such so-called cooperatives, the rich landlords, owning the major share, will be in a position to control the entire land and the crops.

Before the new legislative measures are adopted, the landlords are evicting peasants from their possessions on a large scale and with the assistance of the police beating back the resistance of the evicted peasants. As a result, the private possessions of landlords are growing, monopoly holdings of land are increasing, and the tillers of the soil are being expropriated on a very large scale. The new agrarian measures will do nothing but legalise this expropriation.

To boost these measures as advances or progressive steps is to cheat the peasants and shield the bourgeois leaders.

We must expose and unmask the proposed bills as measures to rehabilitate landlordism, measures that will further impoverish the mass of tillers of the soil and thereby further intensify the food crisis. They will strengthen the hold of monopoly in food, and thereby extend the blackmarket. We must oppose compensation being given to landlords, and

demand that instead of giving compensation to landlords, the State must provide for manure, irrigation, reclamation of fallow land and supply cattle, seeds and modern implements to the peasants. Land must be given to the tillers of the soil, private land belonging to landlords being expropriated without compensation. The poorer sections of landlords are to be given a moderate allowance for a certain period, or allowed to retain private land sufficient for their maintenance.

The agrarian movement against feudal relations is not complete unless land is secured for the tiller. The peasantry, in order to secure land, must develop a coordinated movement round that slogan—a movement emerging from the partial movements for reduction of rent, debt, etc.

We should unhesitatingly lead the fight against the food famine created by the Government's policy, and demand that the stocks of the big traders and landlords be confiscated for distributing food to the people. In the backward areas we should demand abolition of serfdom, forced labour, illegal cesses as in the case of Warlis and Halis, and take the struggle forward to the central slogan of **Land to the Tiller**. In the States also the peasant must be roused to demand complete abolition of jagirdari and landlordism, of all feudal relations, and land to the tiller.

The economic crisis, which will smite the agrarian areas most ruthlessly, will set in motion colossal forces. These agrarian movements, uniting the entire mass of the poor peasants, middle peasants and the agrarian proletarians, will serve to bring about an alliance between the workers and the peasants which is the crux of any successful democratic movement. They are a part of the movement for the Democratic Front against the imperialist-bourgeois combine.

To head these agrarian struggles and unify them into one single stream of agrarian resistance, centring round the slogan of **Land to the Tiller**, the All-India Kisan Sabha must be built up as the fighting central organisation of India's peasantry.

(Political Thesis, pp. 97-100.)

Notwithstanding the fact that a general call to struggle is given, the bourgeois landlord bills are unmasked, the slogan of land to the tiller is raised and a call is given to organise the agricultural labour into a separate organisation, the analysis remains rooted in the old and fails to take proper account of the changed class relations in agrarian areas. It does not take account of the development of capitalist relations, of the rise of new contradictions, new antagonistic classes as a basic contradiction and fails to develop the strategy of a correct class combination for the

day-to-day struggle of the rural toilers as well as for the struggle for People's Democracy. Nevertheless, the call given therein served to release the peasant front from the fear of struggle, from capitulation before landlords and the agents of the Congress, and unleashed new forces.

The unleashing of these struggles have brought forth all the accumulated problems of the agrarian front. The fact that in the recent struggles in Bihar the agricultural worker played a leading role, that they centred round him, has raised the question of his separate organisation for his day-to-day battles. This has raised a number of problems, his relations with the poor peasant, and the middle peasant; would a separate organisation lead to an antagonism between the two?

Similar is the experience in the United Provinces—the experience of agricultural workers fighting heroically in the agrarian struggle has posed the same problem. But the comrades of the United Provinces have gone deeper in the analysis, for they have posed the problem of the agricultural worker in his antagonism to the rich peasant. Once again the question of his separate organisation has been raised and of his relations with the poor peasant and the middle peasant.

In both these Provinces, the question is raised only from the point of view of organising the day-to-day struggles.

In Andhra, the question has been raised more fundamentally—from the point of view of the main class combination for the present stage of our revolution. The question has been asked: do we seek an alliance with the middle peasant, or do we seek to neutralise him? It is contended that if we are in the period of revolution corresponding to February in Russia, then we must seek alliance with the middle peasant; if we are heading for October then we must neutralise the middle peasant. Here, the problem of the class combination in rural areas was raised in a different way—in the guise of protecting the alliance with the middle peasant, etc.—but its basic approach was the same reformist one which would not apply a class analysis to the peasantry and would not uphold the cause of the agrarian workers for fear of breaking the peasant unity.

But the merit of the Andhra comrades was that they tried to correlate the strategy in the peasant areas with the general political strategy of the proletariat for People's Democratic Revolution; that they sought to deduce the day-to-day tactics from the general political strategy. That they did it wrongly is another matter.

It is, therefore, inevitable that the Party re-examines the agrarian situation and comes forward with a correct strategy based on a correct class analysis of the forces in rural areas. This leads us to go to the facts about the agrarian situation and test how far things have changed since the Sixth Congress of

the Communist International made its analysis. In passing, it should be noted that while the Sixth Congress Thesis sharply emphasised that pro-capitalist and feudal forms of exploitation and relations on land continued, yet it also took note of the fact that the situation would not be always so rigid and that changes might take place. It declared:

“The pitiful attempts at carrying through agrarian reforms without damaging the colonial regime are intended to facilitate the gradual conversion of semi-feudal landownership into capitalist landlordism and in certain cases to establish a narrow stratum of kulak peasants.”

## 4

What have been the changes in Indian agriculture during the past five years—what has been the accumulated effect of the changes in the last fifty years? How does it alter the picture of Indian agriculture hitherto painted by us?

The first arresting fact is the rise of the landless labourers. Quite a considerable part of these landless labourers are the village serfs or slaves of the Hindu village—the Untouchables. They are no longer in possession of their plot of land. The rest are expropriated touchable peasants. Both together create the landless labourers. The following statistics are revealing:

**The rise in the number of agricultural labourers (in millions):\***

1882	1921	1931	1933	1944
Census	Census	Census	I.L.O. Estimates	
7.5	21.5	33	35	68

**Figures given by R. P. Dutt in “India Today” (PPH Edition p. 197) on class differentiation in Madras (per thousand of agricultural population):**

	1901	1911	1921	1931
Labourers .. ..	345	340	317	429

**Figures about Bengal quoted by R. P. Dutt (ibid):**

	1921	1931
Labourers .. ..	1,805,502	2,718,939

According to 1944-45 official figures, 20.6 per cent or 78 lakhs of acres in Bengal were cultivated by agricultural labour.

\*These figures are given by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, in its monthly publication, AGRICULTURAL SITUATION IN INDIA, Vol. III, No. 4, July 1948. They are for the whole of the undivided India including the States. The same source gives its own estimate of the population of Agricultural Labour for 1948, in Indian Union and States including Hyderabad, as 33.986 millions, which is obviously too low.

According to the same source, the strength of respective sections of the peasantry in Bengal was as follows:

Type of peasant	Percentage of total agricultural population	Percentage of cultivated land in their possession
Landless	36.4	1.8
Families dependent on less than one acre of land ..	17.7	4.2
More than one acre but less than three ..	22.0	16.9
More than three acres but less than 5 acres ..	9.6	14.7
More than 5 acres ..	14.3	62.8

(Agricultural Statistics, 1944-1945, p. 48.)

Thus in Madras in 1931, 42 per cent of the agricultural population was landless labour. In Bengal in 1944-45, 36 per cent was landless, and together with those who held below one acre—the semi-proletarians—they formed 54 per cent, i.e., the absolute majority of the agricultural population.

Figures given by the Andhra Provincial Committee of the Party about Andhra reveal that in one village, out of 447 families, 220 are families of landless labourers. In another, out of 49, 16 are families of landless labourers and 22 are those of poor peasants. In the three villages, out of 492 families, 350 are those of agricultural labourers including artisans. The proportion of landless thus is nearly 50 per cent in the first village, 30 per cent in the second and 70 per cent in the third.

A report of a member of the U.P. Committee of the Communist Party contains the following:

"I have here used the word ryot along with agrarian labour. Now this is very important since the agrarian labour numerically is a very very minor section these days.

The ryot or 'Riyaya' means the small artisan, barber, iron-smith, carpenter, sweeper, etc. in the village, including of course the agricultural labourer. They are all landless generally.

The Riyaya is 30 to 45 per cent in the villages. The larger the village the bigger the percentage.

Taken community-wise the sweepers and chamars make the major portion of the ryot. They are the worst sufferers too.

Now the agrarian labour is drawn mainly from the chamars. The non-agrarian among them indulge in various trades. And the labour section also has two categories—seasonal and permanent.

For the whole ryot the question is of wages and land. But the question of land concerns the agricultural labourer alone, and the question of a living wage is also his. For the rest it is an economic question of yearly or terminal remuneration on a fair basis.

No doubt the remuneration given to them is very poor and inadequate and the sweepers are posing the issue very sharply. But so far we have not fixed any remuneration standards for the different sections of the ryot. At various places the sweepers have struck work under the leadership of Babinki Sabha or some opportunist leaders. The striving for a better deal is intense in the sweepers all round.

