PEASANT PROTEST AND RURAL ELITE STRATEGIES IN ASIA

Case Studies of India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka

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EEN WETENSCHAPPELIJKE PROEVE OP HET GEBIED VAN
DE SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van Doctor aan de
Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen
volgens het besluit van het College van Decanen
in het openbaar te verdedigen
op maandag 9 november 1992
des namiddags 1.30 uur precies

door

Victor Prasad Karunan

geboren op 7 augustus 1954
te Bangalore (India)

Promotor : Prof. Dr. G.J. Huizer

PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is a contribution to an ongoing Third World debate on the role of peasants and peasant movements in rural development. The present study was actually intended to be a sequel to my first publication, "The History of Peasant Movements in Thailand and the Philippines", Plough Publications, Hong Kong, 1984, when I began to document and study the history of peasant movements in India and Sri Lanka. In the course of this work, my involvement with peasant organisations in these two countries, as well as continued contact with the peasant movement in the Philippines, stimulated me to document the emerging struggles of the peasants in these countries. Through this experience I was led into new areas of inquiry, and the peasants and peasant leaders with whom I interacted during this period urged me to carry forward their own struggle by broadening the scope of my study. This thesis is, therefore, the end result of this process.

The background study and preparation of initial drafts of this thesis was undertaken in 1985 when I was granted a scholarship by CEBEMO (Catholic Organisation for Development Cooperation the Netherlands) to spend about 6 months in the Netherlands to document my experiences of involvement with peasant movements in India and Sri Lanka. During this period I was fortunate to be granted a Research Fellow status with the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in the Hague, which provided me the opportunity to work closely with many distinguished scholars and researchers and to utilise secretarial and library facilities at the ISS. I am grateful to the ISS for the assistance provided and the encouragement I received from, among others, Ben White, Vicky Meynen, Peter Waterman and Aurora Carreon.

It was during this research work in the Netherlands when Professor Gerrit Huizer at the Third World Studies Center in the Catholic University of Nijmegen, urged me to write up my experiences of work with peasant movements in Asia for a Ph.D. programme. Since then, Gerrit has been my chief mentor, colleague and friend helping me along the way as my work progressed. I am deeply indebted to Gerrit for his close supervision, stimulating insights and constructive criticism of the many drafts of this thesis which he closely monitored during several years. Without his constant encouragement and guidance, this entire project would not have been possible given the nature of my international work and frequent travels since 1985.

My stay in the Netherlands during this period was facilitated by the warm and self-less hospitality of Frans van Vliet, Anita and their children - Geertje, Sam and Hilda - who put up with my long hours of work day and night and many meetings and discussions at the "Open House". Other Dutch friends who have encouraged me and also shared in the successes and difficulties of the many years of work on this Ph.D. thesis include Fr. Piet Van Dongen, Tony Fernandes, and the staff of CEBEMO and VASTENAKTIE in the Netherlands.

On completion of the case studies on India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines, I received useful comments and suggestions to my earlier drafts from friends and colleagues in these countries to whom I owe at least a word of gratitude. In India, valuable comments and criticisms were received from, among others, Mohan Ram, Professor T.K. Oomen, Stan Lourduswamy, Paul Guerviere, Manuel Alphonse, Professor A.R. Desai, and Ajit Roy. Some peasant activists and organisations, who prefer to remain anonymous, provided me valuable grassroot information and rich insights during my study of their specific struggles.

In Sri Lanka, the All Lanka Peasant Congress, the Social Scientists Association of Sri Lanka, Devasarana Development Centre and others facilitated my field-visits in 1986-1987 and commented on earlier drafts. In particular, I would like to thank Charles Abeysekera, Hector Abeywardena, Sarath Fernando, Patrick Fernando, Yohan Devananda, Kumudu K. Kumara, Newton Gunasinghe, and S.Balakrishnan. There were others, especially peasant leaders and activists in Monaragela district whom I met and interacted with during the course of my field work, many of whom have today laid down their lives for the peasants struggle in Sri Lanka. To one in particular, Ananda Weerakoon, a 62-year old peasant leader of the All Lanka Peasant Congress, who was assassinated by unidentified armed youth in front of his family in his home in Monaragela - I am specially grateful for his valuable contribution to my study of peasant struggles in Sri Lanka.

In the Philippines, my regular visits and fieldwork was facilitated by, among others, Philippine Peasant Institute, *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (KMP), Forum for Rural Concerns, Farmers Assistance Board, REAPS, National Federation of Sugar Workers, and others. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the solidarity and assistance provided by long-standing friends as Pancho Lara, Jaime Tadeo, Joel Rodrigues, June Rodrigues, Charlie Ocampo, Prof. Randolf David, and many other leaders of the peasant and sectoral movements in the Philippines.

I also wish to express my thanks and appreciation to M S Shivakumar from the Division of Human Settlements, Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok (Thailand) for his assistance in formatting and typesetting this manuscript, and to my Dutch friends - Mr. Toon van Kaan, Prof. Dr. Jan Nuchelmans and others - who provided valuable assistance in enabling me to make the necessary arrangements for the printing of this thesis in the Netherlands.

Finally, my personal sustenance to complete this work over the years was made possible by the support and understanding of my dear family members in India. A special thanks for their unlimited patience, concern and tolerance while I went through the tedious process of compiling and writing this work. My wife, Wanida (Lek) has been a constant inspiration and support, especially after January 19, 1991 when our first child, Mallika was born in Geneva. It has been a struggle for her to put up with my late nights and working holidays while I completed the final sections of this thesis and, at the same time, to care for our baby girl. On completion of this work, I share the happiness of success with Lek and Mallika - an acknowledgement of the love, concern and support shared by them both in my work.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Nature and Context of the Study

It is only in recent decades, more precisely, since the 1970s social sciences became seriously attentive to peasants and peasant societies from an emancipatory perspective. Earlier, during the colonial period, peasants and peasant societies were chiefly attractive to Western cultural anthropologists to meet the needs and policies of colonial regimes. During that time, colonial administrators tried to better understand peasant societies so that they could exercise control over the so-called "natives" and "savages" of the colonies.

There are a number of reasons why peasant societies are now being studied seriously. The salient ones are the following :

(1) By far, the most important reason for scholarly interest in peasant societies and peasant movements was the victorious "peasant revolutions" in China, Cuba and Vietnam. For the first time in history, revolutionary peasants under the leadership and guidance of a Communist party, brought about national liberation from the seemingly overwhelming power of "feudalism" and "colonialism". In this situation, peasants portrayed a "revolutionary potential" that could not be explained or interpreted within the orthodox Marxist theory and the various approaches used by anthropologists and colonial policy makers.

(2) Around the same period when peasant rebellions were sweeping across many parts of the so-called "Third World", in other countries, the peasantry constituted the backbone of escalating nationalist movements or regional separatist struggles, for example, the less-violent nationalist movement in India under the inspiration of Mahatma Gandhi or the long history of peasant struggles by the *Moro* people in southern Philippines. What was specific to this situation was that the peasantry found an effective leverage in the nationalist struggles to better their situation and therefore rallied enmasse in support of national liberation against colonial rule.

Although the peasantry were not to reap the fruits of these struggles, they nevertheless brought their demands and aspirations onto the agenda of the "independent nations" after gaining freedom.[1] Thus, the peasantry became the focus of attention during this period, not only for the nationalist political leadership, but also for scholars and social scientists.

(3) The colonies were largely agricultural countries i.e., over 60-80% of the population earned a living by working on or living off the land. In the post-colonial situation, therefore, the character of the independent nation state was determined by the respective roles of the vast masses of peasantry. Their active participation in, or their passive subjugation, in the post-colonial social formations was to shape the class character of the State in these countries. Hence, the question of the role of the peasantry in the post-colonial society gained importance for scholarly enquiries as well as for nationalist leaders.

Ironically, however, the nationalist leadership and research scholarship of the Third World countries continued to neglect such interest in their own history of peasant movements. As Desai notes in relation to the Indian context :

> "It is also equally sad that such a comprehensive account is not available inspite of the existence of various political parties, including the traditional communist parties, some of which have even been ruling in some of the states. A number of these parties have been working in rural areas, through their peasant organisations, kisan sabhas and khet mazdoor sanghs (farm labourers associations). Inspite of working with and leading their struggles, these parties and organisations have not systematically documented or published a comprehensive all-India account of the evolution of the struggles of the rural poor, portraying and analysing them dialectically in the context of the type of development taking place in Indian society, during the post-independence period."[2]

The only exceptions have been a few active participants or close observers of such struggles who had first-hand knowledge and experience, and who have documented this history.[3] The policy makers of the independent nations failed to develop an indigenous intellectual community that could document and interpret its own history.

Also, the attempt by the nationalist ruling elites to incorporate the peasantry and its leadership into the status quo seemed to take predominance over their desire to submit to the radical demands and aspirations of the peasantry for radical reform and change. Consequently, the origins of Asian scholarship in the study of the peasantry and peasant movements in the period immediately after independence manifested itself in an "elite bias" that catered to the needs of the political leadership and policy makers (national and international) rather than to the aspirations of the peasantry.

Today, we have come a long way in our understanding and interpretation of the agrarian question and the peasant movements in the Third World. Path-breaking studies and research by a school of radical social scientists in the Third World and the West, intellectual debates and discussions, and, more important, concrete historical experiences of peasant protest in the post-independent periods of these societies, have all brought about further clarity in the analysis and our knowledge of peasant movements in our countries.[4]

The scope of this study is based on two broad areas of concern and inquiry that have emerged from my involvement with the Asian peasantry elaborated below, and which have theoretically challenged traditional approaches to the study of peasant protest and agrarian movements, particularly in Asian countries. These two areas can be elucidated by the following questions :

(1) In spite of a long history of spontaneous and organised peasant movements and struggles during the colonial period and since independence in our countries, agrarian revolt and movements are largely sporadic, regionalised and lack necessary direction and sustenance in recent years. What have been the historical and sociological factors that have contributed to the present crisis in agrarian protest and peasant organisations?

(2) In Asian history, the role of ideology vis-a-vis peasant consciousness plays a dual role. On the one hand, it provides for organisation and direction in the course of a peasant movement; and, on the other, it appears to be one of main factors resulting in fragmentation and disillusionment within peasant movements and ultimately contributes to their collapse and subjugation by the forces of the State and the rural elite.

How does one grapple with the problematic of ideology - used here to mean "not fixed or systematic meanings, but to the moment of formation of consciousness in practical activity : in work, social and cultural reproduction, and in struggle", [5] in relation to peasant consciousness and peasant protest, and in what concrete manner does ideology determine and/or influence the form of protest and its consequence ? While the above two broad areas of concern would be central to our analysis of peasant protest and agrarian movements in Asian countries, it further suggests more specific questions that would also be considered in this study, namely :

(a) Have there been significant shifts overtime in the form and impact of peasant protest and agrarian movements - in particular relation to the ideology of protest, role of the leadership and social base, class alliances and strategies ?

(b) To what extent have power elite strategies and State-sponsored agrarian policies enabled or hampered the articulation of peasant protest and why ?

(c) What has been the role of local/national and international forces in response to radical peasant protest in Asia ? Here we intend to focus our attention on foreign states, aid agencies and local/international power elites that exercise significant influence in the Asian countryside.

(d) What strategies were adopted by the State and rural elites to co-opt the peasant movements? How did the State and rural elites facilitate certain movements on particular issues and what movements were repressed ?

In recent years there has been considerable literature on the definitions of the concept of "peasantry", "peasant movements", "ideology" and "peasant consciousness". Below I only intend to outline the broad ideas of the salient concepts used in order to clarify how it is

understood and applied in this study. In this study the concept "Peasantry" is used in a very broad sense to mean "rural cultivators" and whose surplus produce is transferred to the dominant group or elite. This definition adopted is based on the approach of Eric Wolf to the study of the peasantry.[6] At the same time, the broad Marxist definition of agrarian social classes in terms of the rich, middle and poor peasants and agricultural labourers, is also a useful working definition for our analysis.

The use of the term, "Agrarian Protest" implies two aspects (a) Agrarian Protest as specifically Peasant Protest : that is, all forms of spontaneous and organised expression of protest of the peasantry against a dominant political power/elite. These expressions of protest are basically reactions to given conditions and/or changes in those conditions felt as oppressive or detrimental to the interests of the peasantry.[7] (b) Agrarian Protest as Popular Protest : that is, it is a form of protest or political expression that does not belong to any particular social class or group, but has a popular element in that it expresses the consciousness of various strata/classes in a given social context, mostly rural but also urban elements. This clearly distinguishes "agrarian protest" from "ideology as class consciousness".[8]

In the following review of rural elite strategies and peasant protest in Asia (specifically in India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka), we would observe that both these aspects of agrarian protest are prevalent in different points in time, or within the process of development of a specific peasant struggle/movement in a particular area. Therefore, it is necessary to view agrarian protest in both these aspects, sometimes distinctly separate, but in others, mutually inter-related and dialectic.

The working definition of "Ideology" put forward by Goran Therborn is useful for our purposes of analysis : "Ideology will refer to that aspect of the human condition under which human beings live their lives as conscious actors in a world that makes sense to them to varying degrees. Ideology is the medium through which this consciousness and meaningfulness operate. Thus, the conception of ideology employed here deliberately includes both everyday notions and "experiences", and elaborate intellectual doctrines, both of the "consciousness" of social actors and the institutionalized thought-systems and discourses of a given society."[9] We define "Popular Protest" or "Popular Ideology" as constituting two main elements - the "inherent" and the "derived" :

> "Popular ideology...is most often a mixture a fusion of two elements, of which only one is the peculiar property of the 'popular' classes and the other is superimposed by a process of transmission and adoption from outside. Of these, the first is what I call the 'inherent' traditional element - a sort of 'mother's milk' ideology, based on direct experience, oral tradition or folk-memory and not learned by listening to sermons or speeches or reading books. In this fusion the second element is the stock of ideas and beliefs that are 'derived' or borrowed from others, often taking the form of a structured system of ideas, political or religious, such as the Rights of Man, Popular Sovereignty, Laissez-faire and the Sacred Right of Property, Nationalism, Socialism, or the various versions of justification by Faith."[10]

To use the above definition in the context of our study, we can say that the "inherent" element would imply, for example, the peasant's belief in his/her right to land - whether owned individually or collectively - the desire for freedom and justice, the consciousness of belonging to a community. The "derived" element, on the other hand, could imply, for example, the ideology of Marxist socialism or Maoism as brought to the peasantry by external forces - communist parties, social activists, NGOs and others.

1.2 Theoretical Considerations

A large part of this study deals with "peasant consciousness". Following Turton and Tanabe, I understand "consciousness" as not just an abstract entity in the realm of thought and ideas; but as a concrete social force present and acting in society.[11] Also, the peasant consciousness is determined not only by conceptions, beliefs and ideas coming from "external forces" (e.g., rural elites, State, Communist parties, peasant organisers and NGOs) but primarily from "internal forces" (e.g., the cultural norms, values and praxis of the peasants and the socio-economic context of rural life).[12] The latter is similar to the Gramscian concept of "non-organic ideologies" which is defined as the "less structured forms of thought that circulate among the common people, often contradictory and confused and made up of folklore, myth and day-to-day popular experience".[13]

The distinction between "external" and "internal" forces that shape peasant consciousness is crucial. Conventional Marxist theory - including many Marxist scholars studying peasant movements - have generally worked within the framework of society divided into two fundamental classes : the capitalist class and the working class. All other classes are subject to these two fundamental classes in relation to the level of contradiction and conflict that prevails in society. Thus, the consciousness of traders and artisans, middle classes and professionals, farmers or peasants, indigenous peoples or tribals, must be seen within the framework of the consciousness of one or the other of the two fundamental classes in society. This view of orthodox Marxist theory has deemed the peasantry "a sack of potatoes" unable to constitute a social force by themselves and a critical force in societal transformation - as was ascribed to the working class by Marx.

Also, this orthodox framework is based on the "trickle-down theory" - "the revolutionary spirit must thus trickle-down to the workers from the vanguard and its professional intellectuals. Both the trickle-down hegemony theory and the corresponding trickle-down counter-hegemony strategies are analytically misplaced perspectives in the Marxist political tradition".[14] This has reimposed a "teacher-pupil" relationship between the vanguard intellectuals (Party) and the workers. In the case of peasant movements in Asian societies, conventional Marxist parties have also adopted the same strategy vis-a-vis the peasantry.

Our study will challenge this orientation and show, to the contrary, that the peasantry does possess the potential for a radical consciousness of protest and to play a critical role in societal transformation. The historical evidence of peasant revolts in many parts of Asia -

particularly in China, Vietnam, Indonesia, India and the Philippines - has proved this point beyond doubt. This history of peasant resistance in Asia was inspired by Marxists who took a distinct position away from conventional European-centred Marxist theory vis-a-vis the peasantry.

While Marxism was elevated to an official ideology in about 30 countries covering over one-third of the world's population, none of the official communist parties in Europe ever won a revolution to bring them into power. Rather they were installed by the Soviet army and thus had to depend on the USSR for support to survive. On the other hand, Marxism in Asia had a distinct history as Francisco Nemenzo notes : "the Soviet party in 1917 and the Chinese, Yugoslav, Cuban and Vietnamese parties which achieved genuine revolutions were all led by creative Marxists who refused to be hamstrung by ideological orthodoxy. Lenin, Mao, Tito, Ho Chi Minh, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara devised effective strategies that stunned the imperialists because they used Marxism to comprehend the uniqueness of their respective societies and to firmly grasp the specific laws of their respective revolutions."[15]

It is this specific history of Marxism in Asia that sets it apart from the European version of Marxist states that existed until very recently. The decade of the 1990s has marked a historic turning-point in the world of Marxism with the collapse of Stalinist-style authoritarian regimes that ruled under the disguise of Marxism. In recent years the collapse and near-extinction of the East or Central European models of Marxist states and communist parties has proved beyond doubt that Marxism also possesses its version of authoritarian rule and dogmatic party politics.

With the downfall of the East/Central European Marxist states many - especially the capitalist powers - claimed the "downfall of Marxism" itself and the triumph of the "free-market" model over the "centralised socialist" model. Ironically, Third World states have also used the same pretext to de-legitimise and repress Marxist opposition parties, and radical social movements. The fact is that these historic developments in Europe have had limited impact in the Asian region, largely because of the distinct "Asian" and "Chinese" praxis of Marxism in this region and especially the continuing stability and example of the Chinese model to Asian conditions.

Thus, what we have seen in recent years is not the universal collapse of Marxism per se, but the downfall of the Stalinist version of socialism personified in the centralised and authoritarian East/Central European states. Socialism and Marxist ideas, therefore, adapted as in the Chinese and Asian experiences, continues to respond to the needs of peasant movements and democratic forces in many Asian countries. Against this background, and as we shall see below, for example, in the case of Mao Tse-tung in China and Mahatma Gandhi in India - the ideology that contributed to the growth and success of peasant protest in these two countries was drawn from the "internal forces" ("non-organic ideologies") of peasant consciousness and clearly negated the European models of orthodox Marxist theory and praxis in the mobilisation of the peasantry which contributed to the fundamental transformation of these two societies. Recently, the sociologist, S.C. Dube observed in a U.N. University study :

"The Mahatma (Gandhi) and Mao make strange company : one was a votary of non-violence, the other believed that power lay in the barrel of the gun; one was a believer, the other an atheist; one supported austerity as a way of life, the other chose it as a temporary expedient. But they had many similarities also. Both shared a concern for the common man, both believed in the dignity of labour, both advocated a philosophy of self-reliance and both opted for a self-limiting society. And both were great mass mobilizers for their cause."[16]

Following Dube, it appears important to re-examine the stature and role of two charismatic personalities - Mao Tse-tung in China and Mahatma Gandhi in India - when one attempts to interpret and understand better the dynamics of peasant protest and rural elite strategies in the Asian context.