Then comes the agrarian labour mainly employed by the zemindars, rich peasants and an upper section of the middle peasants and, above all, by the farm owners.

Their wage standards are certainly very poor and differ from locality to locality. Mostly they are paid Rs. 15 monthly and an ordinary diet, or maximum two maunds of grain yearly instead of diet. The seasonal ones get ordinarily Re. 1 per day.

So far we have fixed no living wage for them too. This is to be particularly noted that during the recent years there has been a growing shortage of agrarian labour due to the miserable wages and hard work. In the industrial areas the agrarian hands have become industrial workers and in other areas they have become milkmen, etc.

At many places they have refused to work and agreed only after a petty increase was sanctioned. In many areas they are getting even Rs. 30 monthly and food.

Politically, the chamars (the agricultural labour too) are swinging towards the Dalit Sangh and the sweepers towards the Babinki Sabha, etc. Now all these are communal organisations led by Congressmen of their own community. But in places where we have worked they look to us also.

As soon as we pose before them their demands of wages and land the entire ryot gets up and thinks. They are also easily convinced of a united front with the poor peasants and become ready to join the common organisation of which so far the latter is not convinced.

Not only that there are deep prejudices among the ryot against all peasants, it is also divided sharply on the basis of caste, but such prejudices wither away as soon as they have to face some common oppression.

There exists vast discontent in this section and there have been clashes between ryot and zamindars, but our task is to properly and consciously lead this discontented mass and win it over from all sectarian and communal politics and influence."



Here is yet another new factor. The ranks of the rural proletariat are swelled not only by the ancient serf, the pauperised peasant, but also by the dispossessed artisan who has lost his profession. The comrade concerned is somewhat hesitant to lump him with the agricultural worker—and yet it is correct to do so.

Here again, according to the testimony, rural workers from land as well as other means of production number 30 to 45 per cent in villages.

According to the report of the Floud Commission the number of landless labourers in Bengal was about 22 per cent of the population. This was nearly a decade ago. The latest official figures for 1944-45 give the percentage of landless labourers as 36.4.

## 5

What is the significance of the rise of the agricultural workers? It announced the fact firstly of capitalist commodity production. It announced the fact that an increasingly large number of rural people can only exist by offering to sell their labour power—that their labour power has become a commodity. Notwithstanding the fact that a considerable number of these again find occupation as tenants, or share-croppers, etc.—the main conclusion emerges that they are sellers of labour power. They are not only divorced from land but also from other means of production, bullocks, ploughs, etc., so that it is becoming impossible to engage them except as “hands.”

The development of labour power into a commodity is a capitalist relation and is in contradiction with feudal relations, feudal land relations; in fact it is the negation of such relations. It is only a sign of the disintegration of feudal economy and the growth of capitalist relations within the womb of feudal society.

The striking feature, then, of our agrarian relations is that between 30 to 50 per cent of the rural population are involved in capitalist relations and are sellers of labour power. Actually the number is much bigger since together with the poor peasants, who partly hire themselves out and also sell their labour power, they come to 70 to 80 per cent of the village population—which shows a reversal of old relations and the strength of capitalist relations.

Naturally, another conclusion follows from this. These 70 to 80 per cent are also buyers of commodities—means of livelihood, etc.—in the market, and thus once again this overwhelming majority represents the capitalist mode of exchange. Despite the feudal relations obtaining on land, despite the varied forms of feudal bondage that still exist—the overwhelming majority is subjected to the laws of commodity production. It has not es-

caped feudal exploitation or feudal burdens. The new exploitation has been added to the old one. But the point is that such an overwhelming mass is also subject to capitalist exploitation, capitalist relations; that the monopoly of feudal exploitation and relations is broken, that these relations are disintegrating and, as a result, new ones have developed.

Describing the rural proletariat Lenin wrote as follows:

“The other new type is the rural proletariat, **the class of wage-labourers possessing allotments**. This comprises the poor peasants, including the completely landless peasant; but the typical representative of the Russian rural proletariat is the agricultural labourer, the day labourer, the unskilled labourer, the building worker, or worker in other trades, possessing an allotment. The insignificant dimensions of the farm on a small patch of land and, moreover, a farm in a state of ruin (this is particularly evidenced by the letting of land), the inability to exist without selling labour power, (the ‘trades’ of the poor peasant), an extremely low standard of living, probably lower than that of the labourer without an allotment, these are the distinguishing features of this type... Very often the rural labourer is allotted land in the interests of the rural employers and for that reason the type of rural labourer with an allotment is a common type in all capitalist countries. This type assumes different forms in different countries: the English cottier (cottager) differs from the parcel land peasant in France or in the Rhine Provinces, and the latter differs again from the knecht in Prussia. Each of these bears traces of the special agrarian system, of the special history of agrarian relations in those countries... The legal title to his plot of land does not affect the definition at all. Whether the land belongs to him as his own property (as in the case of the parcel land peasant) or whether the landlord or Rittergutsbesitzer allows him the use of the land, or, finally, whether he owns it as a member of the village commune, as in Russia—makes no difference to the case at all. In including the poor peasant in the category of rural proletariat we are not suggesting anything new.”

(**Development of Capitalism in Russia**, Lenin: **Selected Works**, L.W. Edition, Vol. I, pp. 231-233.)

The main criterion for the rural proletariat is that it must be a seller of labour power, whether it formally owns some plot of land or not.

Writing about the significance of the disintegration of the peasantry and the rise of rural proletariat, Lenin said:

“**The disintegration of the peasantry creates the home market for capitalism**. In the lower group, the formation of

the market takes place in regard to articles of consumption (the personal consumption market). The rural proletarian consumes less in comparison with the middle peasant—and, moreover, consumes goods of an inferior quality (potatoes instead of bread, etc.), but he **buys more.**" (*Ibid.*, p. 235.)

Thus the rural proletarian is a buyer of commodities on the market—he belongs to capitalist society—more than the middle peasant.

His emergence gives rise to another class belonging to capitalist society:

"The rise and development of a rural bourgeoisie creates a market in a two-fold manner: first, and principally, in regard to means of production (the productive consumption market), for the well-to-do peasant tries to convert into capital the means of production he 'collects' from the 'impoverished' landlords as well as from the ruined peasant. Secondly, the market for articles of consumption is created by the fact that the requirements of the wealthy peasant have grown." (*Ibid.*—pages 235-36)

In this way the rise of the agrarian proletariat signifies the rise of a capitalist market, the rise of commodity production, the rise of new antagonistic classes, the rise of the peasant bourgeoisie out to hire and exploit labour, run agriculture not as a source of livelihood, nor for satisfaction of personal needs, but for profit, for surplus value.

## 6

The strength of these relations can be seen easily if we take into consideration the strength of the agricultural workers and poor peasants—and the figures about concentration of land.

All these years we had noted the phenomenon of the growing concentration of land in the hands of fewer and fewer people. But from this we did not draw the conclusion of the rise of a new class—antagonistic to or superimposed upon the old one; we saw in it only growing impoverishment, and not the new classes—and were deceived sometimes by the fact that the expropriated peasantry was again employed as feudal tenants, moneylenders' serfs, etc. We regarded it only as a throw-back to feudalism. Today we can understand the same facts in quite a different light.

The evidence about expropriation of peasants, described by imperialist chroniclers as the "passing of the land from the cultivating classes"—but which constituted in reality the process of penetration of capital into agriculture—the moneylenders, the usurious capital, and later on the rich tenants and farm capital—has been noted by economists, and our Party, long ago. But it was associated only with the growing impoverishment of the

masses under imperialist rule and not with the rise of new classes. The concentration of land comes out of this process of expropriation, which expropriates the peasant not only of land but also of means of production—making it more and more difficult for him to return to the status of an ordinary or even a cultivating peasant. The evidence submitted to the Bengal Famine Commission shows that this process is going on. War conditions have of course accentuated it all the more. The Famine Commission asked the Provincial Governments: to what extent was there a tendency for ownership of land to pass out of the hands of cultivating classes to non-cultivating classes (read people with money, or moneylenders, etc.)? Has this tendency been reversed or arrested to any significant extent?

The replies\* were as follows:

**Bengal:** "There is no doubt that there is an increasing tendency for ownership of land to pass out of the hands of the cultivating classes. The transferees may be either non-agriculturists or agriculturists who have already got more land than they could cultivate directly. There is no reason to suppose that the tendency has been arrested or reversed; and it may be presumed to have been rendered worse by the Bengal Tenancy (Amendment) Act of 1938, which by removing restrictions on rights of transfer, has greatly facilitated the passing of lands out of the hands of bona fide cultivators."

**Orissa:** "There are reasons to believe that the right of free transferability of land has prejudicially affected the small cultivators. At present there is no noticeable tendency for ownership of land to pass out of the hands of the cultivating classes to non-cultivating classes, but there is a tendency for land to pass from small cultivators to persons who are men of professions as well as cultivators"—i.e., to rich farmers or to those who though born in the farmer's family have made money in professions and accumulated capital to invest in land.

**Madras:** "An investigation of transfers during the period 1931 to 1934 showed that about 20 per cent of all the areas transferred went to non-agriculturists, while a very large proportion went to big absentee landholders, particularly agricultural moneylenders. This was the result of foreclosure on debts. A definite reply cannot be given whether the tendency has been arrested or not in recent years. The indications are there that the tendency has decreased."

**Bombay:** "One of the results of agricultural indebtedness is the transfer of land from the cultivating classes to non-cultivating classes. The process is however slow and is

\*The Bengal Famine Enquiry Commission, Final Report, 1945, pp. 445-8. (Emphasis ours.)

checked by the Dekkhan Agriculturists' Relief Act, the Agriculturists' Debtors' Relief Act and by the introduction of the restricted tenure."

The claim of the Bombay Government to have checked the process is a false one. Bombay is one of the worst Provinces so far as direct expropriation of peasants is concerned.

**The Central Provinces and Berar:** "There was an increasing tendency for ownership of land to pass out of the hands of cultivating classes but this has been checked by the Debt Conciliation Act, the Money Lenders' Act, the Relief of Indebtedness Act, etc. There is now a tendency for ownership of land to go back to the agriculturists as a result of good profits made in agriculture. In Berar, most of the lands bought up by cooperative banks have been sold to the agriculturist class."

The claim of the Berar Government is equally false. For by agriculturists they only mean rich cotton-growers or landlords. One can easily understand who could buy back the land because of good profits from the cooperative societies, who could have had the money. The fact is that in Berar, nearly 20 to 25 years ago, the small peasants as well as the well-to-do peasants, and following them perhaps even some of the landlords, were ruined by the falling cotton prices. They were heavily indebted. Large parts of the land were mortgaged to moneylenders—who were considered to be non-agriculturists, and large parts went to the Cooperative Societies who had advanced big loans. Large areas of land remain uncultivated. The Government appointed a Debt Conciliation Board to scale down the debts and laid down that debts up to Rs. 25,000 can be scaled down. The clear intention was to include the debts of the landlords and very rich farmers also for scaling down. In the process of conciliation the small peasant was ruined and the rich ones and the landlords got back the land after paying down the scaled debt. The process of conciliation consisted in scaling down the debt to an arbitrary proportion—say to one-third or one-half—and then ask the debtor to pay the sum or in view of the same give away his plot of land. The small peasant had no cash and could not pay even the reduced amount. Only the big ones could pay the reduced amount and get back their land.

**The United Provinces:** "Where transfer of cultivating tenures take place, the transferee generally belongs to the cultivating class, because unless he sub-lets the land, he himself cultivates it. The United Provinces Tenancy Act provides for restrictions on sub-letting and for ejectment as a penalty for sub-letting in contravention of the Act. **The recent working of the Tenancy Act shows that ejectment**

**of tenants giving sub-leases in contravention of the Act have been rather large."**

The U.P. Government does not say how far land is passing into the hands of the bigger or richer tenants. The admission, however, that sub-letting is increasing, may be of importance because sub-letting is often done by poorer sections to richer sections who require more land for cultivation.

The high prices of the war and post-war period have accentuated the process of strengthening the richer sections at the expense of the poorer ones—whose direct result could only be more and more concentration of land in the hands of the richer sections. The report of the Famine Commission (on p. 299) writes under the heading "Decrease in indebtedness between 1942-1945":

"In view of the absence of reliable statistics, it is impossible to estimate the extent of the reduction in agricultural indebtedness as a result of high prices for agricultural produce. The replies which we have received indicate, however, that there has been a substantial reduction in all provinces. **This appears to be particularly true of cultivators with large holdings and a considerable proportion of those possessing medium holdings. The hopeful significance of this fact for the future development of agriculture must not be underestimated merely because the proportion of such classes to the total rural population is not large. It should not be overlooked that the proportion of land held by these classes is large. In so far as the burden of debt has hitherto stood in the way of the improvement and better cultivation of land, the outlook for the future may be regarded as reasonably bright in respect of the greater part of the cultivated land of the country.**" (Emphasis ours.)

Here is ample testimony to prove that only a small minority of well-to-do and rich farmers, together with a few medium peasants, benefited by the high prices, and that for the rest conditions must have deteriorated. Also ample evidence to show that this small minority holds the major part of the land. The hopeful sign that the Commission perceives in this is characteristic of their hope to develop agriculture on a "more production" basis, i.e., on capitalist lines. The members feel that freed from the old debt the rich peasant will now be permanently freed from the tentacles of moneylending parasitic capital and will have capital enough to exploit land and labour.

Though several Provincial Governments mixed the rich and poor agriculturists and replied to the Commission that agricultural indebtedness as a result of high prices has declined, still a number of them could not fail to notice which class has benefited.

Replying to the Famine Commission's question, "Can you assess to what extent, if any, this (agricultural indebtedness) has been reduced as a result of the rise in prices of agricultural products?"—the Provincial Governments say the following:

**Bengal:** "Substantial reduction has been possible because a large number of cultivators are now in a better position than before to repay their debts in cash and to secure thereby larger reduction of their debts from the creditors. It is difficult to say to what extent the small cultivators who form the majority of the agricultural debtors, have reached to the rise in prices, since the crop they get from their lands is not always sufficient for the upkeep of their families and they have to purchase cloth, salt, kerosene, medicine, etc., which are at abnormal prices."

**Bombay:** "Well-to-do agriculturists are to some extent taking advantage of the facilities for encouraging the savings habit afforded by the Post Office Savings Bank Cash Certificates, National Savings Certificates and Cooperative Societies. Others have practically nothing to lay by."

**Orissa:** "Substantial cultivators have been able to effect small savings, out of which they paid something to liquidate their own debt without incurring new ones. The smaller agriculturists owning land upto five acres have not much benefited by high prices, as they have hardly any surplus produce to repay the old loans, and the high prices of consumer goods have imposed an additional strain on this class."

The well-to-do classes are investing their saving in the purchase of lands and Defence Savings Certificates and other war bonds. There has been a noticeable demand for land among agriculturists in the rural areas."

**The Central Provinces and Berar:** "High prices have resulted in regular payments of instalments of scaled-down debts and in making many debt-free or in redeeming their lands which were mortgaged" (we have seen above the meaning of this). "The rural population knows no other method of saving than the purchase of land, cattle, gold or silver. All these being high priced, a leaning has been shown to purchase land wherever possible."

(Bengal Famine Commission's Final Report, pp. 467-8—  
Emphasis ours.)

## 7

All this evidence points to the emergence of a new class, of the rich peasant, that benefits by high prices because it produces a surplus for the market, that hires labour, that buys land and that regards agriculture as a source of profit and not a source of livelihood. This class has forced itself on the attention of the Provincial Governments. Previously the Governments knew only three

classes: landlord, tenant or peasant, and the moneylender. The differentiation among the peasants was noticed. The war-years have accentuated the process and the new class is now recognised.

This class emerges sometimes from the former moneylending "landlord" of ryotwari areas who now takes to cultivation by hired hands instead of letting out the land. It also emerges directly from the cultivator—from the more fortunate better situated section, and is no longer a "non-agriculturist." It emerges from the tenant of either the moneylending or the feudal landlord.

This class is the other side of the process which has brought the agricultural proletariat into existence, and is its opposite. The agricultural proletariat is deprived not only of land but of means of production also. In the developing commodity production and market, both land and means of production have to be bought on the market for which investment, capital, money is necessary. Neither the poor peasant nor the agricultural labourer can buy these, for they have no money. The rich peasant with his surplus cash and money is able to buy these on the market, and use these for hiring labour. His mode of production is typically capitalist. He exploits labour, buys labour power, on the basis of his possession of means of production—land and implements of production.

He does not belong to feudal society but to capitalist society. He arises out of the disintegration of feudal economy in face of developing commodity production and often represents the emancipated tenant of the landlord who is able to get out of the shackles of the feudal landlord by the power of money, the power of exchange relations over feudal relations.

This is how Lenin described the phenomenon in connection with Russia:

"We see therefore that the peasants are more and more throwing up social elements which become transformed into private landowners.... At the end of the nineteenth century, the feudal or serf-owning landed property of the nobility still comprised the overwhelmingly greater part of the privately owned land, but the trend of development is obviously towards the creation of bourgeois landownership. Privately owned land acquired by inheritance from former royal bodyguards, patrimonies and government officials, etc., is diminishing. Privately owned land, acquired simply with money, is increasing. The power of land is declining; the power of money is growing. Land is being more and more drawn into the stream of commerce...." (*The Agrarian Question in Russia*, Lenin: Selected Works, L. W. Edition, Vol. 1, p. 141.)

Thanks to the power of money, the power of developing commodity production, these well-to-do elements are able to escape

medieval yoke and carry on capitalist exploitation.

To quote Lenin:

"Mr. Karyshev has to admit that 'natural rent' (i.e., rent, not in money but in kind or labour) as a general rule is everywhere higher than money rent, and considerably higher at that, sometimes twice as high; that natural rent is most widespread among the poorest groups of the peasantry. The peasants who are at all well-to-do strive to rent land at money rents. The tenant takes advantage of every opportunity to pay his rent in money and in this way reduce the cost of hiring other people's land."