Mao Tse-Tung, in his early years, had been rather skeptical about the working class and the peasantry. He is quoted as confessing in late years : "I began life as a student and at school acquired the ways of a student; I felt that intellectuals were the only clean people in the world, while in comparison workers and peasants were dirty."[17] His "discovery of the peasantry" was only in 1925 when Mao returned to his province of origin, Hunan, and worked directly with the peasantry in the aftermath of the struggles of the Hunan peasantry which has come to be known as the May 30, 1925 Incidents. In late 1926, Mao conducted a thorough investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan Province which has become a classical work on the peasantry entitled "Report on an Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan", published in March 1927.[18]

In this work, Mao perceived the various forms of domination over the Chinese peasantry in three distinct types of authority : (i) the state system (political authority) ranging from the national, provincial and county government down to that of the township, (ii) the clan system (clan authority) - ranging from the central ancestral temple to its branch temples to the head of the household, (iii) the supernatural system (religious authority) - ranging from the King of Hell down to the town and village gods belonging to the nether world and the Emperor of Heaven down to all the various gods and spirits belonging to the celestial world. Further, there prevailed another type of authority over women - the authority of the husband. "These four authorities (political, clan, religious and masculine) are the embodiment of the whole feudal-patriarchal system and ideology, and the four thick ropes binding the Chinese people particularly the peasants."[19]

It was his direct experience with the Hunan peasantry that Mao developed his philosophy and theory of revolution for China centrally based on the revolutionary potential of the peasant classes. His experience among the peasantry in Hunan was to remain pivotal in the evolution of his thought in later years. Mao has discovered in the Hunan peasantry his destiny - "what remained for him now was to transform his feeling that the peasants were the key to the success of the revolution into a theory that would lead to eventual victory."[20] Indeed, it was this experience with the Hunan peasantry between August 1926 and May 1927 which was crucial to the development of Mao's own Marxist thinking.[21]

Mao's recognition and faith on the potential of the Chinese peasantry was affirmed in that experience and provided the concrete basis for his conviction - "A rural revolution is a revolution by which the peasantry overthrows the power of the feudal landlord class. Without using the greatest force, the peasants cannot possibly overthrow the deep-rooted authority of the landlords' which has lasted for thousands of years."[22] Thus, "without the poor peasants there can be no revolution. To reject them is to reject the revolution. To attack them is to attack the revolution."[23]

Also, Mao's faith in the poor peasants as the "vanguard of the Chinese revolution"[24] was a significant distinction from Western Marxism which attributed the "revolutionary potential" only to the working class. In this conviction, Mao was to make a radical break with classical Marxism, and for the first time in history, bestow the potential of revolutionary upsurge on the peasantry in a predominantly agricultural society.

This specificity in Mao's Marxism is crucial to the understanding of the character of the Chinese peasant revolution. The significant contribution of Mao to the theory of peasant protest and peasant revolution in Asia is precisely in his attempt to develop an indigenous interpretation of Marxism. In other words, Mao's contribution was his determined effort to re-interpret and adapt Western Marxism to the given local (historical, social and cultural) conditions of China in the early part of the 20th century. He affirmed his fervent desire to inspire the Chinese peasantry with a Marxian theory of revolution that was specifically "Chinese" in character, in the following words :

> "For the Chinese Communists who are part of the great Chinese nation, flesh of its flesh and blood of its blood, any talk of Marxism in isolation from China's characteristics is merely Marxism in the abstract, Marxism in a vacuum. Hence to apply Marxism concretely in China so that its every manifestation has an indubitably Chinese character i.e., to apply Marxism in the light of China's specific characteristics, becomes a problem which it is urgent for the whole Party to understand and solve. Foreign stereotypes must be abolished, there must be less singing of empty, abstract tunes, and dogmatism must be laid to rest; they must be replaced by the fresh, lively Chinese style and spirit which the common people of China love."[25]

It is a strange paradox that while, on the one hand, this specificity of the Chinese experience provided the cultural and historic uniqueness of the revolution and contributed to its success in China, on the other hand, it was this same Chinese specificity that also shaped the character of the Chinese society after revolution and contributed to the debacle of Mao in later years. As Isaac Deutscher notes : "national history, custom and tradition (including the deep philosophical influences of Confucianism and Taoism) have been reflected in the patriarchal character of the Maoist government, the hieratic style of its work and propaganda among the masses, and the magic aura surrounding the leader."[26]

The victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949 signified the victory of the Maoist vision of a peasant revolution based predominantly on peasant participation and mobilisation. China in

1949, therefore, had proved itself a classical example and a model for most Third World societies. The Chinese Communist Party was undoubtedly a peasant party and the peasantry formed the vast majority of the population of Third World countries.[27]Thus, the role of the Chinese peasantry in revolution became in the succeeding years of this century the main inspiration for Communist parties and peasant movements in many parts of Asia as will be elaborated below.

Mahatma Gandhi's influence on the Indian peasantry during the nationalist struggle for independence from British colonialism, lay not only in his charismatic personality but also in the specific Indian vision of a free and independent society that he posited for its people. The philosophical and strategic basis of his peaceful revolution was "*satyagraha*" i.e., "soul force" - a non-violent civil disobedience movement against British rule. For the Indian peasants, Gandhi was not just "a remote, western-educated lawyer-politican : he was a Mahatma, a *Pandit*, a *Brahman* ..."[28]

Furthermore, the "*Mahatma* as an *idea* was thought out and reworked in popular imagination"[29] In other words, Gandhi signified the hope of freedom from landlord oppression, independence from foreign rule and a firm affirmation of the dignity of Indian lifestyle and history for the peasantry. It was precisely this mass appeal of Gandhi that won over the Indian peasantry to the side of the Indian nationalist movement. Although the leaders of the Indian nationalist movement arose from an urban-educated and elitist background with little or no affinity to the genuine grievances of the peasant masses; Gandhi was able to reconcile the contradictory interests of antagonistic social classes and groups in Indian society and mobilise a united movement for Indian independence.

This "populism" of Gandhi's appeal was crucial to the unity among the Indian people - hence, landlord and peasant, rich and poor, Hindu and Muslim forged a delicate unity inspite of adverse political ideologies and economic interests within the Indian national movement, and Gandhi bonded together and symbolised this paradox. As Shahid Amin notes, the consciousness of the Indian peasantry was influenced by a popular enticement with Gandhi who was "to initiate the very first moments of a process which, given other factors, could help the peasant to conceptualise the turning of his world upside down. This was an incipient political consciousness called upon - on the possibility of an inversion of many of those power relations deemed inviolable until then, such as British/Indian, landlord/peasant, high-caste/low-caste, etc."[30]

Like Mao, Gandhi was also opposed to foreign models of revolution and change, but was convinced that only by re-discovering the liberative elements in Eastern traditions and cultures that a relevant mass movement for societal change can be mobilised effectively. Furthermore, such an Eastern or Indian vision as Gandhi propounded was rooted in his concept of "non-violence" and "*satyagraha*". To quote Gandhi :

> "Let us not be obsessed with catchwords and seductive slogans imported from the West. Have we not our own distinct Eastern traditions ? Are we not capable of finding our own solution to the question of capital and labour?...Let us study our

> Eastern institutions in that spirit of scientific inquiry and we shall evolve a truer socialism and a truer communism than the world has yet dreamed of. It is surely wrong to presume that Western socialism or communism is the last word on the question of mass poverty...Class war is foreign to the essential genius of India which is capable of evolving a form of communism broad-based on the fundamental rights of all and equal justice to all."[31]

Mahatma Gandhi signified for the Indian peasantry an Indian deity, as the Hindi weekly "*Swadesh*" which played an important role in spreading the message of Gandhi in Western India, reported in 1921 : "Even in the time of the Buddha, Mohammad and Christ such miracles were supposed to have taken place. Then we see no reason why miracles (*chamatkar*) should not be associated with Mahatma Gandhi whose name is perhaps even better known in India than that of Ram and Sita. It has been said..."*Jaki rahi bhavana jaisi, prabhu moorat dekhi tin taisi*" ("Whatever faith one has, the image of god appears accordingly")."[32]

While Gandhi's role in the historical evolution and final victory of the Indian nationalist movement remained decisive, the end result of the process was the emergence of the Indian ruling elite under the banner of the Congress Party to the helm of political power after gaining independence from the British, with the peasantry relegated to the background. It is precisely for this reason that today Gandhism in India is often considered a "thing of the past", no longer providing the necessary relevance for contemporary Indian society and particularly the grievances of the Indian peasantry. Thus, as Partha Chatterjee notes : "..Gandhism, like Russian Populism, was not a direct expression of peasant ideology. It was an ideology conceived as an intervention in the elite-nationalist discourse of the time and was formed and shaped by the experiences of a specifically national movement...In the Indian case the largest popular element of the nation was the peasantry. And it was the Gandhian ideology which opened up the historical possibility for its appropriation into the evolving political structures of the Indian state."[33]

1.3 Active Involvement as a Research Methodology

This study has utilised a research methodology based on active involvement with the peasant movements and key actors in peasant protest in Asia. This approach is also known as "Participatory Action Research" (PAR) popularised by, among others, Orlando Fals Borda from Latin America as follows :

> "Our idea was to take grassroots knowledge as a starting-point and then to systematise and amplify it through action in collaboration with external agents of change - such as ourselves - in order to build and strengthen the power of formal and informal rural workers' organisations".[34]

Following this approach the purpose of this thesis is to present the history of peasant protest and rural elite strategies in some selected countries of Asia from a specific "view from within and below". This concept has been defined by Gerrit Huizer as follows :

> "View from Within and Below implies that these realities are being seen most critically, and thus probably scientifically, by those who are suffering the efforts of these changes, watching them with suspicion and doubt, the basis of all science. Objectivity can be guaranteed in such committed research by the distance through self-reflection which researchers can take from themselves and their own personal and cultural biases and the political-economic context to which they structurally belong."[35]

In the context of our study, this connotes that we would look at the history of peasant struggles and its "counter-forces" (e.g., state, foreign business/corporate interests, rural elites - both national and international) from the point of view of the peasantry, who are the main actors in the long history of peasant struggles in Asian countries, as well as the subjects and victims of the counter-forces. In order to present this perspective from within and below, we have reviewed the history of peasant protest and rural elite strategies from a specific standpoint of highlighting the peasant's own perceptions and analysis of this history and interpreted their success or failure accordingly.

In my involvement with the peasants, I always envisaged my role as one of sympathetically reflecting the peasant's perceptions, cultural contexts and perspectives of their own milieu and the process of social change. Further to present this perspective, I have consciously based the analysis on my personal reflections on this experience and to faithfully reflect the peasants' viewpoints within the overall socio-economic and cultural context of peasant protest.[36]

In this sense, this thesis seeks to supplement and further concretise conventional academic work on peasant protest and agrarian society in Asia. Wherever we have relied on academic sources, it has been mainly to provide the necessary historical background and contextualisation to our study. This study, therefore, draws on the richness and relevance of both academic works as well as "perspectives from within and below" on peasant protest and rural elite strategies in Asia.

Based on the involvement with the peasantry, the perspective of this study outlined above is seen as both important in terms of documenting the history of peasant protest from a standpoint that is rooted in the perceptions and cultures of the actors themselves, as well as attempting a comparative analysis across local and national situations to identify broader trends and potentials in the process of evolution and change in Asian rural societies.

This conviction has emerged from many years of close contact and involvement with peasant organisations and movements in some countries of Asia - particularly, India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka which constitute the main case-studies of this thesis. My first involvement with peasant movements began in India in the late 1960s when, as students, we developed close contact with the peasantry through "exposure programmes - where we went down to the villages" and participated in "work camps" with peasants in the fields.[37] This experience not only gave us a good "first-hand" knowledge and experience of the lifestyle and plight of the poor Indian peasantry, but also gradually began to politicize us as students with the

problems, issues and concerns of the peasants vis-a-vis the rural elites (e.g., landlords, rich peasants, money lenders, traders) and the Indian state.

The 1960s and early 1970s in India was also a period of intense radicalization of the social sectors - primarily the peasantry - which were greatly influenced by the Chinese peasant revolution and successes of peasant-led revolutions in other parts of Asia. Although there was a strong tendency to "import models" of peasant revolutions into India - especially by the Indian communist parties, the process, however, resulted in the formation and growth of radical peasant associations and coordinated struggles in the Indian countryside.

As students, we were exposed to this reality and were drawn into becoming allies of the peasantry in their concrete struggles to alleviate their situation through radical social transformation of the Indian society. In this involvement over a period of about ten years, we began to closely study the nature, scope and impact of peasant protest and to assess our own perceptions, attitudes towards the potentials of the peasantry with those of the "actors" themselves. This was indeed a learning experience which broke down many inherent misconceptions and biases on the peasantry and peasant protest.

The more experience we accumulated through direct contact and alliance-building with peasant movements in various parts of India, and consequently the lessons we learnt from the peasantry themselves, the more we became convinced that the role of the "external agents" (like ourselves) in interpreting and studying the nature of peasant protest should be one that adopts a sympathetic "view from within and below". This implies testing theories and concepts in concrete history and life-experiences of the actors themselves.

In other words, to find a mediation between "theory" and "practice", "analysis" and "experience", "knowledge" and "reality". It is only in this manner that "external agents" can usefully serve the interests of the peasantry and produce knowledge that can be used in supporting and enhancing the genuine interests of the rural poor and peasant movements.[38]

The severe crisis emerging from political rivalries and the ensuing ideological splits that confronted the radical peasant movements in India and other Asian countries in the early and mid-1970s and their dramatic collapse under the repression by the State and landlord classes, brought to the fore many fundamental questions that were vital to be addressed and resolved. In our involvement with the Indian peasantry we attempted to grapple with some of these crucial questions, which can be summarised as follows :

(a) In many countries of Asia (including and especially in India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines) the history of peasant protest has been replete with ideological conflicts within the leadership and/or between the "party leadership" and the "peasant mass base". What were the causes for such internal political rivalries and splits within the leadership of peasant movements (including the Communist Parties that led many peasant revolts)?

(b) In the analysis of peasant protest in Asia one often notes a serious disparity between the "ideological leadership" (especially of the political party) and the "peasant

consciousness" at the grassroots level. Hence, it is important to pose the question as to what extent were the participating peasantry really convinced of the ideology of the party and the leadership of the peasant struggles ?

(c) Since independence, most Asian governments have evolved various "Rural Development" policies and programmes to appease the peasantry and to curb radical peasant protest. In what manner did these strategies and counter-forces of rural elites and the State contribute towards the collapse of peasant movements ?

(d) As we will see below, there has also been a strong tendency among communist parties with peasant support in some Asian countries to import models of peasant revolutions from other neighboring countries. In particular, how far did the "model of peasant revolution" in China and Vietnam really apply to other Asian societies in the 1960s and 1970s ?

(e) The Asian scenario of peasant protest in the post-independence period is characterised by two distinct features : countries in which there are consolidated national-level peasant movements (e.g., the Philippines, Korea); and others in which peasant movements are largely localised and divided if not disintegrated altogether (e.g., Thailand, Sri Lanka, India). What lessons can be learnt from the history of peasant struggles in these Asian countries and to what extent are they comparable to each other ?

(f) The fact that for the foreseeable future most Asian societies will remain predominantly agricultural-based and consequently conflicts in the Asian countryside will intensify, it is important to enquire into the potentials of future peasant protest. What is the future of "peasant movements" and "agrarian revolts" in India and Asia ? To what extent can peasant struggles constitute the backbone of an organised process of social transformation of predominantly agrarian societies in Asia ?

Between 1983-1986 I had another opportunity of involvement with peasants in the sugar-belt of Maharashtra state in Western India wherein I joined a team of researchers and social workers working in Puntamba village in Ahmedanagar district. Our objective was to gather first-hand knowledge and experience of the life and working conditions of poor sugar workers in around ten villages in that area. We conducted an informal research survey among sugar worker's families in these villages in order to identify their real needs and their potentials for building up rural organisations of sugar workers and migrant sugar labourers. Our "entry-point" into these villages was our enthusiasm to share the lives of the poor farmers and to assist through community development programmes and basic literacy classes.

This experience was similar to that cited by Gerrit Huizer in the Latin American context, where he successfully utilised the approach of "view from within and below" to understand and interpret peasant protest. As Huizer noted : "Villagers often (and with considerable justification) passively reject an outsider, but once he has proven himself to be trustworthy, he may be even more highly respected because of his non-peasant background and dedication to the peasant cause (while - as peasants believe - he could have had an easy life in town)." [39]

This opportunity provided the valuable direct experience and exposure to the power and politics of the rural elites - in this case, the landlords and owners of sugar estates and sugar factories. In that experience we learnt the complex network of intertwining relations between the power elite, police and security forces and the rural rich. We also experienced the role of political parties and rural workers' organisations which were competing with each other to win over the massive electoral base of sugar workers in Maharastra State. From this experience new questions arose in my mind, especially, on the nature and role of the rural elite and their impact on the rural poor and on peasant protest.

My eagerness to grapple with these questions and in the process attempt to re-read the history of peasant movements in India led to study similar experiences in other Asian countries. Between 1979-1982 and 1986-1988, I worked at the Asian level, firstly, with an International/Asian students movement, and later with a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) on a Documentation and Research programme monitoring "Agribusiness Transnational Corporate Activity in Asian countries". This enabled me to visit and conduct research among the peasantry in other Asian countries - particularly Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Thailand. During this period I had the opportunity to be directly involved with the All Lanka Peasant Congress (ALPC) and peasant leaders in Sri Lanka when they launched two major struggles, and also with peasant organisations in the Philippines. In this study I have attempted to exhaustively document and study the case of peasant protest in Sri Lanka based on this active and direct involvement, and my own desire to dialogue and learn from the Sri Lankan peasants given my other experiences with peasant movements in India, Thailand and the Philippines.

In this way I began to comprehend the nature of peasant movements in these countries during the same period as my own experience in India and started to take a closer look at the process of growth, consolidation, success and/or collapse of peasant movements in these countries during the post-independence (1940s onwards) period. Whenever the opportunity provided, I interacted with peasants and leaders of peasant struggles, listening to their histories and life-stories and assessing their concrete struggles to transform society. This involvement resulted in interaction both with academics and intellectuals as well as peasant activists and leaders. The more I began to learn about the history of peasant movements in other Asian countries, the more it made me aware of a "common pattern" in the nature of peasant movements in Asian countries. There seemed to prevail many common causes of peasant successes and failures in their struggle against local (e.g., landlord or state) as well as international actors (e.g., transnational corporations, foreign multi-lateral institutions, governments). This "common pattern" was confined not only to the history of the peasant movements in our countries but also to the strategy ("counter-forces") of rural elites and international actors vis-a-vis radical peasant protest.

Having documented the history of peasant movements in these countries during a period of over five years, I began to rewrite the history of peasant protest (in Thailand, the Philippines, India and Sri Lanka) in a popular fashion in an attempt to address the questions posed above.[40] These two major works, and other research studies and publications since then have attempted to address the questions foremost in my mind and experiences with peasant movements in India and other Asian countries.

In the course of the above-mentioned research work, I had moved from a perspective of orthodox rural sociology studying "peasant movements" in terms of leadership, mass base, impact, goals/objectives, internal and external causes for success and/or failure; to a perspective that consciously refrained from beginning an enquiry with a set of predetermined hypothesis or questions or a model or framework. Rather my enquiry began by listening, interpreting and reflecting the concrete history and life-experiences of the actors in peasant movements from a distinct "view from within and below" perspective. My "macro-framework" of study was a collage of "micro-frameworks" which existed among the peasants and emerged from the many years of involvement with peasant movements and confronting rural elite strategies in Asian societies.