Hence the whole burden of the serf features of our tenancy system falls upon the poorest peasants. The well-to-do peasants try to escape from the medieval yoke, and they succeed in doing this only to the extent that they possess money. If they have money they can rent land for a money rent at the prevailing market rate. If they have no money then they must go into bondage, pay three times the market price for the land they rent, either in the form of a share of their crop or in labour." (*Ibid*, p. 166.)

And Lenin adds:

"Since we see, on the one hand, households which have no horses, or have only one horse, renting one dessiatin, and even a part of a dessiatin of land, and, on the other hand, we see households having four or more horses, renting from seven to sixteen dessiatins, it is clear that quantity is being transformed into quality. The first category is compelled to rent land by poverty; the position of those in this category is that of bondage. The 'tenant' under such conditions cannot but become transformed into an object of exploitation by paying rent in labour, winter-hiring, money-loans, etc. On the other hand, households having from 12 to 16 dessiatins of land and in addition renting from seven to sixteen dessiatins obviously do so not because they are poor but because they are rich, not to provide themselves with 'provisions' but to become richer, in order 'to make money.' Thus we have a striking example of how tenant farming is converted into capitalist farming, we see the rise of capitalist enterprise in agriculture, for, as we shall see further on, households like these cannot dispense with hired agricultural labourers." (*Ibid*, p. 168.)

The rise of the rich peasant is thus a capitalist phenomenon, the rise of capitalist relations in agriculture. The "emancipation" of this strata from the medieval yoke—the reduction of their relation with feudal lords to a mere contractual relation—symbolises the power of money over land; and their mode of exploitation constitutes the capitalist method, of exploitation of men divorced from means of production. Their emergence heralds a

new class struggle in the countryside—superimposed upon the old—and makes it plain more and more that the struggle against feudal landlordism cannot be carried on without simultaneously carrying on the struggle against capitalist exploitation, that the two become inextricably mixed, that the majority of the countryside are now exploited by both landlords and capitalists, directly or indirectly.

## 8

The strength of capitalist relations is further seen in the figures of transfer of land to the upper section and its concentration in fewer and fewer hands.

The sale and purchase of land—even when it is legally only a transfer of tenancy rights—is itself a witness to the power of money, which now represents capitalist relations. It means that land has become a commodity, and whosoever has got money can buy it on the market, notwithstanding the obstacles raised by feudal property in it. It is a sign of the crumbling power of the feudal landed property. Land, as Lenin says, is now drawn into the vortex of the commercial order. So long as feudal private property dominated economic relations, so long as production could be conducted on the basis of natural economy, and exchange of commodities hardly existed, land could never be an object of sale and purchase. Money could not barter in land as in any other commodity.

Secondly, the concentration of land in ryotwari areas and in landlord areas is an expression of class relations and of the fact that the product of land is more and more turned into commodities; that men working on land sell their labour power; that the phenomenon of producing for oneself, for satisfying one's needs, is coming to an end.

The Bengal Famine Commission Report gives figures about Punjab which show that 2.4 per cent of the owners have holdings over 50 acres and own 38 per cent of the land.

28.8 per cent of the owners hold between 1 and 3 acres and hold 3.2 per cent of the land.

20.2 per cent of the owners have holdings of less than one acre and hold 0.8 per cent of the land.

Thus while 2.4 per cent hold 38 per cent of the land, 48.8 per cent hold only 6 per cent of the land.

The figures about Bombay show that:

Holdings below 5 acres number 1,130,000; they constitute 49 per cent of the total number of holdings; they occupy only 9.5 per cent of the land.

Holdings between 24 to 100 acres number 22,000; they constitute 10 per cent of the total number of holdings and occupy 34.4 per cent of the land.

Holdings over 100 acres number only 20,000; they constitute

1 per cent of the total number of holdings and occupy 15.6 per cent of the land.

This feature becomes all the more glaring when we take into consideration the total number of acres occupied by each category.

Thus the first category of 1,130,000 holdings occupy 2,540,000 (25 lakh 40 thousand) acres.

The second category of 220,000 holdings occupy 9,230,000 (92 lakh) acres.

And the third category of 20,000 holdings occupy 4,170,000 (41 lakh) acres.

Thus 11 per cent holdings occupy 59 per cent of the land; they together occupy 13,400,000 (1 crore 34 lakh) acres when 49 per cent occupy only 25 lakh acres. (Bengal Famine Commission Report—pp. 256-7.)

The concentration will be still more sharply understood if one remembers that these statistics do not take into consideration the number of agricultural labourers, who may number anywhere between 40 to 50 per cent.

These figures relate only to holders of land and show concentration of land as among those who hold the land as owners. The polarisation, the land monopoly, would stand out still more sharply if we took into consideration the total agricultural population and included the land labourers in the figure.

Figures quoted earlier show the following about Bengal:

	land in possession for cultivation
36.4% landless	.. 1.8%
17.7% less than one acre	.. 4.2 "
22.0% between one and 3 acres	.. 16.9 "
9.6% more than 3 but less than 5	.. 14.7 "
14.3% more than 5 acres	.. 62.8 "

Thus 54 per cent of the rural population has 6 per cent land for cultivation.

14.3 per cent has 62.8 per cent of the land in its hands.

If we take the first three categories together, we find 76 per cent of the rural population has 23 per cent of the land, while 14 per cent has got 62.8 per cent of the land.

## 9

These figures apart from showing the impoverishment imposed on the peasant mass reveal how the old feudal small-scale agriculture is crumbling, how its place is being taken by new agriculture in which production for the market dominates and new classes come forward.

First, the fact that a very big majority hold only a small part of the land means that they are not able to maintain themselves from the land and that they must hire themselves out partly.

They together with the agricultural workers must go to the labour market to work for others.

Secondly, because they have to hire themselves out, it means they have to purchase their means of subsistence on the market; they cannot produce them.

Thirdly, the fact that a small minority owns the land means that it is no longer owning the vast tracts of land for satisfying its own needs, but for selling on the market; that it cannot exploit these lands unless it exploits hired labour. It means a considerable part of the produce of these lands—the majority of the land area—must enter market as commodities.

Thus in landlord area also, under the very nose of the feudal landlords, people begin to produce for the market, hire labour, and carry on capitalist methods of production.

The concentration of land in landlord and ryotwari areas is determined by the growing concentration of money—capital in the hands of a few; by the growing availability for the few to purchase means of production on the market. The concentration of land is not only concentration of land but also other means of production—bullocks, ploughs, manure, etc. Lenin has explained this as follows:

“As a matter of fact the paradox is explained by the fact that the loss of horses is accompanied by the concentration of land in the hands of the wealthy households who are able to maintain a ‘proper’ proportion between the number of horses employed and the area of land cultivated. The ‘normal’ proportion is not being ‘restored’ (for it never existed in our peasant economy) but is reached only by the peasant bourgeoisie. The ‘abnormality’ is really the fact that the means of production are broken up and divided in small peasant farming: the same amount of land which a million one-horse peasants cultivate with the aid of a million horses is better and more carefully cultivated by the wealthy peasants with the aid of only one-half or three-quarters of a million horses.” (Ibid, p. 185.)

This concentration of land further signifies the disintegration of the old feudal peasantry. It symbolises the collapse of the small-scale production suited to natural economy with its production to satisfy personal wants, with little or no exchange of commodities. This understanding of the process is vital for understanding the position of the middle peasant. To quote Lenin:

“The sum total of all the economic contradictions among the peasantry comprises what we call the disintegration of the peasantry. The peasants themselves very aptly and strikingly characterise this process by the term ‘un-peasantise.’ This process signifies the complete destruction of the old, patriarchal peasantry and the creation of

new types of rural population... No attempt was ever made to study this phenomenon systematically... The is due also to the fact that the majority of the writers who write on this question regard the disintegration of the peasantry simply as the rise of property inequality, simply as 'differentiation,' to use a favourite term employed by the Narodniks in general... Undoubtedly the rise of property inequality is the starting point of the whole process, but the process is not confined to 'differentiation.' The old peasantry are not only undergoing a process of 'differentiation,' they are being completely destroyed, they are ceasing to exist, they are being squeezed out by absolutely new types of rural population—types which serve as the basis of a society in which commodity production and capitalist production predominate. These types are the rural bourgeoisie (mainly petty bourgeoisie) and the rural proletariat, a class of commodity producers in agriculture and a class of agricultural wage workers."

(Development of Capitalism in Russia, Lenin: Selected Works, L.W. Edition, Vol. I, pp. 227-8.)

"The disintegration of the peasantry, which, at the expense of the middle 'peasantry,' develops the extreme groups, creates two new types of rural population. The common feature of both types—is the commodity, money character of economy. The first new type is the rural bourgeoisie, or wealthy peasantry... The other new type is the rural proletariat, the class of wage labourers possessing allotments." (Ibid, pp. 230-231.)

"The intermediary link between these post-Reform types of the 'peasantry' is the middle peasantry. THEIR DISTINGUISHING FEATURE IS THAT COMMODITY PRODUCTION IS LEAST DEVELOPED AMONG THEM. (Capitals ours.) Only in good years and under particularly favourable conditions is the independent husbandry of this type of peasant sufficient to maintain him and for that reason his position is a very unstable one. In the majority of cases the middle peasant cannot make ends meet without resorting to loans to be repaid by labour, etc., without seeking 'subsidiary' earnings on the side, which partly also consist of selling labour power, etc. Each time there is a failure of the harvest, masses of the middle peasant are thrown into the ranks of the proletariat. In its social relationships this group oscillates between the higher group, towards which it gravitates and into which only a fortunate minority succeeds in entering, and the lower group, into which the whole process of evolution is forcing it. We have seen that the peasant bourgeoisie not only squeezes out the lower group, but also the middle group of the peasantry. Thus, a process which is a specific feature of capitalist economy is going on—the process of

'unpeasantising;' the intermediary members are dying out, while the extremes are growing." (Ibid, p. 235.)

## 10

This gives us the place occupied by the middle peasant in the development of the new class struggle. He is squeezed by feudal landlords; his economic position when it weakens makes him a helpless prey of landlords where landlordism exists: therefore he is anti-feudal. He is squeezed by the peasant bourgeoisie also; therefore in the joint struggle against the feudal landlords and peasant bourgeoisie he can be won over as an ally.

But, at the same time, he vacillates because of his intermediary position, because of his social orientation to the peasant bourgeoisie. He, at the same time, tries to defend his intermediary position as a small self-sufficient proprietor—with little connection with production of commodities—when the whole trend of social development is towards production of commodities; he tries to defend small-scale production when large-scale production is developing. Hence he continually vacillates not only in the struggle against the peasant bourgeoisie but also against the feudal landlords. He can be won over by decisive action, but cannot be made the base of anti-feudal anti-capitalist struggle.

The connection between the middle peasant and the feudal form of bondage, especially labour rent, Lenin stressed as follows:

"The more the natural self-sufficiency system of economy and the middle peasantry decline, the more effectively is the labour rent squeezed out by capitalism. The wealthy peasants of course cannot serve as the basis for the labour rent system, for it is only extreme poverty that compels the peasant to take the worst-paid form of work and such that is ruinous for his own farm. But neither is the rural proletariat fit for the labour rent system, although for quite another reason; not possessing a farm, or possessing an insignificant plot of land, the rural proletariat is not tied down to it to the same extent as a 'middle' peasant, and consequently it is much easier for him to go away and hire himself on 'free' conditions, i.e., for higher pay and without any bondage." (Ibid, p. 259.)

No separate statistics are available just now to show the disintegration of the middle peasant. But the process is considerable in Bengal. According to the Floud Commission the percentage of families owning above 5 acres was 25 per cent in 1940; according to the 1945 figures of the Bengal Government quoted above it was reduced to 14.3 per cent. This precipitous reduction could only have been reached by a mass expropriation of the middle peasant, especially in view of the fact that between 1940-45 prices rose immensely in Bengal,

from which only the richer sections benefited; that in 1943 Bengal saw the worst famines leading to wholesale expropriation of peasants.

The development of capitalist relations thus gives us new classes in the agrarian areas and a new class struggle superimposed on the old one against feudal landlordism. It shows that a new class of exploiters has arisen—the rich peasant; that the interests of the majority—the agricultural workers and poor peasants—are decidedly antagonistic to the interests of the feudal landlords as well as the rich peasant; that the middle peasant, though himself a victim of this process, vacillates and is capable of giving the battle only under decisive leadership.

## 11

Having come to this understanding of the new classes in the rural areas, we must, at the same time, see the tenancy of feudal relations, which, though they are disintegrating, yet continue to exist and oppress the majority of the people. Only the rich peasants are able to emancipate themselves from their tentacles. The development of capitalist relations does not as yet mean that feudalism is dead, that it is finished. If we act on this premise we will be committing the same mistake as that made in the agrarian programme of the Russian Social Democratic Party, a mistake which was nailed down by Lenin as the result of "an over-estimation of the degree of capitalist development in Russian agriculture" (*Selected Works*, Vol. 3, p. 233).

We must realise that the new class antagonism, the new class relations are superimposed upon the old. The entire toiling peasantry groans under the unbearable conditions created by feudalism, backwardness, etc. — and the rise of new capitalist methods of exploitation has only added to the exploitation without abolishing old burdens.

If this is not realised we will not only miss one of the main sources of oppression, of universal oppression, but also land ourselves into a different kind of alliance—an alliance to fight only capitalism—an alliance in which the middle peasant may have no place—one which will have to neutralise him.

What are the facts which show that feudal relations are still tenaciously persisting and that they are still strong, despite the development of capitalist relations?

First, over a large part of the territory—the acceded States—the jagirdari, landlord and other systems remain, while commodity production may not have reached there to this extent, nor polarisation of classes and emergence of new classes. At the same time, it is a fact that these classes are emerging, and with the accession of all the States to the Indian Union and the opening of them to trade and exchange on an increased scale, the evolution will be in this direction.

Secondly, in the landlord areas of the Indian Union the landlords own vast tracts of land as their private land; in addition they hold thousands in feudal bondage on lands which they rent. All kinds of feudal levies, like batai, share-cropping and other forms of excessive rent, continue on the landlord lands. Their extortionate rents and forms of bondage spell ruin and disaster among the peasants—and the developing capitalist relations only enable a tiny section of the rich peasants to emancipate themselves. The rest includes middle peasants, poor peasants, and sections of agricultural labourers, and all of them suffer from feudal exploitation also along with capitalist exploitation.

The tenacity of feudal relations arises from the fact that penetration of capital in agriculture and development of commodity production depend on the general development of capitalism, of large-scale industry in the country. India, which in spite of the development of large-scale industry like the cotton textile, jute, exploitation of coal and iron mines, of cement industries, and big iron and steel works in two places, has not yet developed the metallurgical industry on a big scale, cannot boast of machine-producing industry, and, therefore, has not yet broken through her industrial backwardness. Development of capitalist relations could not be, therefore, full-fledged in agriculture and feudal relationships could not be swept aside. The tenacious roots of feudalism could be uprooted only by a thorough-going process. In this connection the failure of Indian industry to produce agricultural machinery and the consequent failure to apply it to agriculture has played a great role in keeping feudalism alive, continuing agriculture on the basis of primitive implements and, therefore, open to small-scale production under feudal overlordship. In one sense this was inevitable. For the application of machinery depended upon the growth of a strata with sufficient capital in hand and this strata was only slowly rising till late.

Consequently, we find some of the worst forms of feudal bondage still continuing and the fight against the landlord still becoming the rallying cry for the majority of the people in the rural areas. Of course, it has become impossible to rally a big section of the majority if simultaneously you do not raise the cry of fighting the capitalist exploitation. But the point is that even those who are exploited directly by the capitalists cannot remain indifferent to feudal exploitation, since it also affects them directly or indirectly by producing and perpetuating conditions of backwardness, low wage or feudal bondage.

The fact that alternative employment in the city is limited because of industrial backwardness compels even sections of agricultural workers, recently dispossessed of land, to seek feudal bondage in the form of share-cropping or tenant with no right, tenant-at-will, tenant with rent in kind, etc. This is much more the case with poor peasants and middle peasants who allow them-



selves to be exploited by the land monopoly of the landlord. Thus, in spite of proletarianisation, there come into existence various shades of proletarian and semi-proletarian elements, some of which work now as wage-labourers, now as feudal tenants, etc. This fact makes the fight against landlordism a common and real fight.

The main point, however, to understand is that the capitalist relations have developed inside the feudal framework, that they are developing with great speed and that in future they will develop with still greater rapidity. Neither the tenacious resistance offered by feudal relations in India as a whole, nor the uneven development of commodity relations in different parts of the country, can disprove this truth. So far as the uneven development of capitalist relations in agriculture in different parts of the country is concerned, such unevenness is normal and the penetration of capital in agriculture is always an uneven process.

"It must be pointed out that the penetration of capital into agriculture is a peculiar process which cannot be properly understood if we confine ourselves to general statistics covering the whole of Russia. Agriculture does not become commercialised suddenly and to an equal degree in all types of economy and in all parts of the country. On the contrary, the market usually subordinates to itself one phase of the complex economy of agriculture in one place and another phase in another; moreover, the remaining phases do not disappear but adapt themselves to the 'main,' i.e., to the money, phase."

(The Agrarian Question in Russia, Lenin: Selected Works, L.W. Edition, Vol. I. p. 202.)

To conclude, feudalism is not dead despite development of capitalist relations. But the struggle against feudal relations becomes linked with the struggle against the new capitalist exploiters in the countryside. To attempt to carry out the one without the other is to be guilty of class collaboration and disrupt the struggle for agrarian revolution. It gets directly linked with the struggle for land itself—for today the struggle for land is directed against the monopoly in land of the landlords and rich peasants—both in landlord and ryotwari areas. The land-hunger of the people cannot be satisfied without attacking the land-monopoly of the old and new monopolists. The slogan of the agrarian revolution, "Land to the Tiller," is directed against both.

## 12

What is the policy of the bourgeoisie towards the agrarian problem, towards landlordism? What is behind the landlord bills of the Congress Ministries?