My "frame of reference" in this study is based on the experience that a genuine "view from within and below" perspective in the study of peasant protest in Asia must combine academic/intellectual studies on peasant movements with concrete life-histories of the actors themselves. This study, therefore, attempts to present history as experienced through my involvement with peasants and peasant movements. Wherever possible, I have also attempted to study "ongoing movements" especially in the three Asian countries we have chosen as "case studies". As Ghanshyam Shah notes : "The study of ongoing movements provides greater insight into the course of the movements."[41]

1.4 Outline of the Study

Chapter 1 discusses the perspective of "a view from within and below" which is utilised in this study to review the ideological roots of peasant protest in Asia (India, The Philippines and particularly Sri Lanka), the impact of State policy and power elite strategies to counter peasant protest, the role of national and international forces to coopt the peasant movements and the politics of rural elite vis-a-vis the radical peasantry and peasant movements. This chapter explains the roots of peasant consciousness which is influenced not only by "external forces" (e.g., elites, state, political parties), but fundamentally by "internal forces", i.e., the cultural norms, values and praxis of rural society, and the peasant's way of life. Although peasant movements in Asian societies have been largely inspired by communist parties, this chapter explains that the Marxist ideological orientation of these parties have been more influenced by the Chinese Revolution and Mao Tse-Tung Thought, rather than from conventional Western Marxism. In looking at the influence of Mao Tse-Tung in China and Mahatma Gandhi in India, this chapter suggests that Gandhi is no longer seen as relevant in the Indian context, whereas the ideas of Mao Tse Tung and the Chinese peasant revolution continues to influence and determine the nature of peasant protest in some Asian countries.

Chapter 2 reviews the agrarian context in Asia. Many Asian governments have attempted to address the problem of land ownership and control through Agrarian Policies and Land Reform programmes. This chapter reviews the socio-economic and political context of Land Reforms introduced in Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, and identifies the political and ideological basis of these reforms with specific attention to US policy in the Asian countryside. It is suggested that the ideological basis of these reforms were centred on neutralising radical

peasant protest and the spreading communist influence - especially with the victory of the Chinese peasant revolution and its impact on anti-colonial struggles and rising nationalism in other Asian countries. Against this background, the next three chapters discuss the three main cases of peasant movements and rural elite strategies in India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

Chapter 3 reviews the long history of peasant struggles in India during the colonial period and after independence. This includes a discussion of the All India Kisan Sabha during the peak of Indian nationalism against British rule, the salient peasant struggles in the post-independence period - peasant struggles under Communist Party leadership - the Tebhaga struggle (1946-1947) and the Telangana Uprisings (1946-1951), the Maoist agrarian resistance - the Naxalite movement (1967-1971), and contemporary Maoist peasant struggles. This chapter also discusses the emergence of "farmers' agitations" led by the rich peasantry in recent Indian history, and situates them in the context of the post-Green Revolution period and outlines its potential threat to the growth of radical peasant movements in the Indian countryside.

Chapter 4 reviews the history of peasant struggles in the Philippines. The Huk Rebellion (1942-1945) against Japanese imperialism during World War II and the US and Philippine government policies to curtail the growth of this radical peasant movement and coopt its leadership is elaborated upon. This chapter also assesses the Agrarian Reform programmes (e.g., Masagana 99, Samahang Nayon, Corporate Farming Program) of the Marcos government and the repression carried out on the radical peasantry organised under the Communist Party of the Philippines and its New People's Army by this regime. The agrarian policies of the Aquino government are also discussed with special attention to the "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme" and the intense controversy between government agrarian policy and radical peasant organisations in the Philippines. In this context, this chapter highlights the contemporary stage of peasant struggle under the leadership of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas - National Peasant Movement of the Philippines.

Following the study of peasant movements in India and the Philippines, special attention has been paid in Chapter 5 to peasant protest in Sri Lanka. Studies on peasant protest in Sri Lanka have been rather limited until today, and hence it has been found necessary to document more exhaustively in this chapter the evolution of peasant protest and rural elite strategies in Sri Lanka. This chapter reviews the salient British policies in traditional Ceylon and the numerous cases of peasant uprisings documented during this period. The chapter then critically assesses the agrarian policies of successive Sri Lanka governments after independence - the Green Revolution and Peasant Colonisation (1948-1971), Land Reform and Nationalisation (1972 - 1977), Open Economy Policy (1977-1985), and the Mahaweli Development Scheme, the Ceylon Tobacco Company and the Sugar Transnational Corporations in the Agricultural Promotion Zones in Sri Lanka. Against this background, this chapter focuses on the key role of the All Lanka Peasant Congress and reviews the two main struggles launched by this national peasant movement in recent years, viz., the Water Tax struggle and the Monaragela struggle against Sugar TNCs. These two cases have been studied and documented by the author through personal involvement with the ALPC and the peasant leaders and activists during the period 1985-1987. In the concluding Chapter 6, we discuss the problematic of peasant protest and rural elite strategies in Asia today, drawing on the main conclusions from the three case studies.

CHAPTER 2

THE AGRARIAN CONTEXT IN ASIA

2.1 The Politics of Land and U.S. Policy in the Asian Countryside

> "Land is at the heart of agrarian conflict and reform and is the pivot of power. More precisely, the problem is one of human and social relations in respect to control and use of land and access to accruing benefits. The land system is a network of these relations in institutionalised form. Land becomes the pivot of power because people depend on it for their vital needs : the greater the dependence, the more strategic becomes control of land and the more power it confers. Monopoly control of land may lead to monopoly control of power over people."[1]

Asia is predominantly an agricultural region[2] with the large majority of its population directly working on or deriving their livelihood from land. It is this fundamental characteristic of the Asian region that makes land central to our understanding of the dynamics of this region's development in the past and its prospects for the future. More precisely, to understand the nature of people's relation to land and the larger socio-economic and political factors that determines its control and usage, provides us the basis to interpret the respective history of development of these societies and distinguish the internal and external political and economic forces that shape this history. To quote Christodoulou :

> "As rural societies are predominantly agrarian and thus dependent on land, control of land is the strongest force in shaping their economic, social and political structure. To understand the nature and dynamics of these societies it is therefore essential to examine them in relation to the land."[3]

Both during the period of colonialism and more particularly after independence, Asian societies have attempted to address the central issue of land ownership and control through land reform. This has been on the political agenda of governments in power, which has both ensured their legitimacy as well as determined their power. Many Asian governments derive their political and economic power from the landed elites and rural rich - who also provide the main power base in the predominantly rural sector where the majority of the population - and hence the electorate - lives. While addressing these issues, Asian governments have been strongly influenced by external factors - foreign governments that have exercised direct control in determining the respective national economic policies of Asian countries; so also powerful international institutions that have financed and provided support to national agrarian reforms and rural reconstruction and development programmes.

However, an important determining factor that has pressurised Asian governments to address the land question and agrarian reform has been not only the huge disparities in class stratification in the Asian countryside, but also the consequent intensification of agrarian conflicts and radical peasant protest movements. Peasant protest in Asian countries has a long history going back to the early period of colonial rule. Among the salient questions addressed by the radical peasant movements in Asia have been the inequality in the ownership and control of land, terms of rent and tenancy, agricultural workers' wages, government subsidy for agricultural production and repression by landlords and political forces of radical peasant protest.

The increasing radicalisation of the peasant movements in Asia, especially during the period 1940-1970s, initially during the independence struggles against colonial rule later consolidating with the influence of Marxist and Maoist ideology and political praxis, set the stage for an intensive confrontation between the peasantry and the State in many Asian countries on the issue of Land Reform. The spreading Communist influence on peasant associations and especially among the peasant leaders threatened the prevailing "top-down" structure of power of the ruling elites and local and foreign interests that supported them. As Christodoulou notes, Agrarian Reform has always been a highly political issue as it touches the central political questions of land ownership and control :

> "Agrarian Reform is a drastic, planned public intervention aimed at bringing about a new structure of access to land more adequate to the requirements of the socio-economic and political system for which it serves as support or with which it is closely linked. Thus agrarian reform inescapably involves the whole network of power relations and brings into play a vast range of forces."[4]

The United States has for long direct interests in the politics and development of the countries of the Asian region. The chief objective of this interest has been, among others, to ascertain that "developing nations evolve in a way that affords a congenial world environment...that strategic areas and the manpower and natural resources of developing nations do not fall under communist control...that the resources and markets of the less developed world remain available to us (USA) and to other Free World countries."[5] To realise these objectives, US foreign policy has been based on the assumption that "the United States retains the right and obligation to intervene in the Third World in any way it ultimately deems necessary, including militarily".[6]

Since the Chinese revolution of 1949, US foreign policy had direct interests particularly in those countries in the Asian region (e.g., Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand) which it considered as open to communist threat and the presence of radical peasant rebellions. This was based on the assumption that the victory of Communists in China, if left unchecked, could be exported to neighboring Asian countries. The US fear was based on its contention that the only remedy to offset the expansion of Chinese communist influence in other parts of Asia, was to provide the logistic and economic basis to fight the communist ideology.

The policy described above, therefore, included providing of military, technical and financial assistance to the local governments in these countries to undertake fundamental Land Reform programmes. This policy was particularly in practice in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and the Philippines, which we will discuss later. At the same time, US policy also entailed providing the necessary assistance to promote "counter-insurgency" programmes to fight local dissent, including radical peasant organisations and peasant movements. The fear of US policy vis-a-vis the Asian region, is well summarised in a confession of an ex-CIA agent as follows :

> "Historically, every great Chinese dynasty that developed sufficient military capabilities took a turn at trying to conquer mainland Southeast Asia. Taking these past trends into consideration made it seem inevitable that the newly emerged power in Asia, Red China, having proved its military prowess in Korea, would want to make history repeat itself."[7]

It is interesting to view the American perception of China in the aftermath of the 1949 communist victory, and how much that directly influenced American policy towards the region. It was this narrow perception that provided the basis for the framing of US foreign policy towards China and the rest of Asia. The Former Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) between 1969-1973, Mr Ray S Cline, characterised China and outlined the goals of American policy towards Asia in the following words :"China is a politically oppressive one-party dictatorship governing one billion desperately poor Asian people with too few resources to raise standards of living much or easily in the next few decades....The goal of US foreign policy ought to be an energetic, reinvigorated cooperation among the Asian states whose political ideology, economic health, and strategic security are in accord with US interests."[8]

In the above scenario of US foreign policy in Asia, the Philippines was the strategic centre-piece of US hegemony in the Asian region. In 1951, Assistant Secretary of State, Dean Rusk is quoted as saying : "Should it (the Philippines) fall out of the "American orbit" it would, more than any other single factor discredit the United States throughout the length and breadth of Asia ... it is vital that we hold the Philippines whatever the cost - unless we are prepared to write off Asia."[9] In reviewing the agrarian situation and peasant movements in the Philippines in the sections below, we shall see how US policy decisively determined the course of history of the Filipino people, from colonial times to the present.

It is important to review the history of Agrarian Reform and peasant protest in the countries of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea as these countries were the first in the Asian region to implement drastic Land Reform programmes under the direction and massive financial and technical assistance of the USA. This post-World War II phenomenon in these countries is often seen as "success stories" of Agrarian/Land Reform in Asia, but a closer examination reveals a scenario that is marked by intense political interests of "counter-insurgency" of US foreign policy in this region and a programme whose chief objective was to curtail the possible growth of radical peasant movements and to open up the internal market for US imports and dumping of agricultural surplus.

2.2 Japan : Top-Down Land Reform to Eliminate Fascism and Liquidate Radical Peasant Protest

Agriculture had provided the means of livelihood for the majority in Japan for a long period in its history From the Meiji Era (1868 1912) to World War II, agriculture involved over 5 5 million households or 13 7 million people in Japan [10] Rice remained the primary crop for the Japanese farmers until the mid-1970s Paddy fields occupied more than half of the entire arable land, and rice accounted for more than half of the total value of agricultural production. Naturally, rice culture forms the core of Japanese agriculture and holds unchallenged importance [11] Land Reform was a post-war phenomenon in Japan In the 1930s and 1940s the farmers movements were gaining strength demanding "Land-to-the Tiller" which threatened the traditional power of the landlords To eliminate increasing class tensions between the peasants and the landowners, the American Occupation Forces deployed in Japan after the War urged the Japanese government to implement radical Land Reforms

Japan had experienced a long history of peasant rebellion Between 1600 and the end of the Togugawa period in 1868, over 3,000 peasant riots are reported to have occurred during periods of famine [12]The first national level peasant organisation, the "Japanese Peasant Union - *Nichino*" was inaugurated on April 9, 1922 in Kobe, then comprising of only about 253 peasants who were members and about 15 local chapters At the Second Convention of *Nichino* in February 20, 1923 the strength had grown to about 300 affiliated chapters and about 10,000 members [13]

In the ensuing years, *Nichino* developed into a strong peasant organisation based on its chief aims of reducing rents and ensuring legislative protection for tenants Increasingly, *Nichino* also played a political role in initiating the formation of a Workers and Peasants Party in Japan *Nichino* also played an instrumental role in fighting court cases to defend tenant's interests against landlords who tried to evict them With landlords becomes more conscious of the emerging strength of the *Nichino* and consequently opposing tenants from joining the union, as well as the fact that the court rulings were often in landlords' favour and hence detrimental to the peasants' interests, the *Nichino* became more and more aware of the need for radical action at the national level to defend its interests

The government, alarmed at this escalating radicalisation of the *Nichino*, clamped down in a wave of arrests of *Nichino* leaders - which has come to be known as the *"3-15 event"* (March 15, 1928) This crippled the *Nichino* as most of its top leaders were imprisoned, many of them remaining in prison until World War II The subsequent split in the *Nichino* led to the formation of the "National Peasants Union" *(Zenno)* on May 27, 1928 However, in another wave of repression in 1929 both the remnants of Nichino and the newly-formed *Zenno* were eliminated With this sudden collapse of the peasant movement in Japan, farmers were left to carry out individual actions at local levels which had limited impact and remained largely ineffective. As Huizer noted .

> "The peasant unions as national and prefectural organisations were also affected. At the local level, tenant action against landlords for more favorable conditions

continued, but at the national level the emphasis was laid more strongly on the demand for a greater share in the distribution of the national income for agriculture as a whole, for landowners as well as tenants."[14]

In the aftermath of the collapse of the peasant movement, the Japanese government sought to de-politicize the peasantry. In the 1930s, efforts were made by the government to harmonize the interests of landlords and tenants through village self-help movements such as the "Village Rehabilitation Movement" of 1932. Under this program, the government promoted the formation of Agricultural Cooperatives to bring together landlords and tenants to serve the interests of national policies. These cooperatives were dominated by the affluent landowners and the government allied with them to ensure the pacification of the radical peasantry and to ensure maximising of the productive capacity of the rural population to serve national economic goals. It was precisely this scenario of rural Japan that "prepared the way before and during World War II for the land reform finally carried out in 1946."[15]

However, in February 1946, with the re-organisation of some left-wing political parties, the Japanese Peasant Union (*Nichino*) was re-formed. The issues thrown up by the Land Reform programme stimulated the peasants with the support of the socialists, social-democrats and communists to re-organise the national peasant movement to ensure that the Land Reform benefited the tenants and poor farmers. The *Nichino* now began to play a crucial role within the Agricultural Land Committees which were set up under the Land Reform programme. Later, amidst stern opposition from landlord interests and government officials, the *Nichino* struggled hard to defend the tenant's interests within these committees at the local levels. However, the tenants were outnumbered by the overwhelming dominance of landowners within the Agricultural Land Committees. "In the country as a whole, 24.8% of the chairmen of Agricultural Land Committees were tenants, 39.1% were landlords and 34.5% owner-farmers, the rest being independent outsiders."[16]

It is against this background that we need to situate the Land Reform Programme in Japan. The salient reasons for Land Reform in Japan during this period included the following :

(a) The feudal system in Japan - dominated by the powerful landowning class - provided the social base for Japanese authoritarianism . Hence, it was necessary to eliminate this social base in order to democratize society.

(b) The US also feared that with the radicalisation of the farmers movement, Japan would be pushed to a socialist path of development. It was in the immediate interest of the US to prevent Japan from becoming socialist.[17]

The Land Reform programme affected over 6 million farmers who were granted an average of 1 ha. of land which created a massive base of small owner-cultivators.[18] Aside from this impressive redistribution of land to cultivators, the government also ensured that collective control over land was prohibited and cooperative efforts of farmers was strictly controlled by the State.

On completion of this Land Reform programme, the government signed a "Mutual Security Act" with the United States in the early 1950s which, among others, provided for food aid through the dumping of US agricultural surpluses on Japan. Under this agreement, tons of wheat and milk were imported into Japan. The consequent effect of this was the drastic reduction in Japanese wheat production and the sudden introduction of bread and milk on the market. In 1946, the Japanese government passed a Law to provide free lunch to school children to improve their health - US bread and milk was introduced to the children, thereby changing their food habits. [19]

In 1960, a policy legislation was passed to modernise agriculture in Japan. This policy proposed to create independent farmers engaged in large-scale mechanised production and thereby eliminating inefficient and non-competitive farmers. Thus, there was a sharp increase in the use of "power-tillers" - between 1955-1959 the use of power-tillers increased from 89,000 to 514,000. By 1961 their use had reached 1 million and by 1965, 2.5 million power-tillers were in use.[20] Displaced farmers migrated to the cities to join the expanding industrial labour force. Modernisation of Japanese agriculture included, among others, the massive use of chemical fertilizers which gradually replaced organic fertilizers.

The above factors brought about drastic changes in the demographic composition of the Japanese rural society, as well as resulted in an overwhelming dependence of Japan's consumption patterns on foreign - particularly US - aid. For example, in 1960, the Japanese farming population was 10 million. By 1987, it was down to just 4.4 million. In 1960, Japan could meet 82% of its consumption of grain. Now, it can only meet 32% of its needs in grain.[21] The government has allowed free imports of food products into the Japanese market in exchange for its industrial exports.

Thus, the Japanese market was flooded with imports of the same vegetables and fruits that the Japanese farmers produced. Many Japanese farmers were thus forced to find other sources of income besides farming. "It has been said that Japanese farmers are overproducing, but this is true only because foreign food traders are given first priority. The amount of food to be imported is decided first, considering trade balances, then the levels of domestic food production is set."[22]

There are three distinct features of the "Japanese model" which can be said to have contributed towards the success of its agricultural development :

(a) agricultural output increased within the framework of the existing small-scale farming system;

(b) the bulk of the nation's farmers were involved in increases in agricultural productivity - through adoption of technical innovations or new inputs; and

(c) agricultural and industrial development went forward together in a process of "concurrent growth".[23]

2.3 Taiwan : U.S. -managed Land Reform against the Communist Threat

Japanese occupation of Taiwan between 1894 and 1945 did not result in the taking-over of direct control of land and agricultural production by the Japanese colonisers. In Taiwan, the Japanese chose not to intervene directly in agriculture and found it expedient to leave much of the rural social structure intact, insofar as it provided the necessary surplus to feed the Japanese people. Under the slogan "Agricultural Taiwan, Industrial Japan", the colonisers sought to expand agriculture and introduce export-production.

However, Japanese investment played a decisive role in introducing capital into Taiwanese agriculture during this early period of colonization. This witnessed the spread of irrigation and farm machinery to the cultivating peasants and also the introduction of new seeds. Thus, Japan took over 85% of Taiwan's exports between 1911 and 1940 and supplied over 74% of its imports, mainly, fertilisers, machinery, manufacture and fishery products.

After the Second World War and the defeat of Japan, the impetus in Agrarian Reform and Rural Development came from the United States and its aid agencies. In Taiwan, the Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR), with both American and Chinese members, advised on and monitored the radical programme of Land Reform during the period 1949-1953. The JCRR was created on October 1, 1948 after considerable lobbying at the US Congress chiefly by Dr Y C James Yen. Its formation was sanctioned given the danger of communist-takeover in China and the JCRR was empowered to utilise massive funds available for rural reconstruction programmes under the US Law 472 which dealt with US economic aid to China.

In 1949, the JCRR Headquarters was moved from Nanking to Taiwan, with a team of 36 staff members.[24] Moreover, in 1948, Taiwan signed a Bilateral Agreement with the USA which stipulated that the government should promote agricultural and industrial production and ensure economic stability. In collaboration with the JCRR, the USAID (US Agency for International Development) played an unprecedented role by laying the basis for Taiwan's industrial and agricultural development.