To understand this we must first give up the fatuous idea that the bourgeoisie only wants to strengthen and protect feu-

dalism, that it would not attack feudalism even to protect its own interests or advance them. When we say the bourgeoisie compromises with feudalism, or strengthens it, the only Marxist meaning is that from the standpoint of consistent revolutionary policy or action, its actions are compromising, etc. It does not mean, however, that the bourgeoisie does not seek to compel feudalism to reform to its own advantage. All that we say is that the bourgeoisie in the period of declining capitalism cannot liquidate feudalism in a revolutionary way, but will save its interests of the declining period by only attacking to curb feudalism to suit its own interests. This process only emancipates the bourgeoisie, clears the way for the development of bourgeois relations to the extent necessary, even absorbs the landlords in the bourgeois framework and makes of them bourgeois landlords, without really liberating the masses, or calling forth their initiative. Every class is out to protect its own interests and no class is generous to protect another at the expense of its own interests. This idea which is generally prevalent in our ranks comes from a wrong and mechanical understanding of the colonial character of India—an understanding which, by saying that industries have not developed because of colonial character, practically equates the bourgeoisie with feudal elements, sees no contradiction between them and reduces the content of the alliance to one of complete identity of economic interests. In his **Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy**, Lenin writes:

"Yet there may be two forms of this development. The survivals of serfdom may fall away either as a result of the transformation of the landlord estates or as a result of the abolition of the landlord latifundia, i.e., either by reform or by revolution. Bourgeois development may pursue its course having at its head big landlord economy, which will gradually become more and more bourgeois and gradually substitute bourgeois methods of exploitation for feudal methods. It may also pursue its course having at its head small peasant economy which, in a revolutionary way, will remove the 'abscess' of feudal latifundia from the social organism.... These two paths of objectively possible bourgeois development may be described as the Prussian path and the American path, respectively. In the first case, feudal landlordism gradually evolves into bourgeois, Junker landlordism, which dooms the peasants to decades of most painful expropriation and bondage, while at the same time a small minority of Grossbauern (big peasants) arises. In the second case there is no landlordism, or else it is broken up by the revolution, as a result of which the feudal estates are confiscated and divided into small farms.... In the first case the outstanding content of the evolution is the transformation of serfdom

into usury and capitalist exploitation on the land of the feudal lords—the landlords—the Junkers. In the second case the main background is the transformation of the patriarchal peasant into a bourgeois farmer.”

(Lenin: *Selected Works*, M.L. Edition, Vol. III, pp. 180-181.)

Lenin further writes:

“Also Marx in Vol. III of *Capital* pointed out that the form of landed property which the nascent capitalist mode of production finds does not suit its requirements. Capitalism creates for itself its own suitable forms of agrarian relationships out of the old forms, out of feudal landed property, small peasants’ commune property, clan property, etc. In that chapter, Marx compares the various methods whereby capital creates forms of landed property suitable for itself. In Germany the reshaping of the mediaeval forms of landed property proceeded in a reformist way, so to speak. It adapted itself to routine, to tradition, to the feudal estates that were slowly converted into Junker estates.... In America this reshaping went on in a violent way as regards the slave-owning farms in the Southern States. (*Ibid*, p. 216.)

Keeping this fact in mind that the bourgeoisie seeks to adapt the feudal structure, bringing such changes into it as will advance its own class interests and the capitalist order that it represents—what exactly is the policy that it seeks to follow in relation to the feudal landlords? That it is compromising, that it does not seek to destroy the feudal elements, is obvious. But what is the special form of its compromise, its pressure against feudal lords, of its efforts to adapt the feudal set-up to its needs? In the States, by securing the election principle, and by holding the military in the hands of the Central Government, and cashing in upon its influence with the masses, the bourgeoisie has adapted the Princes to the Republic and secured for itself a dominant voice. The alliance takes the form of a dominant voice to the bourgeoisie in the affairs of the States. Only the masses have secured nothing, no abolition of feudal set-up, only double domination.

### 13

What is its policy with regard to the landlords? How does the crisis of agrarian relations come before the bourgeoisie today? The bourgeoisie in power first of all sees the crisis as a crisis of deficit food production which is using all its valuable foreign exchange, making it difficult to import machinery and capital goods from abroad which it wants for its industries. Secondly, the shortage of food, high prices, etc., are leading to a dangerous situation—facing the bourgeoisie with hungry masses and endangering its regime. Thirdly, it realises

that the rack-renting and exploitation of the landlord disorganises agricultural production, makes it less and less efficient and by impoverishing the people narrows down the market for future industrial goods. Fourthly, by keeping the prices high, deficit production raises wage-costs of industrial workers, and makes it difficult to cut wages. Fifthly, the bourgeoisie sees that small-scale production of the impoverished peasant has become very inefficient, and turns its eyes to the rich farmer with capital who, it hopes, will more and more take charge of production. It also hopes to supply him with some machinery in the near future. Sixthly, it realises that the present rights of landlords constitute an obstacle to the rapid penetration of capital in agriculture, to the seizure of agriculture.

The way in which feudalism is adapted to the needs of the bourgeoisie is determined by these considerations. The landlord legislations of the Ministries make the aim quit clear. They are directed to open the way to the rich farmer to produce commodities, to produce in a capitalist way, and seek to remove or curtail or curb the interference from the landlords’ proprietary rights in the way of penetration of capital. The landlords are being bought, by paying compensation worth crores—though the bourgeoisie might, of course, claim that it is not paying the full capitalised value of rent. The oppressive feudal rent is not abolished but “nationalised”, i.e., the bourgeois State seeks to appropriate the huge rent for itself, to advance the interests of its own class, for fixing industrial and agricultural development on capitalist lines. The toiler is not freed from this rent. On the contrary, he is asked to shoulder the burden of compensation, the interest on compensation bonds or the money given in compensation. The beneficiaries of this compensation are the rich farmer and the bourgeoisie. But the entire people have to pay for it.

Whether the present landlord bills are withheld or proceeded with, the bourgeoisie will try to clear the road, an opening to the rich farmer through some means or another, either through amendment of tenancy act, or court or legal pressure against the landlord, or putting a provision in the Act that certain types of tenants will be allowed to buy the land at fair price determined by the Government, and one which the landlord cannot refuse, and fixing the price of land, etc.—steps will be taken to put its agrarian programme into practice. If it is implemented, it will mean widespread exploitation of the peasantry, adding fuel to the fire, setting a spark to an explosive situation.

The bourgeois programme bears a strange resemblance to the programme of the Czarist Minister, Stolypin:

“Serfdom may be abolished by the gradual transformation of the landlords’ feudal latifundia into Junker-bour-

geois estates, by transforming the masses of the peasants into landless peasants and knechts, by forcibly keeping the masses down to the pauper standard of living, by the rise of small groups of Grossbauern, i.e., rich bourgeois peasants who inevitably spring up under capitalism from among the peasantry. The Black Hundred landlords and Stolypin, their Minister, have chosen this very path. They realised that it would be impossible to clear the path for the development of Russia without forcibly breaking up the rusty mediaeval forms of landownership. And they boldly set out to break these up in the interests of the landlords. They abandoned the sympathy which only recently prevailed among the bureaucracy and the landlords for the semi-feudal commune. They evaded all the 'constitutional' laws in order to break up the village communes by force. They gave the kulaks carte blanche to rob the peasant masses, to break up the old system of landownership, to ruin thousands of peasant farmers; they handed over the mediaeval village to be 'sacked and plundered' by those who had roubles in their purses. They cannot act otherwise if they are to retain their class rule, for they have realised the necessity of adopting themselves to capitalist development and not of fighting against it. And in order to preserve their rule, they can find no other allies against the masses of peasants than the 'commoners,' the Razuvayevs and Kolupayevs. They had no other alternative than to shout to these Kolupayevs 'Enrichissez vous!'—get rich! We shall create opportunities for you to make a hundred roubles for every one you invest, if only you will help us to save the basis of our power under the new conditions! This path of development, if it is to be travelled successfully, calls for wholesale, systematic, unbridled violence against the peasant masses and against the proletariat...."

(Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy, Lenin, Selected Works, M.L. Edition, Vol. III, p. 279.)

Thus did a landlord Ministry adapt landlordism to the needs of bourgeois development.

In the light of these facts we must study critically the landlord legislation and unmask it. The phrase-mongering and negative attitude which contents itself with saying that no change has been brought about, that the bills do not mean any change—which really screens from the masses the new offensive—must be given up and a successful campaign launched to unmask the new measure. It is not enough to say that landlordism is not being abolished; you must expose the new capitalist class which is being helped forward in its exploitation.

This also means that in some respects we must modify our agrarian slogans—add to our main agrarian slogans a basic slogan: **Nationalisation of Land.**

The Communist International had put the slogan of nationalisation of land on the programme of the Communist Parties of colonies. Its dropping out of our programme was not accidental. It was the same opportunist concession to rich and middle peasant psychology that has been noted earlier. It is obvious that a movement which mainly based itself on the middle peasant and would not offend the rich peasant, would always be afraid to push forward the slogan of nationalisation, afraid of the reactions of the property-holding followers. Therefore, only one of the main slogans was kept: **Abolition of Landlordism**—and land to the tiller. The fact that we had to add "land to the tiller" was an admission that mere abolition of landlordism might not benefit the toilers, that the fruits might be appropriated by the new class of exploiters.

The slogan of nationalisation, the realisation of nationalisation of land, is the most consistent carrying out of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Nationalisation of land should not be confused with socialisation of agriculture, socialised large-scale agriculture. Under nationalisation, land is nationalised, and so long as the material foundation for socialised agriculture is not ready, private production, small-scale production, commodity production is carried on. In the course of his earlier writings, Lenin repeatedly stressed that nationalisation of land, by breaking up the feudal estates, by nationalising rent, will remove all feudal obstacles to capitalist development in agriculture.

Today, with a quick passing of the democratic revolution into the Socialist revolution, nationalisation of land in the hands of the People's Democratic State becomes the revolutionary weapon not only of abolishing feudal property but also of carrying forward the struggle against capitalist elements who continuously arise out of the commodity production in rural areas and who, if left unchecked, would soon monopolise all land—for private property would mean capitalist property. Nationalisation of land thus becomes a weapon of carrying forward the democratic revolution into the next stage—the proletarian Socialist revolution—by using it as a weapon to squeeze the capitalist elements until they are eliminated by final victory of Socialism. It is the transitional slogan which links the democratic revolution with the next stage of the revolution, enabling the proletariat to strike at the capitalist elements.

The land-hunger of the rural masses, the demand of land to the tiller, is directed against the monopoly of land, of the landlords as well as rich peasants. The slogan of nationalisa-

tion of land is thus directed against the monopoly of both these classes—against both feudal and bourgeois private property in land. The tasks of the two stages of the revolution thus get interlinked through it. At the same time, nationalisation by itself does not and cannot abolish capitalist relations, private or commodity production. It enables the People's State to bring it under control, and gradually squeeze it out.

It will be a common slogan both for the landlord and ryotwari areas—one which we have been lacking all these days. We had hitherto satisfied our conscience by stretching the meaning of the word "landlords" and applying it to the money-lending landlords. Actually the ryotwari areas had no slogan of revolutionary transformation all these days.

Will it be a rallying slogan? Will it galvanise the rural masses? It will definitely do so. Why? Because the basic masses of the rural population on which we have to rely are the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements—the agricultural workers and poor peasants who have been or are being rapidly expropriated because of private property in land. The same is happening to the middle peasant, though he desperately clings to the illusions of a small property holder and dreams of a better world on the basis of small property.

All these classes, and especially the middle peasant, will certainly be frightened if nationalisation is put in the wrong way; if it is not put correctly and properly and its real anti-feudal, anti-rich peasant, anti-moneylender content is not propagated; if it is not advocated on the basis of the very experience of the masses.

The masses have seen that under present property relations they have been expropriated. But our general denunciation of landlords has prevented them from drawing the proper conclusion. Life itself is proving to them that all private property—whether feudal or bourgeois, whether landlord or small-scale peasant property—leads to expropriation of the peasant—it means property of the exploiting classes. We have attacked only feudal property in land, and thus prevented them from understanding that the only guarantee against feudal and bourgeois expropriation is nationalisation of land.

Only nationalisation of land will break up feudal property; only nationalisation of land will hand over the land to the tiller for use; only nationalisation will end the land monopoly of the landlords and rich peasants; only nationalisation, with its prohibition of purchase and sale of land, will eliminate the power of money, of rich ones to speculate in land, to appropriate it and to expropriate the peasant; only nationalisation gives a guarantee of security to the peasant and against the power of money, against attachment of land by the moneylender, etc. Thus not only the agricultural workers and

poor peasants will rally round it, but even the middle peasant, whose experience tallies with what we are saying, can be made to understand that nationalisation, far from threatening him with loss of land, ensures him against expropriation by the richer elements. There is no doubt that initially his vacillation will be very big; incited by the rich peasant, he may be hostile. For he himself has all the prejudices of a property holder against nationalisation. But he can be convinced, especially as he sees the truth with his eyes, especially if we describe to him what is happening to the middle peasant all over the country—statistically, concretely.

Nationalisation of Land—with land to the tiller for use—should be our slogan along with abolition of landlordism, etc.

## 15

Another major demand which must figure in our programme is the demand for a living wage of agricultural workers—which will be a tremendously rallying demand to organise the agricultural workers. This, together with limitation of hours of work, extension of other rights of industrial workers, social insurance, etc., will become the broad platform for organising the agricultural workers into a separate organisation. Of course, the platform will include the common demand for nationalisation of land, abolition of landlordism, etc. These at present appear to be the additional demands that will have to be incorporated in our agrarian programme.

Certain questions about organisation—questions regarding a separate organisation of agricultural workers, or rural working class as a whole—have been raised. Some comrades have expressed the fear that such an independent organisation might bring about a conflict with poor and middle peasants, especially if the organisation champions a living wage. These questions can be answered briefly, because the foregoing analysis has already made the position clear. The rural proletarians constitute the biggest single group of the agricultural population—in many parts. Divorced from land, he is the nearest ally of the proletariat in carrying through the revolution. He is the closest ally in the democratic as well as the Socialist revolution. Proletarian hegemony in the agrarian revolution, in the People's Democratic Revolution, cannot be established without the rural proletarian taking the lead and initiative in the countryside and leading the poor peasants—another firm ally—and the middle peasant, a vacillating ally. Proletarian hegemony can only be secured through the leadership of the proletariat. Both for the success of the democratic as well as the Socialist revolution, the proletariat must see that the rural workers, firmly allied with poor peasants, take the lead and initiative.

The rural workers cannot be roused to this task unless they

are organised as a separate class, unless their day-to-day battles are fought against their exploiters through their separate organisation. Their separate trade organisation or organisations and the battles fought through them will create a common class consciousness, rouse political consciousness and enable them to play their vanguard role in the agrarian revolution. It is, therefore, incumbent that they should be organised in separate organisations for their day-to-day battles. It is further incumbent that the Party makes special efforts to recruit this section inside the Party, since they are nearest to the proletariat. Special political work, Party work among the rural proletarians, recruiting them inside and making them the base of the proletarian Party in the countryside, is incumbent on every Communist. It is the ABC of Leninism. Only thus, i.e., by being drawn inside the Party and inspired by the proletariat, the rural worker begins to assume a leading role in the agrarian revolution and the battle for People's Democracy in the countryside.

The separate organisation of the rural workers must, of course, have close links forged by common struggle, mutual help and organisational cooperation, with the other sections of the rural masses—the poor peasants and the middle peasants, organised in the Kisan Sabha. The rural workers' organisation may be affiliated to the Kisan Sabha, with proper representation—or, better still, representatives of both organisations should invite the corresponding executives of the other for their important meetings, etc., and there should be joint observance of days and, of course, joint struggles. But it is incumbent, at the same time, that the trade organisation of rural workers or its federation should be affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress where its members come into direct touch with the industrial proletariat.

The doubts raised about hostility from certain sections of the peasantry towards the rural workers' movement should not be rejected off hand. There are special elements in the Indian situation which make such hostility probable in the beginning, at least which make it possible that the enemies of the workers and peasants might exploit them to create disruption in the rural population.

First, the fact should not be forgotten that in certain parts of the country quite a big section of the rural workers, especially agricultural workers, consists of Untouchables while the peasant sections, both poor and middle, consist of touchables. In U.P., Bihar, Maharashtra, Andhra, Tamilnad and Kerala, this is so. The struggles that we have been conducting all these years—mainly based, as they were, on the middle peasant—have not yet succeeded in battering down the caste walls even in our areas. The fact that both the middle peasant and the poor peasant have sometimes to use the services of at least the rural workers of other trades—sweeper, carpenter, blacksmith—will make them

antagonistic to rural workers' wage demands and a separate movement. If this is allowed to happen, the richer sections, against whom the edge of the movement is directed, will utilise the opportunity to start caste conflicts, incite the lower sections of the peasants against the rural workers, and disrupt agrarian unity. The danger should not be underestimated. The touchable peasant in many places quite casually says that the Untouchable is getting cheeky.

It must be counteracted from the very beginning by bringing before the poor and middle sections the really anti-rich farmer and the anti-landlord character of the day-to-day struggle. They should be made to realise that it is a part of their own struggle against the same oppressors. As far as possible, in any new area, strikes, demonstrations, etc., should be first organised against rich farmers and landlords—wage struggles should be directly carried on against them—so that the anti-rich farmer and anti-landlord character is clearly seen. Secondly, such demands as a living wage, etc., should be properly explained as another aspect of the same struggle which fights for land for the poor peasant, etc. A living wage for the worker and decent livelihood for the peasant is our demand. It should be explained like this. The misconception that he will have to foot the bill should go. The landlords and the rich will foot the bill. He also will benefit thereby. This will come by overthrowing the exploiters, etc. The same explanation must be made to the middle peasants. In all cases, patient explanation and campaigns to see that the unity is not disrupted, are necessary. If this precaution is not taken, the struggle of the workers will be betrayed.