Land Reforms were introduced between 1949 and 1953 with the main purpose to simplify the ownership system by eliminating sub-tenancy and absentee landlordism. The objective was to encourage production for the market, to force the peasants to look beyond his family and village needs and to raise productivity. Land Reforms involved three distinct phases : (i) rent reduction, (ii) sale of public land confiscated from the Japanese,and (iii) land-to-the tiller programme.[25] In this manner, over 1/4 of Taiwan's private farmlands changed hands - families owning all or part of the land they tilled rose from 61% to 88% of all families; tenant farmers plummeted from 39% to 12% of all families during this period.[26]

In Taiwan, land reform was a product of the populist streak in Chinese nationalism as their defeat in mainland China was attributed to the inequality of land ownership and partly because they themselves were not tied to the land. "Learning from the bitter experience of mainland China, the KMT sought to use land reform to blunt the appeal of Communism among

the peasantry, as well as eliminate the Taiwanese landlord class as a competing elite." [27] The three-stage Land Reform Programme of 1949-1953 began by substantially reducing rents and giving tenants greater security. In 1952, the government sold off all the public lands to the landless farmers. The final stage required private owners to sell to the government all holdings above three hectares in exchange for government bonds and shares in state enterprises. The government then sold off these lands to tenants.

Thus, while in 1952 owner-cultivators comprised 38% of the rural population, by 1965 they had increased to 67%. Here, it is important to note that after the Land Reform Programme investments in land were not profitable, and this witnessed the shift of entrepreneurship to industry and commerce. The decisive factors that contributed to the success of the Land Reform programme in Taiwan were clearly spelt out by the former chairman of the JCRR, Dr Monlin Chiang, in the following words - as quoted by an authority on Land Reform in Taiwan :

> "He reminded me of the circumstances under which the land reform was initiated in Taiwan. It was during the difficult period in 1949 when the crossing of the Taiwan Straits by the mainland Communists were thought imminent. Second, he gave credit to such groundworks as the cadastral system and household registration, etc. which were laid during the years that the island was under the control of Japan...Third, he thanked the United States for the financial support and provision of experts on agricultural technology and production know-how...but he was understandably too modest to mention the role played by him and JCRR as catalytic agents in harnessing these factors into a winning combination."[28]

As noted above, US aid played a key role in the industrial and agrarian development of Taiwan. Between 1951 to 1965, US aid to Taiwan contributed 34% of total gross investment. More than a third of the total allocation to specific sectors (i.e., US $ 1.1 billion) went to infrastructure and human resources and agriculture received about quarter of each, leaving 15% for industry. The bulk of investment in Taiwan's infrastructure in the period was funded by the US aid (over 74%) and more than half of agricultural investment came from the same source (59%). Thus, the importation of foreign capital and goods (mainly from the US) and their deployment in infrastructure and agriculture played a decisive role in private capital accumulation and laid the basis for Taiwan's rapid industrialisation. [29]

The tightening of control over agriculture and the economic pressures experienced by the farming population resulted in migration to the cities and the urban centres. Between 1950 and 1965, over one million farming people migrated to the cities, and another 860,000 between 1965 and 1982. Those migrating were mainly youth, leaving behind an agrarian population of mostly ageing farmers; of those left behind, over 58% were over 30 years old, and nearly 50% were women farmers earning only 60% of what their male counterparts would earn.[30]

In Taiwan, currently the rural sector is declining, although it is heavily subsidised by the State. Increasing pressure from imports as well as the predominant urban and industrial bias of government policy, has rendered farming a less lucrative occupation. Many farmers work only part-time at farming, working off the land to augment incomes. The farming population which is

now about 16% of total Taiwanese population, is expected to drop to 9% by the year 2000, according to estimates provided by the Council for Economic Planning and Development.[31]

American strategy to completely dominate the agricultural economy of Taiwan rested on the aid programme of PL (Public Law) 480 in the 1950s. Under this programme, more than US$ 281 million worth of wheat and flour imports and $125 million worth of soybeans were unloaded on Taiwan during the period 1951-1968. Today, Taiwan is heavily dependent on the USA for its agricultural needs - nearly 85-95% of wheat imports, 95% of high-quality beef, and 56% of wine, are imported from the USA. Overall, USA accounts for over 40% of Taiwan's agricultural imports. [32]

In Taiwan's rural society today, two key institutions symbolise the tight governmental control over the rural populace : the police and the so-called "farmers associations". As a government official described : "the police is the most important resource person of all for community development on the island." On the other hand, the "Farmers Associations" are "much more agencies assisting the penetration of state power into the countryside, then vehicles for village-level mobilisation or participation."[33]

These Farmers' Associations, which were initially setup during Japanese occupation were later strengthened and institutionalised by the Taiwanese government with the guidance of the JCRR in the 1940s. Between 1949 and 1963, the JCRR provided grants equal to about US$ 5 million to the Farmers' Associations to assist them in providing services (e.g., agricultural extension work, farm credits or construction of warehouses) to the farmers in the countryside.[34]

From the above, it is evident that the Land Reform programme in Taiwan was possible not only because of stringent government policy to lay the base for sustained agricultural and industrial development, but one that was undoubtedly aided and supported for political and ideological reasons by the USA. Thus, "the agrarian policies in Taiwan were designed, with US assistance, to control the peasantry through certain benefits channeled through organisation from above, in order to guarantee political stability, while facing the influence of the example of radical reforms carried out in the People's Republic of China on the mainland."[35]

This severe economic and political (ideological) control over the farmers exercised by the KMT government in collaboration with the US policy has evoked strong reactions from the farmers themselves. To quote one source : "(villagers) would not be surprised if one day the Government should take the position of the landlords...Some villages even said that in effect their land belongs to the nation and farmers are just its cultivators."[36]

Generally, farmers have been considered as obstacles to the path of industrial and technocratic development that Taiwan has followed in the past decades. Indeed, "farmers were considered, at the very least, as problems, and at most, as obstacles that needed to be weeded away in the interest of development or pacified in the pursuit of political stability."[37]

Today, the rural scenario in Taiwan is one in which the importance of agriculture to the overall economy has significantly declined, resulting in the removal of the central role of the

farmer in Taiwanese history during the pre-industrial period to one of subsidising a "necessary evil". In 1964, agriculture accounted for 28% of GDP and by 1988 it had dropped to just 5-6%.[38]

The resulting pressure on the farmers from government policy, foreign aid and dumping of US agricultural surplus on Taiwan, has sparked off marked reactions from the farming population beginning in 1988 with the formation of two independent farmer's associations. This step is significant in that it symbolises the sentiments of the Taiwanese farming population to speak out against government and agricultural trade policies that are detrimental to their interests and threaten to sacrifice them for the sake of industrial growth and US political and economic hegemony over Taiwan.

2.4 South Korea : Land Reform, U.S. Food Dumping and Peasant Protest

The 20th century Japanese occupation of Korea witnessed the take-over of direct control of Korean agriculture by acquiring large tracts of land. By 1942, 80% of forest and 25% of cultivated lands was in Japanese control. Japanese exploitation of Korean agriculture was primarily intended to siphon off the agrarian surplus to fuel Japan's rapid industrial development. This caused widespread rural pauperisation in Korea : 56% of farm households were left with only 5.6% of the land and rice consumption was halved from 1912 to 1936. The traditional Korean landed aristocracy was severely weakened by Japanese occupation and land take-over.[39]

The path of rapid industrialisation adopted by South Korea after independence was closely aided by the US AMG (Army Military Government) that took over after the defeat of the Japanese in World War II. The Land Reform programme of 1949 basically aimed at making all farm lands owner-occupied and outlawing tenancy. The reforms, which set an upper limit of 3 hectares, brought about the redistribution of over 40% of the total arable land and affected the majority of rural households. By 1974, 70% of farm households were fully owner-occupied. The decisive impact of these reforms is that it severely undermined the dominance of the traditional rural landowners, and by 1950s and 1960s, they left the land to pursue more lucrative investment opportunities in Korea's rapidly-developing industries.

While agricultural productivity did increase due to the independence of the tiller: the land reform programme could not solve the problem of land fragmentation and proliferation of small and miniature farms. In 1962, miniature farms (i.e., under 0.5 hectares) comprised 51% of total farms. Moreover, this stagnation in agriculture was also accentuated by the dumping of huge shipments of grain (mostly wheat, barley and rice) from the USA under the PL 480 scheme. Between 1965 and 1985, South Korean food self-sufficiency fell from 93.9% to 48.5%.[40]

This crisis in South Korean agriculture witnessed the natural tendency of rural to urban migration. The rural population declined from 56% in 1965 to 17% in 1988, which in absolute terms, is a decline from 15.8 million to 7.8 million people. The rate of migration to the cities has been one of the highest in Asia - approaching an average of 400,000 yearly during the mid-

1980s.[41] Thus, the long-term effect of land reform had been to drive both the richest and the poorest from the villages.

The rapid industrial boom in South Korea in the 1960s left behind a stagnated agriculture, propped up by the dumping of American grains to feed the burgeoning population. In the post-war period, therefore, Korea witnessed the inflow of US $ 4.5 billion in grant aid alone from the USA, much of it in the form of commodities, that is, about one half of the South Korean government revenue came from the USA. Further, the proportion of foreign capital in total investment in South Korea increased rapidly - from 42% in 1953 to 58% in 1955, rising to a peak of 65% in 1961.[42]

South Korean agriculture is traditionally based on rice cultivation, which is the staple food of the Korean people. In 1985, about 1,237,000 ha out of a total of 1,780,000 ha was used for rice cultivation. The farming population in South Korea was about 8,521,000 (or 21.1%) out of a total population of 40,467,000 as of 1985. Two decades earlier, in 1965, over 15,812,000 (or 55.1%) were engaged in agriculture. Now just over 28% of the agricultural population is between the age of 20 and 49 years, and farmers over 60 years constitute about 14% of the rural population. Increasing migration to the cities and the industrial-bias of Korean development policy had resulted in a steady decline in the farming population over the years.[43]

Farmers' debt per household exceeds over 4 million won. Between 1975 and 1985, the farmers' income recorded 6.57 times increase while the debt increased over 61.3 times. The number of farmers indebted has also rapidly increased - from 79.2% in 1976 to 98% in 1985. [44] The government adopted the "Open Door Policy" in the agricultural sector after independence. This policy consisted of the following : (a) to encourage large scale enterprise for agricultural activities, (b) to encourage the farmers to grow extra items, like vegetables, fruits or livestock; and (c) to liberalise the import of foreign agricultural products and livestock.[45]

To sum up, the "economic success" of South Korea in agriculture is inseparable from US control and investment in that country. The rapid pace of industrialisation at the cost of a stagnating agricultural base was possible only through the "dumping" of US aid, especially food, on the Korean people. Naturally, this is the crucial link in the chain of US strategy in South Korea vis-a-vis its political and military policies in this part of Asia. [46]

One of the populist responses of the government to the serious crisis in Korean agriculture in the 1970s was the introduction of the "*Seamaul Undong*" (New Community Movement). Its aim was to mobilise the rural masses to self-reliance, by organising farmers into cooperative production teams and work brigades to repair roads, bridges and rural infrastructure. It also included "rural beautification programmes" through which a number of villages were entirely re-built. "*Seamaul*, above all, was an intense campaign of moral and ideological indoctrination meant to defuse peasant dissatisfaction after years of neglect and to mobilise the peasantry behind a central government constantly worried about its legitimacy."[47]

Farmers' agitations in South Korea had been widespread in the past two decades. These struggles have been led by national peasant associations viz., the Korean Catholic Farmers'

Movement, the Korean Christian Farmers' Federation, National Peasant Association, Catholic Womens' Farmers Association, and other independent peasant associations. In 1980s, the wave of farmers protests intensified signifying the deep crisis in Korean agriculture. Between 1980 and 1988, for example, South Korean farmers agitated demanding, among others, the following :

(a) restriction of imports of foreign products,
(b) unfair domestic prices for farm products,
(c) unreimbursed appropriation of lands,
(d) against water-taxes,
(e) lack of fair system of health insurance for farmers, and
(f) for a democratic agriculture.[48]

The 17th National General Assembly of the Korea Catholic Farmers' Movement was convened between January 27-29, 1986 on the theme : "Overcome the Monopoly, Dictatorship and Subjugation, and Realise Reunified Nation". This was followed by the National General Assembly of the Korea Christian Farmers' Federation between March 13-14, 1986. As a result of these two Assemblies, and especially based on the assessment of the situation of the peasant movement, a Joint-Statement was published signed by members of the three national peasant movements viz., the Korean Catholic Farmers' Movement, the Korea Christian Farmers' Federation and the Catholic Peasant Women's Association entitled : "The Call of Ten Million Peasants on the Present National Situation". The statement, among others, pointed out the future course of action for the Korean peasant movement :

> "The peasantry is faced with the task of consolidating the struggle to prevent the disintegration of agriculture and the peasantry and the destruction of the national economy through an indiscriminate importation of foreign agricultural and livestock produce. This struggle will expose the reality and the nature of the foreign domination of Korea by the US and Japan, and the military dictatorship."[49]

On March 1, 1989, the farmers unions banded together to form the "*Chonnongnyon*" (National Alliance of Farmers' Movements) composed of 20 free farmers societies and 80 district chapters of the Catholic Farmers' Movement and 15 groups affiliated to the Christian Farmers' Federation.[50]

The South Korean government admits it has a serious problem in agriculture on its hands. As the Assistant Minister of Trade and Industry, Kim Chul Soo, himself admitted : "The problem is political. Farmers feel they have been left out of the economic development South Korea has enjoyed in the past couple of decades."[51]

In conclusion, it is clear from the above review of US policy in Asian agriculture and the imposition of a "top-down" Land Reform programme in the countries of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea; that while initially the Land Reform programmes in these countries attempted to reduce the inequalities in land ownership, they finally ended up detrimental to the genuine grievances of the peasantry and sacrificing national food security[52] to foreign interests. The US

has clearly played a decisive role in the planning and implementation of Land Reforms in these three countries. Guided by its "National Security Doctrine" which outlined its strategic interests in aiding these countries to fight communism, the US strategy was based on winning over these governments through providing economic and technical assistance as a precondition to military protection to fight internal and external threats from communism.

Land Reform was pivotal to US foreign policy implementation in Japan, Taiwan and South Korea after World War II. This was primarily because of the severe inequalities that prevailed in the Far-East during the pre-War period and also the fear that a disgruntled - and increasingly politicized - peasantry could be easily won over by communism and hence posed a threat to local and foreign elite interests. A radical and redistributive Land Reform programme was implemented - under US guidance and help - in these countries to appease the peasantry and to lay the economic base for rapid industrialisation and foreign capital and technological investment. This was evidently an economic and political strategy of the US to counter the increasing dominance of communist China in the region, and especially on its neighboring countries viz., Japan, Taiwan, South Korea.

Land Reforms in these countries followed a general pattern of drastic redistribution of land to tillers and breaking up of large landholdings. This was backed with a huge investment in infrastructure and providing fertilisers and farm machinery to owner-cultivators to increase agricultural production. The US provided the necessary financial, logistic and military and technical assistance to undertake this programme on a massive scale in these countries.

In addition, during the post-Land Reform period these countries were subject to the dumping of US agricultural surpluses and also pressurised to introduce export-crops for the US and other Western markets. The dependence of these countries on US aid and produce became complete, and was justified through political indoctrination and military power. Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, sacrificed their national food security to US interests and were thus incorporated into the US-led world capitalist system.

In all these three countries, the peasants associations and peasant movements have prevailed for sometime and intensified their struggle in recent years. The *Nichino* in Japan the independent Farmers' Associations in Taiwan, and the *Chonnongnyon* (National Alliance of Farmers Movements) in South Korea, signify the determination of the peasants to defend their interests against both national agricultural policy and pressures from dumping of US produce. Hence, farmers in these countries have had a long experience of organisation and struggle against the State. In response, the governments of these countries - again, under the inspiration and collaboration of the US - set up "top-down" so-called "Farmers' Associations" and "Rural Development Programmes" : for example, the Village Rehabilitation Programme and the Cooperative Movement in Japan in 1932, the Farmers' Associations in Taiwan in the 1940s and the *Seamaul Undong* Movement in South Korea in the 1970s - to subjugate the peasantry and de-politicise peasant associations.

These programmes and associations not only served the economic objective of streamlining agricultural production and marketing, but were also politically-motivated in that

they contained a "counter-insurgency" element that is evident in its ideological impact over large sections of the peasantry in these countries. Under the political patronage of the local government and the heavy economic subsidy of its agricultural programmes, farmers in these countries have generally been subdued into submission.

In sum, the peasantry in Japan, Taiwan and South Korea were subdued by the State and foreign interests. Although initially "successful", the Land Reform programmes in these three countries was subsequently followed by neglect and relegation of the peasantry to the backstage of an economic development model wherein micro-chip technology and capitalist development took precedence over agriculture which remains mainly an appendage to the dominant economic system. However, the increasing pressures on land and agricultural production vis-a-vis international trade and foreign exploitation has stimulated the peasantry in these countries to stand up and organise themselves in recent years. Also, increasing debt, rural-urban migration, export-production, foreign competition and dumping of food were some of the key issues around which the farmers' in these countries have re-organised themselves in recent years.

The main political significance - which is indeed a "success story" of the Land Reform programme in these countries - was the attempt to eliminate the traditional and ideologically-backward landlord class. Consequently, this removed the traditional rural elites in these societies opening up the possibility for the emergence of new enterprising farmers who capitalised on the new incentives for export-oriented agricultural production and politically allied themselves with the new industrial and commercial classes. The peasantry too benefited from this process in that there were now free from traditional landlord exploitation, but found themselves in the hands of a more dominant rural elite who were allied to powerful local and international interests.

CHAPTER 3

INDIA

3.1 Peasant Struggles in India under British Colonialism

In India, peasant struggles during the colonial period tended to be sporadic and rather spontaneous. Exploitative British-colonial policy appropriated surplus from the traditional Indian society, through tax exactions, by introducing the landlord systems in agrarian relations, and the forced production of export crops (e.g., indigo, tobacco) at the expense of basic food crop production. In addition, the powerful control and exactions exercised by the rural elite (e.g., landlords, moneylenders, traders, businessmen and tax collectors) increased political and economic pressure on the peasantry.

Thus, the peasant struggles during this period expressed grave resentment towards both forms of economic control i.e., British colonialism and the local rural elite. However, in the consciousness of the peasantry the fundamental cause for their state of deprivation and subjugation was the alien ruler. It was for this reason that most struggles during the colonial period in India were directed against British rule. Another factor that contributed towards directing the struggles against the British, was the interests of the local rural elites, who with the coming of the British had lost their traditional control and authority in the village. These rural elites, therefore, organized the peasantry, under their leadership, in an attempt to expel the British and restore their continued authority over the peasantry.

In such instances, the peasantry expressed their loyalty to the traditional leaders by their militant participation. It was a spontaneous response on the part of the peasantry, but it was also an expression of their desire to better their situation. Although this was not to be realised by the eviction of the British and restoration of the traditional powers of landlordism. The extra-economic powers of domination over the peasantry in this pre-capitalist situation was the most important factor to explain the expression of unconditional loyalty on the part of the peasantry to the local rural elite.

Struggles against British colonialism also took another form. Particularly, among the tribals, and sections of the peasantry who were members of a dominant religious group, it took the form of "social banditry" or "millenarian movements". In this situation an individual leader, often charismatic in nature, or a religious doctrine played an important part in mobilising the peasantry in struggle. The fact that both these forms of ideological motivation of peasant consciousness had a strong influence on the peasantry resulted in these struggles taking on a very militant and violent form. These peasant struggles were localised and regionally-specific, often involving peasant classes from a particular village or geographical region. It hardly signified any organisational character of protracted struggle, rather they were spontaneous and, in some cases, suicidal in nature.