Finally, we must take into consideration our past. The base that we have got is primarily a middle-peasant base. We have no desire to liquidate this work of a decade. We must desperately attempt to retain him, answer his doubts, etc., do everything to see that he is saved from going the wrong side even temporarily, or from taking a merely neutral attitude towards this question. At the same time, we must decisively go ahead, carrying forward the struggle and overcome his vacillations through it, if they are not overcome before. All opportunities for explaining, propaganda, solving doubts and creating solidarity should be taken—all tactical handlings of struggles, when to start, how to start, etc.—but we cannot sacrifice the tempo of the struggle for him, cannot wait till he is convinced, his doubts solved. If we do sufficient propaganda and do not leave him to his fate, if we continue to maintain our links with him in the course of the struggle, then his doubts will more and more disappear as he sees the agrarian workers fighting desperately. His vacillations, however, are bound to be great.

We must refer to another organisational aspect — the role of peasant committees in the struggle of land—of peasant committees as organs of struggle. Our full slogan should be Nationalisation of Land and its distribution for use through peasant committees—which, we should take care to see, are mainly composed of the poor peasants and rural proletarians—i.e., that they are in majority, though the middle peasant will also be there. This committee tradition must be created in the day-to-day struggle itself—whether it is a struggle against ejection, for wage, or for the occupation of land. The committee—elected committee in the course of the struggle, and not the Sabha Committee—which throws up new militant elements, must be the broad democratic organ to conduct struggles. It must be the real authority, respected by the people, consisting of active elements thrown up by the struggles, and before which capitulation and vacillation in the leadership, etc., can be exposed. It must be made into the authority—and it can be because it is elected in the course of the struggle and, therefore, looked upon as embodiment of unity whose word is law, the call of the movement. Our comrades must popularise these committees and function them as the democratic organs of struggle, and rouse pride in them. They are the weapons of rank-and-file leadership and they must be fully used. When out of the partial struggles the committee idea takes root, it comes into automatic play whenever the masses fight, and gives organised form to the struggle. And when the struggle reaches wide dimensions, leading to the seizure of land, they become the revolutionary peasant committees to seize land and, at a still higher stage, the basis of peasant Soviets. Unless the committee is an organ of struggle, is consciously developed as the proper organisational form, the class leadership will not emerge.

This analysis of the agrarian problem ought to give us the class alignment not only in the agrarian revolution but also in the People's Democratic Revolution, the organisation of which is our immediate task. The class alignment in our rural areas, which contain the vast majority of our people, is of vital importance in the struggle for People's Democracy.

Who are the enemies and who are the friends of the proletariat in the revolutionary struggle for People's Democracy? Against whom is it directed, who is to be overthrown? What is the difference between the present period and the previous period?

First, the People's Democratic Revolution is directed towards the overthrow of the political rule of the bourgeoisie. This is a basic change in the situation. Formerly, our perspective was: overthrow the imperialist rule, paralyse the instability of the

bourgeoisie. Today, not neutralisation of the compromising role but direct vanquishing of the bourgeois rule in a political battle. From the old position of opposition indirectly, the bourgeoisie has become the spearhead of Indian counter-revolution.

Where do the feudal landlords, Princes, etc., stand? The agrarian revolution must liquidate feudalism. The People's Democratic Revolution is simultaneously directed against feudalism.

In the agrarian areas it must also struggle against the capitalist elements and attack their monopoly in land. The agrarian revolution thus contains both elements, the struggle against feudal exploitation as well as capitalist exploitation.

What about imperialism? The struggle for real independence and freedom of the country is no longer a struggle for national State, but a struggle to take the country out of the orbit of world-imperialist, world-capitalist order; to join the democratic Socialist system. People's Democracy and remaining within the imperialist orbit are diametrically opposed to each other.

Here we find the interlacing of the democratic and Socialist revolutions. The task of liquidating the feudal order is linked with the task of overthrowing the political rule of the bourgeoisie—a task to be accomplished under the leadership of the proletariat.

The task of national independence is linked with the task of breaking away from the capitalist orbit and going into the Socialist system of countries—an interlinking of the two, which comes because the present democratic revolutions are taking place in the context of the developing world-Socialist revolution. The meaning of two camps today becomes more and more clear—on the one hand, the camp of imperialism and capitalist order, and, on the other hand, the camp of Socialism and democracy. The struggle for freedom from imperialist aggression becomes directly linked with the struggle for the overthrow of the capitalist order on a world plane.

Which are the classes that will be the driving forces of this People's Democratic Revolution?

First, the proletariat, which alone can take a lead in vanquishing the political rule of the bourgeoisie and which must lead it.

Secondly, the rural proletarian and semi-proletarian masses, poor peasants, both of whom struggle against feudal as well as capitalist exploitation. The former is the nearest to the proletariat and is directly exploited by the capitalist elements and expresses the antagonism of commodity production far more sharply than any other rural section. Neither has got any chance of decent existence unless Socialism is achieved. They together constitute the big majority of the rural population.

Then come the vacillating allies. The middle peasant vacillates most; firstly, because his social orientation is towards the rich peasant against whom the people's democratic alliance has

to fight; secondly, he vacillates most because the struggle calls him to fight the bourgeois Government about whom he has illusions. His vacillations, therefore, become violent, especially when he realises that the Congress Government is to be fought. His vacillations were of a quite different type when it was a question of anti-imperialist struggle and following the oppositional bourgeoisie—he vacillated or he was able to overcome his vacillations because of his anti-imperialist and anti-feudal hatred. But today he vacillates most because when he is asked to fight the bourgeois Government and rich peasants he is called upon to fight all that which he aspires to be, his ideal so to say. His vacillations will be, therefore, of the most violent type.

And yet he can be won over; there is an important place for him in the alliance because he is a victim of both feudal and capitalist exploitation, and the grim truth of life will teach him to ally himself with the fighting forces. The struggle for the alliance of the middle peasant is a vital struggle and it will be successful in the manner that the other sections inspire confidence in him by their decisive action. But any neglect of conscious efforts to win him over would prove fatal.

Then comes the petty bourgeoisie of the town and city. The intellectuals, the upper sections, and part of the lower sections get split from the main front, and sections of them range themselves against the proletariat. These are sections who form the upper crust of State bureaucracy, army, organs of State and occupy privileged positions as managers, officials in business concerns, factories, establishments, etc.—all of whom look to the present bourgeois Government to protect their privileged position.

The remaining, the employees, school teachers, students, clerks, lower-grade officials, etc. vacillate, but a section takes a more and more decisive stand and gets socialist minded. The winning over of this section of the petty bourgeoisie is of vital importance.

In all this, where does the rich peasant, peasant bourgeoisie, stand? Does he vacillate? Can he be neutralised? No. He is one of the main enemies in the rural areas—in fact, the spearhead of bourgeois-feudal reaction in rural areas. First, he is a capitalist and he looks upon the Government as his Government. Any movement directly against that Government, he knows, is directed against him—hence he fights doggedly. Secondly, he is an exploiter and the agrarian revolution, which is out to attack his monopoly in land and his exploitation of labour, ranges him against the alliance. He becomes the most fanatical defender of the Government, of reaction, of the present order.

The disposition of class forces then appears as follows: The proletariat and is directly exploited by the capitalist elements

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peasants, marches in alliance with the middle peasant, against the landlords, while fighting the rich peasants, for the overthrow of the political rule of the bourgeoisie, for the overthrow of feudalism, for taking the country out of the imperialist orbit, for a Democratic Dictatorship of Workers and Peasants.

Such is the disposition of the class forces which emerges from our analysis. Such is the meaning of the proletariat basing itself firmly on the rural proletariat and poor peasants.

The alliance, the disposition of the class forces, also shows the interlacing of the democratic revolution with the Socialist revolution.

The preponderating force in the class alliance—the force of the proletariat—leading the rural proletariat and poor peasantry, is the basis of the Socialist revolution, is the force which brings about the Socialist revolution. Thus, the main class force is already born and reaching for the next task.

The alliance by overthrowing feudalism discharges the task of the democratic revolution. The direct overthrow by the proletariat of the political rule of the bourgeoisie gives it a proletarian Socialist character.

The task of breaking away from the capitalist orbit strengthens this character. At the same time, the immediate result of the alliance, the Democratic Dictatorship of Workers and Peasants, marks the stage as completion of the democratic revolution, accentuates the class struggle, strengthens the leadership of the working class and its alliance with toiling peasants.

But all the necessary elements for marching to the next stage are already there. Apart from nationalisation, etc., the main weapon—the alliance of the proletariat and rural workers and poor peasants—is already dominant, and it cannot rest without marching to the next stage, because none of its problems gets solved without Socialism. The overthrow of the political rule of the bourgeoisie deprives the class enemy of the State weapon and places it in the hands of the toilers. How quickly the Democratic Dictatorship of Workers and Peasants — or the People's Democratic State — enters the second phase, i.e., the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, depends on how firmly the alliance of the proletariat with rural workers and poor peasants marches against the bourgeoisie, how firmly the leadership of the proletariat is established so that the State is firmly used to break the resistance of the bourgeoisie; how free the proletariat and its Party are from illusions about peaceful struggle. Then People's Democracy passes from the first to the second stage, the Socialist stage — thus the interlacing takes place.