Various scholars of Indian history have documented numerous peasants struggles that took place during the colonial period. Specifically, Kathleen Gough made an important contribution by categorising those peasant struggles. In her cursory study of the peasant struggles in India, Gough documented 77 peasant revolts - the smallest of which involved several thousand peasants, about 30 revolts affecting tens of thousands, and about 12 which included several hundreds of thousand peasants.[1] Gough classified these 77 peasant revolts into the following 6 main categories :

(a) Restorative Movements : (Oudh revolts : 1778-81, Santhal tribal revolts : 1855-1856, Sepoy Mutiny : 1857-1858).

These revolts were basically "backward-looking", that is, they attempted to restore an "old order". The goals of these revolts were complete annihilation or expulsion of the British and reversion to the previous government and agrarian relations.[2]

(b) Religious Movements : (Moplah revolts : 1836-1896, Munda tribal struggles : 1890s, Bhil tribal movements : 1900-1912).

These were primarily "millenarian movements" i.e., transformative rather than reformative in their expectation of a sudden and total change. The rebels believed that the "Golden Age" would be imminent and subject to some kind of supernatural intervention.[3]

(c) Social Bandits : (Thuggee revolts : 1650-1850, Kallar tribal revolts : late 18th century to 20th century) :

These revolts were similar to the religious movements in that they too possessed religious cults, charismatic leadership and a belief in the fact that the struggles would eventually release the world from pain. These "bandits" were recruited from displaced or outcast groups and individuals - disbanded soldiers, unseated nobles, evicted peasants, unemployed artisans, outlaws of the state.

(d) Terrorist Acts with Ideas of Vengeance and Justice : (Lusahai Kukis headhunting raids : first half of 19th century)

These revolts were characterised by peasants attempting to seek vengeance for salvation. "The individual terrorist kills and risks his life for his community, in vengeance but also partly with a sense of group pride and natural justice, sometimes, with a religious belief that this is his unavoidable destiny and his road to salvation".[4]

(e) Mass Insurrections : (Moplah uprisings : 1921, Indigo uprisings : 1860, Deccan peasant revolts : 1875) :

In these revolts, peasants provided the leadership and were the sole or dominant force. All these uprisings involved tenants or small owner-cultivators and were against

economic deprivation resulting from British policies and, in most cases, also from landlord exactions. These revolts were sudden and dramatic and initially tried to redress particular grievances. The peasants started with peaceful mass boycotts, but fought back when reprisals were taken against them.

(f) Modern Peasant Uprisings : (Tebhaga movement : 1946, Telangana uprising : 1946-1948, Tanjavur peasant struggles : 1948, Maoist peasant resistances : 1967-1970) :

Most of these post-colonial peasant struggles were initiated and led by established Communist parties with a clear ideological and political programme. In general, their goal was to set up "People's Democracies" as a prelude to the transition to socialism throughout India. As Shah pointed out in a survey of literature on social movements in India, studies on Indian peasant movements have generally revolved around the following main questions : (a) who among the peasants participated in the movement ? (b) which class of peasants has the greatest potential to bring about a revolutionary or radical changes in the agrarian structure ? (c) what strategies and styles did leaders adopt in organising and mobilising peasants ? (d) what values do they evoke in them ? and (e) what modus operandi was evolved by the leaders in mobilising peasants ? [5]

In this Chapter on peasant struggles in India we shall consider the above questions in relation to concrete peasant struggles in the post-independent period of Indian history viz., the All India Kisan Sabha, the Tebhaga and Telangana struggles, the Naxalite movement and others.

3.2 The All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS)

During 1930s the Indian national movement against British rule was gaining momentum under the leadership of the Indian National Congress, which had as its main goal the expulsion of the British and the establishment of a "free and independent India". The Congress was the platform from which India's freedom struggle was launched. However, within the ranks of the Congress party there were varied perspectives of the nature of a "free and independent India". A significant section of the Leftists within the Party formed a coalition viz., the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) which turned its attention to the predominant agrarian sector, where the majority of the Indian people earned their livelihood. The hardships of the Indian peasantry were a direct result of the exploitative colonial agrarian policy coupled with landlordism and exactions from moneylenders, merchants and others. "Freedom" and "Independence" for the CSP meant bringing about radical transformation in the agrarian sector of Indian society.

It was during the National Conference of the CSP in January 1936 in Uttar Pradesh that the decision was taken to establish the *All India Kisan Sabha* (AIKS) - The All India Peasants Organisation. Swami Sahajananda Saraswati, the peasant leader from Bihar, was elected the first President of the AIKS. The AIKS laid down its chief objectives as follows :

(1) Complete freedom from economic exploitation of the peasantry and to achieve full economic and political power for the peasants, workers and all other exploited classes, through the active participation in the nationalist struggle for independence.

(2) Whereas the present system of landlord-tenant relationship is unjust and burdensome to the peasants, all such systems of landlordism should be abolished and all rights to land vested in the hands of the cultivators.

(3) The abolition of all systems of land revenue and resettlement imposed by the British government resulting in the pauperisation of the peasantry.[6]

The establishment of the AIKS was a historic step in the history of the freedom struggle in India, especially as it signified a national organisational structure for the Indian peasantry. Moreover, it projected a vision of an "independent India" that would enable the peasantry to free themselves of colonial/landlord oppression. In this vein, the perspective went far beyond the Congress-led national movement. However, the AIKS's weakness at this initial stage was its attempt to reconcile the contradictory interests of various sections/classes of the peasantry that included the rich peasants to landless labourers, and unite them on a common platform. The emphasis was on unity and on immediate demands that would appeal to all sections of the peasantry.[7] The attitude of the AIKS towards the Indian National Congress became clear by 1938 during its Third session held in Comilla (now Bangladesh):

> "The Kisan Sabha must be a separate and autonomous organisation. It is dangerous to agree that the Congress is a peasant organisation because 95 per cent of its members are peasants ... in that case it should reflect the class interests of the peasants and cease to be dominated by those who fatten on the exploitation of the peasants".[8]

The resolutions adopted during this meeting clearly challenged the Congress to take note of the daily sufferings of the peasantry, and warned that the peasants would loose their confidence in the Congress if it continued to be dominated by vested interests and upper classes.

Further, it was in 1940 that the first serious treatment of the agrarian question was taken up by the AIKS. The AIKS stated that money-lending and commercial capital was intimately connected with the existing propriety interests in the Indian countryside, and this cannot support any radical alteration in the present agrarian order ! It called for the socialist reorganisation of agriculture which would alone solve the agrarian problem in the country. "Unless the whole land system is thoroughly overhauled and reconstructed on the principle of socialism, no permanent relief can be given to the peasantry."[9]

The AIKS was clearly heading for a confrontation with the Congress Party in the course of the consolidation of the Indian national movement. The increasing influence of Marxist ideology and the Communist party (banned from 1934 to 1942 by the British colonial government) on the AIKS was marked by the latter politically differentiating itself from the mainstream of the national movement. Although the AIKS claimed to be an independent organisation of the Indian peasants, the influence of the ideology of the Communist party was quite apparent from the political resolutions of the AIKS during this time. And yet, the AIKS held that :

"despite the fact that various political trends, Communist and non-Communist, have always been at work in the AIKS, it had never identified itself with any of them. Neither has it today identified itself with the Communist party which is represented in the Kisan Sabha in prepondering numbers. The Kisan Sabha has always remained and does remain today an independent mass organisation of the peasants with an independent policy of its own and is not deflected from that policy on any account."[10]

With the AIKS gradually opting for a more radical political programme from the Congress, the militant peasant struggles during this period resulted in internal contradictions within the AIKS itself. Some sections within the AIKS, especially petty landowners and middle peasants, joined the Congress as the national movement developed. This internal crisis, together with the British repression on militant peasant struggles in the 1940s, drove the leaders of the AIKS underground.

A unique accomplishment of the AIKS was its success in uniting Hindus and Muslims within its ranks. This was particularly significant because during this period the Hindu and Muslim leaders were negotiating with the British on the status and identity of these two communities after independence. At the Seventh session of the AIKS held in Bakna Kalan, Punjab in April 1943, the AIKS passed the following resolution:

"to organise a unity campaign in the rural areas all over the country to promote unity between the Hindus and the Muslims masses, between various castes and communities, and between all patriotic sections of the towns and villages."[11]

In the AIKS women actively participated, and this fact was recognised in a resolution adopted by the AIKS in 1945 : "This time the peasant struggle is not fought by menfolk alone but women also have shown their interest, initiative and militancy. They have participated in large numbers, performed heroic deeds in beating the enemy and saving the honour of the Red Flag as well as their own."[12] The AIKS was truly an organisation of the Indian peasantry, with its leadership dominated by radical socialists of the CSP and the Communist party. Right through the history of the Indian national movement, the AIKS was stimulating its members to adopt more militant actions against British colonial rule and landlord oppression. However, the first real test case for the AIKS militancy was the "Tebhaga struggle" in Bengal in 1946. The significance of his struggle lies not only in its militancy and effectiveness, but also in that it laid the basis for a more protracted peasant uprisings in the period after independence in India.

3.3 Peasant Resistance under Communist Party Leadership

"These revolts were politically progressive in that they sought a new state of peasant society which would combine freedom from alien rule together with some traditional virtues and modern democracy and popular government, rather than merely reverting to pre-British social structures."[13]

i. The Tebhaga Peasant Struggle (1946-47)

In 1940 the Land Revenue Commission recommended that "two-thirds of the harvested crop would go to the cultivator and the remaining one-third to the owner." This recommendation was not implemented which angered the cultivators as this demand was finally accepted after many years of militant peasant struggle in Bengal. In 1943, the Great Bengal famine devastated the meager living of thousands of cultivators. While millions of poor peasants and tenant cultivators were starving to death, the class of rich landowners fed themselves on the food produced by the starving peasantry. In the aftermath of this famine, the situation was ripe for a militant peasant movement to force the implementation of the *Tebhaga* demand i.e., two-third of the share of the crop. Though this struggle was strongly supported by the Peasant Organisation (*Kisan Sabha*) of Bengal and the Communist Party, it was largely a spontaneous peasant revolt in response to the peasants not receiving their just share of the produce.

The Bengal Provincial Peasant Organisation (*Kisan Sabha*) gave the call for the Tebhaga struggle in September 1946. They popularised slogans to articulate the tebhaga demand, like : "Stack the paddy in your house", "We want Tebhaga", "Long Live the Revolution." [14]

The Tebhaga struggle first began in Dinajpur district and later spread to the region then known as East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Leaders of the Peasant Organisation went from village to village popularising the *Tebhaga* slogans and inviting the participation of the share-croppers and poor peasants.

One source describes the nature of mobilisation of the peasantry during the Tebhaga struggle as follows :

> "The cultivators response was overwhelming and spontaneous. Within a fortnight the movement spread to 22 out of the 30 police stations in the Dinajpur district...Several thousand peasant enrolled as volunteers. The peasants from one village were called upon to assist those of another, not by the beating of drums but by shouting 'Inquilab'. The carrying of lathis (sticks) was compulsory for volunteers."[15]

The police tried to repress the movement with force. With increasing repression, the Peasant Organisation was confronted with the dilemma whether or not to resist to ensure success of the peasant struggle. However, the militant peasants continued to confront police repression and forcibly retain their two-thirds share of the crop. The leadership of the *Kisan Sabha* remained divided on the question of the future of the Tebhaga struggle.

Some leaders advocated a more radical approach to further the gains of the struggle. They put forward the slogan : "Land to the Tiller". But the immediate question was how to resist police repression. If the government succeeded in crushing the movement there would certainly be great demoralisation among the peasants. As there was no clear directive in terms of tactics to resist repression, the movement was allowed to drift.

The Tebhaga movement received widespread support from poor cultivators and middle peasants. The leadership was in the hands of the Peasant Organisation and cadres of the Communist party. A survey of two villages carried out by Krishna Kant Sarkar indicates the nature of the class composition of the Tebhaga struggle : In the first village, over 65% of the peasant families were poor and those who actively participated in the struggle constituted over 89%. In the second village, over 41.7% were poor and their participation was nearly 100%.

The main reason for such active participation of the poor peasants and cultivators was the fact that the Tebhaga demand offered the sharecroppers and additional gain of one-fourth of the crop. It was found that in the first village, about 6.6% of the peasants did not join the movement because they were wage-labourers, and as such, they had no prospect of economic gain in the Tebhaga movement. Further, in the same village, about 4.45% of the poor peasants were opposed to the Tebhaga struggle as they were supporters of the Congress party, which was the main rival to the Communist party that led the Tebhaga struggle.

Among middle-farmers, 66% in the first village and 32.29% in the second village supported the Tebhaga struggle. The middle-farmers stood to gain from the Tebhaga movement as they cultivated extra lands as share-croppers. Only 5% and 29% respectively, in the first and second villages, were opposed to the Tebhaga struggle, and again, the main reason was that they belonged to the Congress party. The rich families formed 8.6% and 3.2% of the total families respectively. Of such families, only 33.3% took part in the movement from the first village. [16]

Similar figures from other villages in Bengal show that it was predominantly the poor peasants and middle peasants who provided the chief participants in the Tebhaga struggle. It was only those sections of the rich farmers who stood in conflict with the big landowners and thus stood to gain from the struggle, who supported Tebhaga.

While the Tebhaga struggle was largely a spontaneous phenomenon, the Communist Party and the Peasant Organisation played a decisive role in providing the movement with leadership. However, this leadership role was only in the later stages as the movement developed. Sarkar identified two main groups that exercised this leadership within the Tebhaga movement :

> "... the leaders who came as members of the Communist party to uphold the peasants' cause without personal interest; and those local leaders who personally suffered because of the extant socio-economic system. At the initial stages of organisation, the leaders of the first group was less effective and had little direct contribution. It was the local leadership that was most effective in the formative stages. The leaders of the first group assumed bigger role when the organisation developed."[17]

The militant Tebhaga struggle developed during the turbulent period of 1946-47 when India was on the eve of gaining independence from British rule. This was also the period marked by intense communal violence between Hindus and Muslims. The fact that the Communist Party put forward radical slogans of total structural change in India resulted in its isolation from the

political mainstream of the Indian national movement. This was seen by the Congress as a "threat to the nation's interests".

Thus, the Congress viewed the Tebhaga struggle as basically a "law and order" problem to be solved by police repression. The following is a statement from a leading Congress Member in the Bengal Assembly: "... there is not merely a general wave of unrest but of lawlessness and defiance of authority...It is a matter of great regret to the government that innocent law-abiding cultivators have fallen a prey to this agitation and have resorted to such steps as made it incumbent on our forces of law and order to use force against force."[18]

Yet, it is clear that the experiences of the Tebhaga struggle had a significant impact on the peasantry in Bengal inspite of the ruthless repression unleashed on it by the police. The struggle collapsed basically because the struggling peasantry were unable to defend themselves from intense repression. The significance of this struggle lies in the fact that it laid the basis, through its militancy and organisational abilities, for the emergence of more organised struggles in Bengal after independence. In fact, this was the first militant experience of the Bengal peasantry under the guidance and support of the Communist party. Many of the key leaders and peasant organisers of this struggle were to join the forces of the Communist party in the later peasant struggles in Bengal. According to M.A. Rasul, a key leader of the Kisan Sabha, there were a number of significant gains of the Tebhaga struggle :

> "it instilled in (the peasants) a spirit of fighting and sacrificing as well as a sense of camaraderies..it taught them that nothing could be achieved by them without organised class struggle; that agricultural workers and poor peasants including cultivators, must unite for struggle; that peasant women have an important part to play in their class struggle through which they imbibe a sense of class solidarity and self-respect; that the exploiting classes are always treacherous in a class struggle; and that the movement should be pursued further with adequate preparation and better political understanding."[19]

On the other hand, the Tebhaga movement had specific weaknesses which prevented it from providing the necessary impetus for similar struggles in other parts of India. The leadership was clearly unable to consolidate the struggle of Tebhaga and proceed further into stimulating mass peasant revolts. Another weakness was the fact that the struggle was unable to develop a volunteer force for defence of the peasants from escalating police repression and landlord attacks. The peasants could not enlist enough support from the working class and the urban middle class, which resulted in their isolation and hence succumbing to police repression.

ii. The Telangana Peasant Uprising : (1946-1951)

(a) Social background

The state of Hyderabad was ruled by the Nizam, a Muslim, from around 1720. The majority of state officials were Muslims. They also controlled law and education in the State.

While the official languages of the state were Urdu and English, the medium of instruction in schools and colleges run by the State was Urdu. The character of the State was projected as being Muslim.[20] There were three distinct linguistic regions within the state : Telangana (9 districts of Telugu-speaking people), Marathwada (5 districts of Marathi-speaking people), and Karnataka (3 Kannada-speaking districts).[21]

The agrarian systems of Hyderabad state was characterised by a feudal-type landlord system, known as the peasant proprietary system. About 60 per cent of the land in the state was under the proprietary revenue system and the remaining 40 per cent was under the direct control of the Nizam, the overlord, and his sub-lords. [22]

The *deshmuks* (landlords) exercised tremendous control in the Telangana countryside mainly due to the expansive area of land under their control. One landlord controlled more than 1,500 acres of dry land, while another had more than 1,000 acres of wet land. [23] The landlords also exercised their political authority as moneylenders, magistrates and "village officials". The people had to address these powerful landlords as "master" or "lord of the village". The notorious exactions that the landowners imposed on the peasantry in Hyderabad state was legitimised by a system of "forced labour" called the *vetti* system under which a landlord could force a family from among his customary retainers to cultivate his land and to do one job or the other - whether domestic, agricultural or official - as an obligation to the master. Most of the agricultural labourers, on whom the vetti obligations fell, were from the lower and untouchable castes.

Many of the Telangana peasantry became serfs under the forced labor system. They were under feudal bondage to the landlords, and were also bound through indebtedness to the same landowner. When the peasant died the debt was inherited by his heir. The result was generations of agricultural labourers did not receive any wages for their work. This enabled the landlords to cultivate their large holdings while paying the most minimal wages.

Two major developments in the otherwise backward region of Telangana affected the agrarian economy in the state viz., (i) the development of irrigation facilities and cultivation of commercial crops - groundnuts, tobacco, castor oil seeds - which gained increasing prominence after 1925, and (ii) the development of commercial farming did not bring about any development in industry, growth of towns, transport or communication facilities. Thus, the peasantry continued to rely on the traditional money-lenders, traders, merchants and businessmen from urban areas who exercised immense control over the market in Telangana and other districts in the state.

These developments began to affect significantly the class structure of the state, and in particular the feudal landlord system. There was gradual growth of rich-peasants who began to challenge the feudal landowners and the feudal exactions (*vetti system*) imposed on the cultivators. These new class contradictions provided the necessary impetus for the political mobilisation of the peasants against the feudal agrarian relations that prevailed in Telangana at the time.

(b) Early Political developments and Peasant mobilisation in Telangana

Hyderabad was a multilinguistic state (the main languages being *Telugu* and *Tamil*) yet Islam and the Urdu language were imposed. This resulted in the rise of communalism among other ethnic communities and language groups.

The Telugu-speaking community was perhaps the most conscious of its language and ethnic identity, and firmly opposed the imposition of Islam and Urdu in Hyderabad. Sections within the Telugu-speaking community, primarily the petit-bourgeois elite, launched the *Andhra Jana Sangham* on November 12, 1923 to preserve their language and culture. This communal organisation was set up with the following objectives : establishment of libraries, felicitation of Telugu *pandits* (i.e., wise man), development of research in Telugu language and culture, and spreading education among the people.[24] Gradually, the *Andhra Jana Sangham* developed into a social reform movement and protested against social evils such as the *vetti system, purdah,* and child marriages.

But with the steady decline of the *Andhra Jana Sangham* by 1930, the *Andhra Mahasabha* came into prominence based on the following objectives : reduced land revenue rates, abolition of the *vetti system*, introduction of Telugu in the local courts.[25] This radical shift in the objectives of the *Andhra Mahasabha* was to bring it in direct conflict with the Hyderabad state and the ruling Muslim elite.

Early communist influence in this region commenced with the establishment of the Andhra Communist party in September 1934. By 1936 regional-level peasant organisations were formed in the state which affiliated themselves to the All India Kisan Sabha. The major support for the Communists in Andhra was from the caste of *Kammas*, well-to-do peasant proprietors, who provided the party with funds and workers, in a way to express their opposition to their arch-rivals - *Brahmins* and *Reddys* - dominating the Congress.[26] When the Communist party was banned in 1940, the communists worked through "front organisations", like the *Andhra Mahasabha* and *Kisan Sabha*, which increasingly came under the influence of the communist party and ideology.

The *Andhra Mahasabha* had paid no serious attention to the feudal agrarian situation in Hyderabad until the Communist party exercised its influence over the leaders of the *Mahasabha.* Between 1940-42 the leadership of the *Andhra Mahasabha*, influenced by the Communist Party, began to deliver speeches calling for a more radical transformation of the agrarian system in Hyderabad. When the ban on the Communist party was lifted in 1942 the Communist Party began demanding radical agrarian reforms. The communist influence in the *Andhra Mahasabha* was made complete with the election of two young communists, Ravi Narayan Reddy and Badam Yella Reddy, as the President and Secretary respectively.[27] Between 1944-46 communist activities spread to Nalgonda, Jangaon, Suryapet, Huzurnagar, Bhongir and other districts in Hyderabad state. The young communists within the *Andhra Mahasabha*, guided by the Communist Party, went about mobilising the peasantry and agricultural labourers and recruiting them into the Sabha and the Communist Party.

During this period some basic Marxist literature was translated into Telugu and gained popularity among the people. The Communist Party of India (CPI) also organised "political classes" for its cadres. There were two main themes : (i) The National Movement, the International Situation, Party organisation and Marxist theory, and (ii) The Revenue system of Hyderabad, students, women and the trade union movement. The CPI cadres who participated in these classes were the ones who later played a crucial role in organising the Telangana peasant insurrection.

However, there was one main contradiction within the Communist party, which greatly influenced its strategy and perspective of struggle in Telangana. Many leading communists within the party in Telangana, as in the rest of Hyderabad state, were wealthy landowners and members of the rural elite. Thus, their class interests were clearly reflected in the Communist party's demands during the course of the struggle i.e., "in promoting a class alliance between the rich and small holders, tenant cultivators and the landless labourers against those isolated landlords and rich landholders who were either inconsiderate to their tenant-cultivators or paid poor wages to their labourers". [28]

Keeping in line with the Party's collaborationist policy with regard to the Indian National movement, the political emphasis was on a "nationalist" and therefore "multi-class" line. The contradiction in this "multi-class" approach vis-a-vis the practical strategy and tactics adopted in the course of the Telangana insurrection became clear in the ensuing years. It created further dissension within the ranks of the Communist Party and contributed towards its first major split in 1962.

(c) Peasant Insurrection in Telangana

The period of 1944-46 of Communist Party activities and political campaigns in the Telangana region contributed towards militant peasant struggles in Nalgonda, Warangal and other districts. There was a general spontaneous response from the peasantry towards these mobilisation campaigns. The salient features of the struggle during this initial period according to Dhanagare was as follows : "large masses of peasants spontaneously participated in the struggles directed against the government, landlords and their agents. The insurgents had neither firearms nor the training required to use them. A few volunteer groups had come into existence. They were not well-organised guerilla squads as such, but were rather spontaneous formations that responded to each situation. Initially, therefore, the revolt was spasmodic."[29]

With the independence of India and Pakistan the British gave the provincial states the option to either remain autonomous or join India or Pakistan. The *Nizam*, backed by his Muslim nobility, declared Hyderabad independent on August 27, 1947. This decision brought about communal conflicts between the Muslim nobility who choose independence, and the Hindu majority population, which wanted to join the Indian union.

This development brought about a tactical political alliance between the Congress and the Communist party in common opposition to the Nizam and the Muslim nobility. Although the CP

had launched a radical agrarian struggle in the Telangana countryside, it now joined forces with the nationalist movement inspired by Mahatma Gandhi. Two definite, and obviously contradictory perspectives and interests, had merged tactically into one united movement against the Nizam. Meanwhile, the fundamentalist Muslim elite i.e., the *Majlis Ittehad* mobilised a para-military force called the *Razakars* to carry out violent attacks against anti-Nizam groups. They raided and plundered the troubled villages, arrested or killed suspected and potential agitators, terrorised the innocent, and also abducted women all over Hyderabad. They were particularly vicious in Telangana, where the rural mass of peasantry was coming under the communist influence ! [30]

Sundarayya provides us a balance-sheet of the wave of repression that was unleashed on the Telangana peasantry :

> "As many as 4,000 communists and peasant militants were killed; more than 10,000 were thrown into detention camps and jails for a period of 3-4 years...A minimum of 50,000 people were dragged into police and military camps from time to time to be beaten tortured and terrorised for weeks and months at a time. Hundreds of thousands of people in thousands of villages were subjected to police and military raids and suffered cruel brutalities; the military and police looted or destroyed properties worth millions of rupees; thousands of women were molested and subjected to all sorts of humiliations and indignities".[31]

The Telangana struggle was to provide the model for militant peasant protests and the basis for future programmes of "agrarian revolution". According to Sundarayya, the following were the main achievements of the Telangana struggle :

(1) Village Governments were set up in more than 3,000 villages, with a population of about 3 million, in an area of about 16,000 square miles (Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam districts),

(2) In these villages people's committees guided the seizure of land from landlords (over 1 million acres) and redistributed it among the peasantry,

(3) All evictions were stopped and the forced labour service was abolished,

(4) Exorbitant rates of usury were either drastically cut or forbidden,

(5) Daily wages of agricultural labourers were increased and minimum wages was enforced,

(6) For a 12-18 month period the entire administration in these areas was conducted by village peasant committees, and

(7) The people organised and built a powerful militia, comprised of 10,000 village squads and about 2,000 regular guerilla squads, to defend the peasantry.

India became independent on August 15, 1947 when a "Standstill Agreement" was signed between the Indian government and the Nizam of Hyderabad. But with the escalation of the armed peasant struggle in Telangana and violent campaigns of the *Razakars* against the Hindu population, the government of India ordered its Army into Hyderabad on September 14, 1948. Politically and militarily this was a two-pronged attack:- (i) to defeat the forces of the Nizam and annex the state into the Indian union, (ii) to crush the armed resistance of the Telangana peasantry and the Communist party.

As a result of the widespread repression and arrests the Communist party was in a state of disarray. Thousands of members were arrested and many resigned from the party after being subject to cruel torture. From an original membership of thousands by the end of 1948 the party strength dwindled to hundreds. Fifty to hundred members were left in each *taluka* (district). The guerillas were not able to fight against the army in the plains and they were forced to move into forest areas for self-defence.[32]

Severely beaten by the Indian Army's "pacification campaign" in Telangana the CP formally withdrew the struggle in October, 1951. Why was this peasant resistance, which began with a spontaneous response from the peasantry and showed signs of developing into a mass peasant insurrection under CP leadership, suddenly called off by the Party leadership ? What were the objective conditions that contributed to this withdrawal and what was its impact on the future course of action of the CP and the Telangana peasantry ? We shall turn to these questions in the next section.

(d) Ideological rifts within the Communist Party

The significant shifts in the ideology and political positions of the international communist movement in the post-World War II period had a definite impact on the Communist party in India. The Indian CP was increasingly influenced by the political developments in China, where Mao Tse Tung was guiding a protracted people's war against the forces of the *Koumingtang*. The Second Congress of the CP, held in Calcutta in 1948, called for a "People's Democratic Front" : a class alliance of the working class, peasantry and the revolutionary intelligentsia, under working class leadership. Their slogan was the attainment of a democratic state of workers, peasants and the petit-bourgeoisie, through a one-stage people's democratic revolution, through violent means. [33]

During this Congress, B.T. Ranadive, General-Secretary of the Communist Party of India proclaimed : "Telengana is another big landmark in the history of the struggle under the leadership of the Party. Here we took the struggle to new qualitative heights with exemplary organisation ... Telangana today means Communists and Communists means Telangana." [34] The Andhra CP went even further to propose a 4-class strategy for the struggle in Telangana known as the "*Andhra Letters*". In short, this meant the following : feudalism and imperialism were considered the main enemy and a two-stage revolution was proposed which included alliances with a section of the (middle) bourgeoisie, the middle classes and the peasantry under the leadership of the working class for armed struggle. [35]

The Andhra letters which was a clear attempt to apply the Chinese experience and the writings of Mao Tse Tung to the Indian situation stated : -

> "Our revolution in many respects differs from the classical Russian revolution and is to a great extent similar to that of the Chinese revolution. The perspective is likely not that of general strikes and a general rising leading to the liberation of the rural areas; but the dogged resistance and prolonged civil war in the form of an agrarian revolution, culminating in the capture of political power by the democratic front."[36]

The Telangana peasant uprising was primarily an armed struggle of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers against a local system that had oppressed them for generations. However, the international tactics of the communist movement, specifically Russia's national policy and endorsed by the Communist Party of India undermined that local struggle. Its revolutionary objectives were sacrificed for parliamentary politics, its achievements, realised only for a short while, failed to live up to the aspirations of its key participants. Nevertheless, it laid the objective basis for an ideological debate within the Communist Party with regard to the nature of agrarian resistance and the role of various social classes in the process of revolutionary transformation in India.

(e) The Lessons of the Telangana peasant uprising

The Telangana peasant uprising made a significant contribution to agrarian protest in India. As Dhanagare notes : "If seizure of power and sustaining it for a considerable period of time is taken as the touchstone of success then, perhaps, no other peasant revolt or movement in India was more successful than the one in Telangana."[37] According to Pavier and Dhanagare, among the lessons of that experience that were to significantly influence the future course of peasant resistance, were the following :

(1) Telangana was the first widespread armed struggle of the Indian peasantry under the leadership of the Communist Party. The backbone of the struggle was constituted by poor peasants, tenant-cultivators and agricultural labourers. Based on a revolutionary ideology of struggle for a People's Democracy and a socialist reorganisation of agrarian relations, it attained a protracted political mobilisation of the peasantry. In the course of the struggle, the movement developed very effective strategies and tactics to counter the violence of the "landlords" and the Indian army - although only for a short time.

(2) The cultural action adopted during the struggle, especially in its formative stages, proved extremely useful and effective in mobilisation campaigns and political education. Revolutionary songs, dramas and a popular type of mobile theatre helped immensely in propagating radical ideas and motivating the peasantry to action. Later, many of these methods were to be used again in peasant revolts in Andhra and other parts of India.

(3) The Village Government (*Gram Raj*) set up in the villages of Telangana during this uprising, was a major contribution to the peasantry's first experience of exercising and controlling power in the villages. It was basically an alternative village power structure : "when the peasantry comes forward to seize land and takes up arms to defend it under the leadership of a revolutionary peasant committee, the latter becomes the embryonic organ of power."[38]

(4) The women also played a significant role in the Telangana struggle. The traditional attitude towards women's role continued to prevail, and could not be erased easily. However, a considerable number of women were active in guerrilla squads and "*gram raj*" committees - one of them even became a member of an Area Committee. But there was much controversy about their participation. Sundarayya cites one such experience : "In the course of our campaigns, our squads met many women in small groups. They narrated their sufferings and our women cadres in the squads condemned the present superstition and encouraged them to fight back against their sufferings. But instead of elaborating their sufferings that arose mainly from the social system, and the government that maintained it, there was a tendency to attribute them mainly to the menfolk. One women, after our squads exhortation, went to the extent of declaring that she would make her husband cook the food. The leadership pointed out now this approach would only lead to domestic trouble, instead of the women being drawn into the fight against the present social and political system." [39]

(5) After the *Telangana* struggle the Communist Party had many debates on agrarian protest, resistance in general, and the relevance and limitations of armed peasant struggle. This debate as well as the precise role of various stratas of the peasantry in the process of a revolutionary struggle in the agrarian sector was to plague the ideology of the Communist Party and its approach to the agrarian question. The armed struggle experience in Telangana led to future political debates which later caused dissension and polarisation.

The Tebhaga and Telangana peasant struggles have been defined as "mass peasant insurrections" or "mass peasant uprisings" by scholars because they possess both a quantitative dimension and a distinct qualitative aspect that separates them from the other forms of peasant revolts in colonial India. In these peasant struggles the masses of the peasantry not only provided the social base for the movement but also contributed significantly to the leadership. Motivated by relative economic deprivation these struggles sought to overcome the exploitative nature of British policies and local landlord exactions. Yet, these revolts lacked a clear vision of a society to be established after the expulsion of the British. They, therefore, fell an easy victim to the vested interests of the rural elite. These revolts merely brought about a class realignment in the rural society and failed to realise radical restructuring of the agrarian relations to the benefit of the peasantry.

The Tebhaga struggle in Bengal and the Telangana struggle in Hyderabad during the period 1946-51 marked an important stage in the history of peasant protest in India. Firstly, these peasant revolts received organisational leadership from the *All-India Kisan Sabha* and the Communist Party of India which enabled the struggle to be sustained over a period of time.

Ideologically this leadership brought to the peasantry a new vision of the future society and radical demands to restructure agrarian relations in the Indian countryside. Strategically, the actual methods of struggle and resistance found articulation and effectiveness under the trained and equipped leadership of the AIKS and the CP.

Secondly, these peasant revolts erupted during a period in Indian history that was marked by escalating nationalist sentiments and a developing nationalist movements led by the Congress Party. This fact provided an additional impetus for the active mobilisation of the peasantry. Further, to voice the fundamental grievances of the peasantry and seek radical changes as part of the nationalist programme for "freedom" and "independence" from British rule. These struggles therefore signified a strange mixture of "Indian nationalism" and "agrarian radicalism".

Thirdly, these two struggle under the leadership of the AIKS and the CP were to be the first organisational experience for the peasantry in a protracted and militant struggle inspired by a radical ideology. More specifically, it was the first test of Marxist ideology in the agrarian context of India. In this respect, these two struggles marked a stage of emerging political consciousness of the peasantry along radical Marxist lines and was to provide the basis for the political support from the peasantry for the Communist Party(s) in the future.

The failure of both these struggles to bring about a radical change in the agrarian situation in India was due, not only to the failure of these struggles to defeat State repression, but more important, because of ideological contradictions within the leadership and the peasantry. The strategic limitations of the multi-class approach of these movements and the fact that peasant militancy was reduced to a strategy of "individual guerrilla warfare", directly contributed to the collapse of the struggles.

Moreover, the international pressures on the Communist Party leadership to abandon "armed struggle" tactics and adopt a more compromisory and collaborationist policy towards the Indian government had a serious impact on the struggles. The CPI was told by Moscow that since Nehru's non-alligned foreign policy was a "very important development in international affairs" its "present paramount task is to build the peace movement and the broad democratic front".[40]

Inevitably therefore, the mass armed struggle during the Tebhaga and Telangana movements succumbed to "parliamentary politicking" ! The attempt to consolidate the gains of these peasant struggles and create more powerful organs of self-defence and protracted struggle, to mobilise and draw support from the labour movement, middle sectors and urban sympathisers, was clearly not on the agenda of the leadership of these struggles, especially when it reached a stage of provoking the violent repression of the State.

As Bandyopadhyay notes : "In 1946 they had no land. They had a dream. They joined the Telangana movement. Dudi Kumariah died. In 1975 they had no land. They had no dream...perhaps Dudi Kumariah died in vain."[41]

3.4 The Naxalite Movement : Maoist Agrarian Resistance (1967-71)

(a) Introduction

We have seen in the last section how the first militant peasant struggles in India under the leadership of the Communist Party were stunted because of ideological rifts and conflicts within the CP and the international communist movement. Moreover, these militant peasant struggles provoked the violence of the repressive state and the military quickly crushed the peasantry, paralysing the Communist party. Abandoning armed militant resistance, the CP opted to bring about socialist transformation through the "parliamentary path". This ideological shift within the CP initiated a vicious debate within its ranks, widening the ideological gaps on the nature and future course of peasant resistance in the Indian countryside, and the class character of the Indian state and revolution.

In the post-independent period, especially during 1950s and 1960s, ideological rifts within the CP culminated in the first split of the party and the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in 1964, and another split with the formation of India's third CP, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) - the first Maoist party in India - in 1969. These splits were caused not only by differing ideological positions, but also because of varied direct political experiences of CP cadres and leaders.

(b) Ideological Shifts in the Indian Communist Movement : CPI, CPI(M) & CPI(ML)

The multi-class approach of the undivided CP, directly contributed towards its ideological confusion over the future course of action in the militant peasant struggles of Telangana in the 1950s. Further, the class nature of the CP and its leadership stunted the growth of the peasant movement during this period. This was acknowledged in later years in a document of the CPI(M), as follows :

> "Whatever peasant movement was organised and led, was mainly oriented to the middle and well-to-do peasant sector, instead of the growing number of agricultural labour and poor sections. The new opportunities for well-being that presented themselves to the middle and rich peasants in no small way, influenced the CP in the rural areas, and in particular, a good number of the cadres of middle and rich peasant origin who occupied leading positions in the rural party committees."[42]

The ideological rifts within the ranks of the CP was particularly manifested in contradictory attitudes towards the Nehru government. The Rightists within the party called for the establishment of a "National Front" in alliance with the Congress party whom they categorised as the "progressive national bourgeoisie". The Leftists, on the other hand, argued for the establishment of an anti-Congress "United Front" of all progressive and democratic forces in the country. The Indo-China war of 1962 further aggravated these rifts and created conditions for the formation of a new Communist party.

The Leftists within the CP held a Congress in Calcutta in 1964 and established the Communist party of India (Marxist) based on the following programme : "The CPI(M) called for the establishment of "People's Democracies" based on an alliance of all anti-feudal and anti-imperialist forces in the country. In this alliance it is essential that the working class lead the national democratic revolution." [43] One of the fundamental questions which split the CP in 1964 was the party's attitude towards China and the relevance of Mao Tse Tung's Thought for Indian conditions. The CPI(M) programme, adopted at the Calcutta congress in 1964, did not present any definite position on this question. However, many CPI(M) leaders and cadres had clearly opted for Maoism and "armed agrarian revolution" in India.

The CPI(M) was distinguished by a seemingly neutral position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union and China. However, certain sections, especially in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, manifested a clear allegiance to China and the Maoist strategy of revolution. Charu Mazumdar, from North Bengal, was the first to give theoretical articulation to these Maoist sentiments. His famous "*Eight Documents*", written during the period 1965-67 propounded the need for a revolutionary party based on the revolutionary practise of the peasantry: "The main thing about our tactics will be to see whether there is a mobilisation of the broadest sections of the peasantry; and our aim will be to see whether the class consciousness of the peasantry has increased - whether they have moved forward towards widespread armed struggle."[44]

In 1967 the CPI(M) decided to join other parties to form a "United Front" government in West Bengal. Although the CPI (M) formed the government, many of its members criticised it for taking the "parliamentary path". The dissidents within the CPI (M) centred around Charu Mazumdar who sought to bring about unity among the dissident groups. Charu Mazumdar set down four points as the fundamental basis of unity for the dissident groups :

> "First, acceptance of Mao Tse Tung as the leader of the world revolution and his Thoughts as the highest form of Marxism-Leninism of this era. Second, belief in the view that a revolutionary situation existed in every corner of India. Third, belief in area-wise seizure of power as the path for taking forward the Indian revolution; and fourth, belief in guerilla warfare as the only mode through which the development and advance of this revolution was possible."[45]

(c) Origins of Maoist Peasant Resistance : Naxalbari and Srikakulam

The militant peasant resistance in Tebhaga and Telangana between 1946-51 were not totally defeated by the State power. Its spirit was carried into the 1950s and 1960s by militant cadres of the CP, now split under the CPI, CPI (M) and CPI (ML). The main inspiration for the continuance of these militant struggles in these regions and other parts of the country was the ideology of Mao Tse-tung which emerged from a growing disillusionment with the "parliamentary path" of the CPI and CPI (M). The shift towards adopting a Maoist strategy of armed peasant resistance was therefore a logical culmination of these two factors.

In 1967 a *Naxalbari-o-Krishak Sangram Sahayak Samiti* (Naxalbari Peasant struggle Assistance Committee) - NKSSS, led by Sushital Roychoudhury, was carrying out militant peasant struggles in the areas of Naxalbari and Siliguri in North Bengal, based on the slogan of Charu Mazumdar : "Seizure of State Power through Armed Struggle". Communist revolutionaries leading these struggles were then still members of CPI(M). Radio Peking in a broadcast on June 28, 1967 stated :

> "The revolutionaries of the Indian Communist party, in Siliguri sub-division, who advocate the seizure of power through armed struggle, raised the slogans in 1965 of preparing for armed struggle by arming the peasants and setting up rural bases."[46]

Dissidents within the CPI (M), many of whom were expelled in the years following the Naxalbari peasant uprisings, joined together under the initiative of the NKSSS to set up the Coordination Committee of Revolutionaries (CCR) in August, 1967. Key leaders of the Darjeeling committee of the CPI (M) viz., Charu Mazumdar, Kanu Sanyal, Souren Bose and others, took a leading part in the formation of the CCR. Similarly, dissidents set up CCR's in the states of Bihar, Punjab. A Conference was convened of these dissident CCR's in Calcutta in November, 1967 where it was resolved to establish the All-India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR).

The AICCCR continued to operate as a dissident group within the CPI (M) giving the call for an "armed peasant struggle to capture state power." It was after two years that this coordination was to give birth to the third Communist Party of India. On April 22, 1969, Lenin's birth anniversary, Kanu Sanyal announced the birth of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) - CPI (ML) - at a May Day Rally in Calcutta. The political resolution adopted by the new party stated :

> "Indian society was semi-colonial and semi-feudal, the Indian state is the state of big landlords and comprador-bureaucrat capitalists, and its government is a lackey of US imperialism and Soviet social-imperialism. The Indian revolution at the present stage is the People's Democratic Revolution, the main content of which is the agrarian revolution, the abolition of feudalism in the countryside. Our chief responsibility is that of organising the peasantry and advancing towards seizure of power through armed struggle; the basic tactic of the struggle will be guerilla warfare."[47]

The Maoist strategy of peasant resistance originated in two main areas : Naxalbari in North Bengal and Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh. Naxalbari is situated in the Darjeeling district and is primarily inhabited by tribal peoples viz., *Rajbansis, Oraons, Mundas and Santhals.* Most of them were employed in the 32 tea plantations in the areas, while others laboured in paddy fields. The production relations in this areas were based on a system where the landlord labourers, who worked the land and also provided extra-economic services to him. The labourers were bonded to the landlord through the institution of "free labour". in the following manner :

(1) The labourer was expected to supply free labour for the landlords kitchen garden. This included cultivation of vegetables as well as such other work like erecting fences against stray cattle,

(2) Periodic repairs to the landlord's house was the responsibility of the labourers,

(3) If any marriage was finalised in a labourer's family the landlord had to be given some kind of a presentation in his honour. This could be a goat, rice, dal, or vegetables. The gift had to be sufficient in quantity to provide a marriage feast for the landlord's entire household. But the family who gave the gift, and other labourers could not attend this marriage meal. [48]

During 1950s and 1960s peasant struggles and plantation labourers' strikes had been prominent in North Bengal. Between 1955 and 1957 the tea plantation workers were organised and rallied together with the peasants. From 1958 to 1962 the peasant movement in Naxalbari entered a more militant phase when the *Kisan Sabha* (local peasants' associations) under the leadership of the Communists gave the call for the harvesting of crops and their collection by the tillers, hoisting of red flags in their respective fields, arming of the peasants for the protection of their crops, and defence against police attacks.[49]

The "*Eight Documents*" of Charu Mazumdar written during 1965-67 provided the chief inspiration to the Communists in North Bengal as they sought to implement its spirit among the militant peasants and plantation labourers in Naxalbari, Siliguri, etc. At another peasant conference in Buraganj in April-May 1967 these "Eight Documents" were thoroughly discussed and the following programme of action was adopted for peasant mobilisation : a) peasants were urged to seize the lands of the landlords, b) seize the lands of the plantation workers who had purchased land from the poor peasants, c) cultivate lands held under (a) and (b) and retain all the produce from lands appropriated from the landlords, but share half of the crop production on the plantation workers' lands, and d) where the landlord is engaged in self-cultivation such lands should not be seized.[50]

There was a rapid escalation of militant peasant action to implement this programme. One leader claimed that between March to April 1967, all the villages were organised. From 15,000 to 20,000 peasants were enrolled as full-time activists. Peasant's committees were formed in every village and they were transformed into armed guards. They soon occupied land in the name of the peasant's committees, burnt all land records which had been used to cheat them of their dues, canceled all hypothecary debts, passed death sentences on oppressive landlords, formed armed bands by looting guns from the landlords, armed themselves with traditional weapons like bows, arrows and spears, and set up a parallel administration to look after the villages.[51] When the peasants struggles took a violent turn, it provoked repression by the State. The key leaders, were quickly arrested and the peasant organisation was crippled. The first attempt to apply Charu Mazumdar's theory of "armed peasant struggle in the Indian countryside" had collapsed under the wave of State repression.

Meanwhile, in the Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh another militant peasant struggle was brewing. This area was primarily inhabited by the *Jatapu* and *Savara* tribal people, or Girijans. Most of them lived in jungle areas and earned their livelihood through shifting cultivation. Through government measures to preserve the forests and the extortion of money lenders, these people were gradually converted into landless agricultural labourers working for poor wages. Their struggle began with resistance against forest officials and moneylenders and demands for higher wages. Under the influence of the CPI in the 1950s this struggle took on more militant forms. With the CP split in 1964, most cadres of this area joined the CPI(M) and sought to further the peasant resistance of the Girijans. The violent revolts of the Girijans increased during the period 1964-68 but it also confronted increasing police repression. The Andhra Pradesh committee of the CPI(M), however, labeled this initiative as "dissension".

An "*Andhra Document*" prepared by the dissidents was rejected by the central committee of the CPI(M) but adopted at the Andhra Pradesh State Plenum in January, 1968. Later in June, 1968 the dissidents Nagi Reddy, Pulla Reddy, D Venkateswara Rao and Kolla Venkayya were expelled from the party. This group of expelled CPI(M) leaders convened a meeting of their followers in Vijayawada on June 29-30, 1968, and set up a State Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries under the leadership of Nagi Reddy. The theoretical inspiration of this dissident group came from the Naxalbari peasant armed struggle led by Kanu Sanyal besides their desire to revive the Telangana struggle.

The programme of action adopted by this State Coordination committee called for the launching of an armed struggle in the lines of Telangana armed peasant struggle of 1946-51. In Andhra Pradesh there were two currents of "peasant revolution" that were propagated : in the areas of Srikakulam in the North-east the movement was led by Vempatapu Satyanarayana, who was inspired by Naxalbari and called for the immediate arming of the militant peasantry, in the areas of the Telangana region, the movement was led by Nagi Reddy who believed in 'a combination of legal and extra-legal struggles...in a prolonged preparation, mainly through economic struggles, before launching a full-scale armed movement.'[52] In the later years, the Srikakulam revolutionaries disagreed with Nagi Reddy and his State Coordination committee and followed an independent path. The scale of armed peasant resistance in Srikakulam and other areas of Andhra Pradesh during this period was summed up in a newspaper report in "The Statesman" dated December 14, 1968 :

> "Today, the State Government's writ does not run in scores of isolated mountain hamlets where tribesmen are being trained in guerilla tactics and use of arms...last month the tribesmen were again on the warpath and there were at least four raids on landlords in different paths of the tribal reserve, in which property worth about Rs 50,000 was stated to have been looted...Special armed police had moved in the area last February, but their daily operations have not only failed to check the revolt but seemed to have helped the Marxists further alienate tribesmen from the government... The failure of the police to round up the ringleaders despite eight months of intensive hunt in the mountains is clear enough proof of tribal support for them."

The concrete experiences of peasant and tribal protest in Srikakulam signified the first attempt in the Indian countryside at developing and implementing "guerilla warfare methods". But gradually guerilla activity concentrated on "annihilation of class enemies". Nagi Reddy and his followers paid much attention to developing guerrilla squads and guerrilla actions in Srikakulam. As Banerjee notes: "While Naxalbari branded the words 'Armed agrarian revolution' on the sign-post of the Indian revolution; Srikakulam engraved on it the sign "Guerrilla warfare" to indicate the turn of the road."[53]

(d) The Ideology of the Naxalite Movement

Charu Mazumdar's *Eight Documents* laid the basis for the consolidation of Maoist politics and strategy of revolution in India. The escalating armed struggle in Naxalbari and Srikakulam laid the concrete basis for a strategy of agrarian revolution based on "armed struggle" Charu Mazumdar's views on this strategy provided the chief ideological framework for the establishment of India's third Communist party i.e., the Communist party of India (Marxist-Leninist) in 1969.

The political basis for the formation of the first Maoist party in India was laid in the early 1950's during the inner-party debates in the then undivided CP on the future course of the armed struggle it had launched in Telangana. Communist cadres from Bengal and Andhra Pradesh encouraged the CPI and CPI(M) to pursue this course of struggle. Charu Mazumdar gave these sentiments a coherent form in this writings in the late 1960s.

In the initial period of his writings, Charu Mazumdar emphasised the need to build underground peasant organisations, seize arms and conduct armed struggles against the landlords and finally to capture state power. Armed struggle, in his view, was the first item on the agenda for the Indian revolution. For him, "armed struggle" was synonymous with the "fighting consciousness of the peasantry", which, "had to be directed against the State machinery and the feudal class". Hence, the struggles in Naxalbari in 1967 were conducted by armed guerrilla squads that attacked landlords, confiscated lands and confronted police attacks. Kanu Sanyal noted in a Report on Terai Peasants' movement :

> "When all the peasants were armed and jotedars and other vested interests fled the village, we assumed that the base area had been created. We took the armed people for an armed force...In one or two cases, we formed small bands and snatched guns from the landlords; but we did not make this the main form of struggle and assumed instead that a guerrilla force would be built upon the spontaneity of the masses. In many cases we were impressed by the militant attitude of vagabonds, and made them leaders for building up an armed force..."[54]

While the guerrilla squads proved effective in confronting the landlords and confiscating lands, they were unable to effect a more broad-based mobilisation of the peasantry. Charu Mazumdar expressed skepticism at attempts to mobilise the peasantry under mass organisations during this period of struggle. "If everyone starts building mass organisations who is to build up

the underground party organisation? Do we expect the mass organisation to organise the agrarian revolution ? If such mass organisations are built in the rural areas, such an attempt on our part will strengthen the tendency to carry on open movements through those open mass organisations inevitably turning us into another set of leaders of revisionist mass organisations."[55]

Further, Charu Mazumdar's political programme was based on the assumption that the Indian situation during this period (1967-69) was "ripe for unleashing revolutionary political struggles to capture state power". The immediate strategy of revolution to follow, therefore, was the "annihilation of class enemies". This slogan became popular during the Naxalite struggles, but it has often been misinterpreted. Charu Mazumdar clarified this strategy in articles written in 1969 : "... And this campaign for the annihilation of the class enemy can be carried out only by inspiring, the poor and landless peasants with the politics of establishing the political power of the peasants in the countryside by destroying the domination of the feudal classes." [56]

"The annihilation of a class enemy does not only mean liquidating an individual, but also means liquidating the political, economic and social authority of the class enemy."[57] The CPI (ML) was established precisely on this programme and strategy of revolution. Its leaders and cadres conducted armed guerrilla actions in different parts of the country. Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh, Korapet in Orissa, Musahari and Muzaffarpur in Bihar, Naxalbari and Midnapore in Bengal, Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, Assam, Tripura and Punjab. "Flames of peasant armed struggle have been raging in West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal, Orissa, Assam, Tripura states and particularly in Andhra Pradesh," stated the New China News Agency on March 27, 1970.

But while the People's Republic of China had earlier hailed the formation of the first Maoist party in India in 1969, the increasing emphasis placed on "annihilation campaigns" evoked criticism form the CCP's leadership and laid the basis for China's withdrawal of support to the CPI (ML). In a comment on the CPI (ML) the CCP stated:

> "The formulation that "the open Trade Unions, open mass organisations and mass movements is out of date, and secret assassinations is the only way" needs rethinking. Formerly we misunderstood your word "annihilation". We used to think that the idea is taken from our Chairman's war of annihilation. But in the July 1970 issue of LIBERATION (the organ of the CPI-ML) we came to understand that this annihilation means secret assassinations."[58]

The First Congress of the CPI (ML) in Calcutta in May 1970 reiterated the need to "carry on the annihilation campaigns more firmly and unitedly", and to rely on "conventional weapons to release the initiative of the poor and landless peasants".

By 1970 the escalating armed struggle in Naxalbari, Debra and Gopiballavapur in Bengal had a great influence on students and intellectuals in Calcutta city. Charu Mazumdar, urged the students to integrate themselves with the peasantry and to go down to the villages in large numbers as the first step towards such integration.

The CPI (ML) urban strategy had three aspects :

(1) the cultural side, marked by an organised effort to debunk the intellectual heritage of the India, particularly Bengali middle class,

(2) an attempt to reproduce the annihilation campaign in the cities, the targets being police personnel, informers and political rivals, and

(3) a preparatory move to build up an arsenal by mass-scale snatching of arms.[59]

The students who were attracted to reproduce the armed struggle campaign in Calcutta city were drawn from some of the most prestigious educational institutions. Their growing dissatisfaction with the colonial educational system and lack of opportunities in employment, and their feelings of frustration and despair, led brilliant students and intellectuals to join the armed struggle campaigns of the CPI (ML) in Calcutta city. Students joined together to destroy statues. They painted Mao's slogan "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun", on the walls of Calcutta. Examinations were disrupted and threatening letters sent to those that exercised authority in educational institutions and to police personnel.

Thus "urban annihilation campaigns" attacked police personnel, informers, politicians, and others. All this took place in broad daylight on the streets of Calcutta and struck terror in the population, especially the ruling United Front government of the CPI (M). Official government figures for the period April 1 to November 12, 1970 indicate that over "36 policemen were killed and over 400 injured in CPI (ML) attacks". The police estimated that in November the same year, there were over "10,000 to 20,000 CPI (ML) cadres operating in West Bengal and about half were concentrating their activities in the Greater Calcutta area !"[60]

The CPI (ML), in a certain sense, had arrived on the Indian political scene in 1969 to fill a vacuum created by the failure of the parliamentary Left parties in India to pursue the militant struggles of the peasantry. But as the CPI (ML) movement spread across the country, there was a tendency, particularly in the First Congress in 1970, to impose a "personality cult" around Charu Mazumdar as the "chief theoretician of the Indian revolution". The serious neglect of the need for broad-based political education and mobilisation of the peasantry further contributed to the CPI (ML) leading a struggle that was characterised by individual annihilation of class enemies carried out by small guerrilla squads which exposed the militant cadres directly to the repression of the State.

Charu Mazumdar seemed to have relied on the "spontaneous awakening of the peasantry" once such guerilla actions were successful. He even went to the extent of propounding that "by 1975 the wave of revolution will roll over the country". Such hasty political speculations, led to dissension within his party and exposed it to State repression.

The strength of the police and military forces that were mobilised by the government in 1970-71 in Calcutta and Bengal gives us an indication of the scale of the CPI (ML) movement. A main reason for the mobilisation was to ensure a peaceful atmosphere during the March 1971

elections. The then Governor of the State, S.S. Dhavan stated: "I cannot give you the exact numbers of troops mobilised for this operation, but I can tell you that it is a huge force - larger than the forces in any single sector of the battle front during the war with Pakistani aggression in 1965...There is no parallel in the history of Parliamentary Democracy when the army and the police were employed in such large numbers to protect the voters..."[61]

There are no accurate figures on the number of CPI (ML) activists who were killed in the repression carried out by the police and military in Bengal. "Police sources state that, between March 1970 and August 1971, in Calcutta and its suburbs, 1,783 CPI (ML) supporters or members were killed, unofficial sources claimed that the figure was at least double. The numbers do not include those killed in jails. Between May and December 1971, the police opened fire on unarmed prisoners in at least six jails in West Bengal."[62]

During the period 1971-73 the State stepped up its repressive campaign to cripple what was left of the *Naxalites* in various parts of the country. It was also during this period that Charu Mazumdar's theory and strategy were criticised within the CPI (ML). In order to assess the causes for the collapse of the movement, many regional committees of the CPI (ML) began a soul-searching self-criticism of their ideology and tactics.

The Andhra Pradesh State Committee, for example, in March 1971 stated in relation to the armed peasant struggle in Srikakulam : "Our cadres are predominantly petty-bourgeois. Even today the villages of poor and landless peasants are not the centres of our activity. Leadership is not from the basic classes ... This is our fundamental weakness."[63]

The serious neglect of mass political education and mobilisation, which was perhaps the most serious weakness of the movement, was also noted by the West-Bengal and Bihar Border Region Committee :

> "As we ignored ... political and ideological work in respect of peasant guerrillas, as we did not entrust them with greater responsibilities in organising the people, as we did not help them sum up their concrete experiences, we could not develop a greater number of organisers and political commissars from among the poor and landless peasant cadres and guerrillas ... We were not able to establish completely the leadership of the poor and landless peasants over the campaign for seizure of arms..."[64]

In 1982, at the Third All-India Congress of the CPI (ML) (Vinod Mishra's group), the strategy of the "annihilation line" adopted by the party was seriously criticized : "In many areas annihilation was conducted as a campaign, with a lot of indiscriminate and unnecessary killings. It got isolated from the peasants' class struggle so that no resistance could be built up against police repression, and our struggling areas were smashed. This happened in those places where the party lost its leadership and mass movements and resistance could not be developed."[65]

The party recognised it's main mistakes at generalising the "annihilation" form of struggle for every corner of India and adopting it as a campaign, failing to develop a consistent

and thorough-going policy for combining this form of struggle with mass struggles, in spite of an overall orientation and successes at certain points. Even with the appearance of serious signs of setbacks, it did not succeed in arranging a planned and orderly retreat from a military offensive to a political offensive.

After such attempts at "self-criticism", serious political and ideological differences emerged in the Maoist movement in India. Numerous political factions of the Maoist tradition developed in the latter half of the 1970s.[66]

(e) Contemporary Maoist Resistance

In some regions in the country various factions of the Maoist CPI(ML) continue to wage a militant resistance against landlord and police oppression.

(i) The Ryotu Coolie Sanghams' (Peasant Labour Associations), Andhra Pradesh

The Karimnagar and Adilabad districts of the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh have been known for its "agrarian militance" since the armed peasant protests between 1946-51. The resurgence of this militant peasant movement began in the 1970s with the renewed activism of militant cadres of the Maoist CPI(ML) "*People War group*". Sircilla and Peddpally taluqs were the two areas in this region that provided the base for this peasant movement under the leadership of the *Kisan Sabhas* (peasant associations).

The struggle first started in 1978 from the villages of Ranapuram and Kannala. This initially was launched on two main issues : (1) to forcibly occupy the wastelands around the villages, that are often illegally grabbed by the landlords, and distribute these occupied lands among the landless. Such occupations of illegally appropriated wastelands was an important element of the struggle in the entire region. The land thus occupied was either divided equally among the landless or cultivated collectively by them, the latter being more common in the tribal regions. (2) the issue of "fines" and "fees" that the landlords extorted from the peasants during unofficial village council meetings and while settling disputes. During the struggle, the peasants demanded a return of these fees and fines. They also demanded donations from the landlords for the *Sangham* (Association/Union) for what had been appropriated from the people.

The extreme nature of extra-economic exploitation of the peasantry by rich landlords provided cause for the organisation of a militant peasant struggle. The forced labour system continued to prevail in this region during the 1970s. One source described this situation of bondage as follows :

> "The forced labour and exactions, the Vetti system, is widespread in this region. Whether it is the peasant or a barber or washerman, they all have to attend to the landlord's work first and only after completing it can they attend to others' work,

including their own. Each landlord has an army of servants to maintain his house ...Every harijan family has to send one man from the family to do this Vetti...Besides people have to give a bribe to the landlord whenever a special occasion arises in their own houses, which includes not only a marriage, or festival, but also death.

There is also a community bribe which every caste has to give once a year to the landlord...The social norms of behaviour which the landlord imposes have to be scrupulously followed, whereby a peasant cannot wear white clothes, he cannot wear chappals in the presence of the landlord, and cannot send his children to school. Defying untouchability is a crime. In many villages of this area a girl still has to be sent to the landlord to satisfy his amorous desires, as soon as she attains maturity. Though only in a few villages the custom of sending women as a substitute to the landlord's bed, if the landlord's wife becomes pregnant, still prevails."[67]

The peasant movement challenged this *vetti* system and found remarkable support from the poor peasantry and landless labourers. The successes of the struggle to forcibly occupy wastelands and distribute them to the landless labourer, enabled the movement to spread to a number of villages in this region. The movement also demonstrated to the peasants its social responsibility. The money collected from the landlords as compensation for the illegal "fees" and "fines" - which amounted to as much as Rs 30,000 to 40,000 per village - were kept with the Sangham and used for common purposes like building schools, laying roads, paying teachers and getting reservoirs bunded.

Further, the movement had taken up the responsibility of guarding the hillocks and preventing the cutting down of trees. "When the plants are fully grown the movement itself supervises the cutting and sale of timber and also undertakes simultaneous replanting. The proceeds of this sales goes to the movement which is again used for social purposes". Finally, the Sangham has also been successful in increasing the daily wages of the agricultural labourers : "earlier daily labourers used to get Rs 3-4 per day, they now get Rs 6-7; farm servants have also increased their monthly wage to Rs 100". [68]

These initial successes of the peasant organisation has naturally provoked landlord and police repression. With the spreading of the movement, police camps were set up in the "disturbed villages" and violent campaigns of repression and harassment of village folk, particularly women and children of the movement activists, were carried out. Many leaders have been eliminated in staged "police encounters"; the most famous case was the killing of Devender Reddy of Ranapuram village, who was one of the founding leaders. The peasants even today recall the dedication, integrity, tirelessness, inspiration and leadership of Devender Reddy.[69]

The severe repression in these villages has led to arrests or driven men into hiding. In Sircilla, for example, militant Women's Associations have sprung up in about 20-25 villages, mostly as a consequence of the severe repression which drove the men away from the villages. "Many of the men being either arrested or absconding, the burden of the movement and the brunt

of the repression is being borne by the women. With the massive presence of the armed police, many landlords who had earlier fled the area, facing social boycott, are now returning to their villages and unleashing terror on the people, particularly the womenfolk."[70] Between May 22-23, 1983 the Second State Conference was marked by a massive rally in which about 30,000 peasants, agricultural labourers, youth, students, and women participated.

The peasant movement, while continuing its struggle for survival in the midst of escalating police and landlord repression, is also suffering from the lack of support from political parties and democratic forces in the cities.

"The increasing awareness of the problems of the rural poor being shown at all levels from academic studies to the stands taken by prominent political leaders is in sharp contrast to the actual response and support the peasants have received in their attempts to organise themselves. In the final analysis, this sullen silence of democratic opinion may determine, perhaps fatally, the fate of this nascent peasant movement."[71]

(ii) The Militancy of the Gonds in Maharashtra

Gadchiroli and Chandrapur districts in southern Maharashtra are inhabited primarily by tribal populations : mainly *Pradhan Gonds*, and *Raj Gonds* and a small number of *Halbas*, *Kolams* and *Kawars*. The first political stirrings in this area began with the entry of the Communist cadres of the "People's War" Maoist group in 1981 who sought shelter in the Sironcha forests in this region when they fled from the repression in Karimnagar and Adilabad regions, in neighboring Andhra Pradesh.

The *Gonds* worked for low wages as subjects of *zamindars* (landlords). They were cheated by money lenders and traders, robbed by forest contractors and bullied by forest department officials.

In the summer of 1982, the CPI (ML) cadres launched a massive agitation demanding higher wages for picking *tendu* leaves which were used for making *beedis* (local cigarettes). In 1982 the fixed government rate was Rs 5 for every 100 bundles. With the widespread strikes, the wages increased to Rs. 8 and 9. This initial success boosted the image and popularity of the CPI (ML) cadres in the area. People in Chandrapur said "the Annas (brothers) achieved in one year what other political parties and the government had been unable to achieve in 35 years." Senior police officials stated differently. They said : "The Naxalites are "extremely dangerous" and "subversive anti-social elements" who are goading the people into making unreasonable demands. These are violent elements who are creating a law and order problem by instigating people to break the law. Such politics is 'harmful to the very fabric of our society' and must be suppressed by the use of force...".[72]

However, people have continued to provide protection for the militant "*Naxalites*". The villagers have also organised themselves into local committees which have become the effective decision-making bodies at the village level - a veritable parallel administration. Taxes are levied

directly from the contractors who operate in forests where the officials and the police fear to tread. The previously unrestricted authority of officials, contractors and moneylenders is facing stiff opposition and established political parties have lost their popular grip.

Hanif, a 17-year old boy who works in a teak nursery of the forest corporation described the approach used by the *Naxalites* :

> "They (Naxalites) come in the evenings and nights. Sometimes only one or two come. They sing songs in Telugu and Gondi; they ask us about our troubles and problems; they explain how we should organise ourselves; they talk to us about our rights to the forest and its produce; they talk about the need to oppose our exploitation by the forest department and contractors; they also talk about the land wrongfully seized by landlords and the forest department."[73]

(iii) Peasant Militancy in Bhojpur (Bihar)

The simmering peasant movement in Bhojpur has its origins in the untiring work of "Master" Jagdish Mahto, a science teacher. A son of a poor peasant, Jagdish Mahto had never been a member of any communist party. Yet, he rose in popularity among the toiling peasants of Bhojpur and emerged as the "Founding Father of the Bhojpur peasant movement". The peasant movement originated in Ekwari village where a minority of notorious landlords employed, as slaves and semi-slaves, the large majority of the population. Most of the poor peasants and labourers belonged to the low castes of *Yadavs, Kahars and Harijans.* One account describes vividly the plight of these lower caste peasants in Ekwari village as follows :

> "He (the poor peasant/labourer) is not considered a human being at all. Born a slave, his life is firmly tied to the spade, the sickle and the landlord's feet. He produces everything that the landlord boasts of, and yet his children do not have enough to eat. Everyday some landlord takes away his wife and his grown up daughters. If his working daughter is not molested in the fields during the day, a son of some landlord will break into his single-room mud hovel in the night and humiliate her right there; for him the best course is to feign deep slumber."[74]

In 1969, the "Master" organised a torch-light procession shouting the slogan : "We will fight for a state for Harijans!" Since then, many "incidents" have taken place in this and other villages of Bhojpur inspired by the "Master" and other leaders of the peasant movement. With the escalating attacks on landlords and their property, the police moved in to charge the "Master" and some of his companions with 'murder" and "disturbing the law and order" of the villages. But in two years much had changed in the consciousness of the peasantry in these villages. In 1971 "Master", in a conversation with a fellow-teacher said : "I know brother, that I am going to die one of these days. But I will die partly satisfied. For one change that our movement has brought about is that the landlords do not dare now to touch the women of the poor. And that is not a small change."[75]

Meanwhile, in other parts of rural Bihar, especially the Patna district, the powerful landlords set up the *Bhoomisena* (Land Army)[76] between 1972-75 to protect their interests and unleash terror against the Harijans. Most of the Harijans castes in Bihar are landless labourers, they are all over India. In one village the landlords went on the rampage and wantonly burnt down a whole village, threw helpless children in the flames, raped women and butchered men. The landless peasants fought back the landlords. The *Bhoomisena* held a demonstration and said, "The crops will be harvested in the fields, and fire will engulf the hut of the striking agricultural labourers."

In response to the *Bhoomisena*, the CPI (ML) organised the *Lal Sena* (Red Army) to protect the exploited farmers from landlord repression. Today, in rural Bihar, both these groups are locked in an intense class and caste war. This war has taken a great toll in peasant likes and property of the poor farmers and agricultural labourers.

"A caste Hindu who has relations with a *Harijan* woman is merely emphasising his rural heritage. Feudal society condones this act. But if a *Harijan* boy as much as tries to woo a higher caste woman and stayed alive after this "sacrilege", it would be nothing short of a miracle."[77]

Another peasant organisation that has emerged on the rural Bihar scene is the *Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha* (BPKS). The BPKS organised a mammoth demonstration in Patna in February 1981 and at present is active in at least 10 districts of the state. The objectives of the organisation are : "To unite the peasants and demolish the economic, political and cultural base of imperialism and feudalism." [78] The BPKS adopted a comprehensive "Charter of Demands" which included, the following :

(1) Implementation of land reform measures, particularly redistribution of surplus and unowned land to the landless poor,

(2) Writing off of debts of farmers owning up to 15 acres of irrigated land or 25 acres of unirrigated land,

(3) Implementation of the Minimum Wages Act,

(4) Exemption of land revenue in areas where free government irrigation is not available, and

(5) Protection of civil liberties and democratic rights.[79]

In sum, the Maoist tradition in India emerged to fill a political vacuum, but failed to pose itself as a radical revolutionary alternative and further the cause of a socialist revolution in India. Its dogmatic adherence of "classical Maoism" and the Chinese revolutionary experience exposed its impotence to politically articulate such a task in concrete agrarian conditions in India. Moreover, Charu Mazumdar's role as a protagonist and ideologue of the Indian peasant revolution led him to propagate and promote an extreme agrarian programme far beyond the political capability of the CPI (ML) party and the militant peasantry.

Political factionalism and dissension was, therefore, inevitable in these circumstances, accentuated by particular experiences of party cadres in the various parts of the country. To develop an all-India party of the CPI (ML) in a given situation where Maoist resistance was generally confined to certain pockets of anti-feudal struggles in the countryside, was therefore a futile exercise. In the aftermath of the Naxalite movement, the Maoist tradition reverted back to regionalism and localism - where perhaps it has had its most effective impact on party cadres, peasants and rural labourers.

3.5 The Politics of Agrarian Protest from above

> "The logic of populist politics has been that the aspirations and demands of (the rich peasant) section have been presented and articulated as those of the whole of the peasantry - and indeed of the entire rural society. This is what provided the mass basis and muscle to the so- called "peasant power" and its manifestations in a variety of forms - in electoral contests and representation, as much as in mass agitations." (Balraj Mehta in "Mainstream"; December 6, 1980)

A significant development in agrarian conflicts in contemporary India has been what has come to be known as "rich farmers' agitations". This has been a post-Green Revolution phenomenon in rural India giving rise to new forces of rural elite who have asserted themselves over and above the toiling peasantry. The rich peasant group of farmers in Indian emerged at the top of the agrarian social structure because they were the chief beneficiaries of the "Green Revolution" programme.

While the total output of essential food crops did show a marked increase but at the same time, the "Green Revolution" further stratified the agrarian social classes, with the "new" rich peasant (kulak) class at the top, and an expanding landless agricultural labour class at the bottom. "Since all the farmers, with differences only in degree, have introduced new technology, the green revolution has put the entire peasantry in the market framework. All the farmers have to sell a part (in many cases, a major part) of their output to purchase their inputs. Therefore, prices of agricultural produce and inputs are a matter of serious concern to all categories of farmers."[80]

It is within such a socio-economic background that we need to situate the emergence of "farmers agitations" during the period 1980-82. These "agitations", unprecedented in Indian agrarian history, erupted phenomenally in the states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Punjab and Gujarat. Based on a review of these farmers' agitations during this period in India, the following aspects of its political significance can be highlighted :

(1) It produced leaders, little known outside the boundaries of their districts or state, to a position of national stature,

(2) All these "farmers agitations" were led by the rich peasant classes, but were able to mobilise the middle and small farmers, poor peasants and agricultural labourers, to give the agitations a real mass character,

(3) The agitations and their leaders have maintained an "independent" political identity, without any political party affiliation or influence. Also, their emergence was clearly from outside the fold of traditional political parties, left or right,

(4) A unique feature of these "agitations" is that they successfully united all sections of farmers i.e., from the rich to the landless labourer; under their banners, they presented a comprehensive charter of demands that tended to transcend traditional caste and class divisions in rural India.[81]

Let us briefly review the nature of these "farmers' agitations" in some states of India in order to probe into the politics behind these seemingly "mass farmers movements" :

(i) The Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) in Punjab

Punjab had experienced a rich history of peasant movements during the colonial period and in independent India. The agrarian scene in Punjab was revolutionised during the period of the "Green Revolution" in the 1960s, resulting in the emergence of a powerful lobby of rich farmers (rural capitalists). However, over the years, especially in the aftermath of the "Green Revolution", the rapid increase in the prices of inputs, fertilisers and taxation squeezed this section of the rural elite. Yet, it was the small and marginal farmers of Punjab who had borne the brunt of this burden. A study showed : "24 per cent of small farmers and 31 per cent of marginal farmers live below the poverty line in the Green Revolution state of Punjab." [82] The necessary social conditions for the resurgence of a peasant movement in Punjab - albeit of a "rich peasant" variety - lay in the following :

> "The Green Revolution has raised the aspirations of all sections of the peasantry. The growing income inequalities are shaking the confidence of the poor peasants. Any further attempt to shift the burden of the economic crisis and resource mobilisation on this section would enrage them. In this situation, any peasant organisation which can provide them the lead will find a favorable response from them."[83]

It was this opportunity that the powerful rich peasantry identified and exploited to their own advantage, through the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU).

The BKU was constituted in 1980, although it had been in existence since 1972 in Punjab. The necessary initiative came from the farmers of Ludhiana - the epi-centre of the "Green Revolution" of earlier decades. After successful agitations, the BKU rapidly spread to other districts of the state, and by 1983, the Union had elected bodies in all districts except Kapurthala. "The Union had its units at 4 levels : village, block, district and state."[84] The basic character of the BKU can be summarised as follows :

a. Its demands highlighted the general aspirations of rural Punjab, namely education, health and communication facilities in the rural areas, reservations for rural candidates in

professional and educational institutions and industrialisation of rural areas.

b. It demanded : remunerative prices for agricultural produce, concessions on inputs, reduction in prices of fertilisers, tractors, diesel, pesticides, cement, abolition of the tax on agricultural wealth, pensions for old farmers - all of which directly catered to the needs and interests of the rich peasantry.

c. The Union has also voiced its protest on social issues, such as abolition of smuggling, corruption, prohibition and better status for women in society.[85]

The "rich peasant" character of the BKU is further reflected in the issues on which a series of agitations were launched in the early 1980s : anti-single state food zone (1974), power rate for electric tubewells (1974-75), increased water rates, revenue and commercial tax (1975), replacement of defective tractors (1977-78); diesel morcha (1979), milk price strike (1981), and the present agitation on procurement prices of wheat and tariff rates on electricity.[86]

The recent phase of agitations launched by the BKU in Punjab began in 1983 with a demand on tariff rates on electricity. Based on a 5-point demand, the BKU further intensified its agitations the next year, and in a major show of strength on March 12, 1984, about 50 to 60,000 farmers gheraoed the Punjab Governor's House. They continued uninterrupted for 6 days.

> "The peasants brought along their own provisions. Milk and vegetables were regularly supplied by the farmers of nearby districts. Farmers set up their own community kitchens and built thatched huts. It seemed that Punjab farmers had taken over the city. Farmers from other states also joined the demonstration."
>
> After a series of hectic negotiations between the BKU and the administration, an agreement was reached on March 18, 1984 and the BKU called off the agitations and ghereo. Many political parties approached the BKU with offers of help, but the BKU declined assistance from these parties and stood on its own as a non-party political organisation."[87]

In the Punjab countryside the BKU's influence was overwhelming. In April, 1984 it shifted its emphasis from electricity rates to that of recovery of loans advanced by cooperative and commercial banks. The BKU put up notice-boards in most villages of Punjab which read : "Without proper accounting, recovery of loans is illegal! Entry of recovery staff in the village is not allowed without permission - By Order : BKU !." Temporary jails were also set up in the villages to arrest the officials who violated this order, creating further panic among the revenue officials who dreaded entering the rural areas. It was almost as if the union had a parallel government in the villages.

The immense popularity and support of the BKU in rural Punjab has rendered it a non-party political force to reckon with. Its strong leadership, vested in the hands of powerful rich peasants, coupled with its popular economic and social programme of action had encouraged large sections of the Punjab peasantry to follow its leadership. Moreover, its capability to reject

traditional party politics and present itself as not being interested in electoral aspirations, has definitely contributed to its immense effectiveness. The BKU is today posing a serious threat to the communist-led *Kisan Sabhas* of the CPI and CPI (ML).

(ii) The Tamil Nadu Agriculturists' Association (TAA)

The TAA was initiated by Chinnamanna Narayanswamy Naidu in 1968 in Coimbatore taluk to protest against the steep rise in power rates. By the early 1970s, the association had grown in strength and became an established state-wide union of farmers in Tamil Nadu.

The basic demands of the TAA included :

(1) write off the entire loan amount due from farmers with less than 5 acres,

(2) write off 50 per cent of the loans of those with 5-10 acres,

(3) write off the interest due on the loans advanced to the farmers with 10-15 acres and allow them to repay the loan amount in five installments. [88]

Naidu's views clearly provided effective an articulation to the aspirations of the rural rich in Tamil Nadu :

> "When I call a meeting, thousands of green-turbened farmers come. Mind you, not because of me but due to their enormous problems which they believe can be redressed through my movement."
>
> "I watched how the mill tycoons prospered and how they were pampered by the government. So I started telling my brothers...'our hens lay eggs and who eats the omelette? It is the city dwellers, the rich ones.'... I told my farmer brothers that the workers in the textile mills led successful agitations and often a 30-60 per cent bonus because the mills were so prosperous. But the farmers remained the untouchable..."[89]

The political reasoning, therefore, of the TAA was that the farmers have been deprived of their rightful role in the country's prosperity as the economy was basically urban oriented. Further, the current problems of farmers in the country were a consequence of the "Green Revolution" which mainly benefited the middle-men, traders, manufacturers while the farmers continue to toil for a small profit. The widespread popularity of the TAA among the small and middle peasants can be seen from one estimate of the class composition of TAA' movement in Tamil Nadu :

a) those with less than 3 standard acres (50%),
b) those with 3-10 standard acres (30%), and
c) those with 10-15 standard acres (20%).

Nevertheless, it seems clear from the concrete demands posed by TAA during agitations that the leadership of the movement is controlled by the rich peasants.[90]

(iii) Karnataka Farmers' Association

The farmers' agitations in Karnataka were led by H.S. Rudrappa, a former minister and a big landowner. The initial agitations were peaceful *satyagrahas* but they were violently broken up by the police. The farmers observed the uncompromising attitude of the local government to their problems. This directly contributed to increased participation and the spread of the agitations to various districts in the state.

The initial demands posed in Karnataka are strikingly similar to those in other states :

"Initially in Karnataka, the main issues were abolition of the betterment levy and reduction in water rates, abolition of the agricultural income tax, reduction in the power tariffs for water pump sets, lower taxes on tractors, writing off of loans taken from cooperatives and banks, and raising the minimum support prices of foodgrains. The demands however have now significantly gone a step further and include payment of a pension to farmers and agricultural labourers, reserving half the seats in all educational institutions and half of all government appointments for farmers' children earmarking 80 per cent of the budget for rural development, declaring agriculture an industry."[91]

It is important to note here that the Karnataka farmers' agitations were confined to area where there were irrigation facilities and where commercial crops, like cotton and sugarcane were grown. The class of rich farmers, who are commercially-oriented, will directly benefit from the demands. Rudrappa himself has reportedly conceded this fact, but said that "we cannot divide ourselves into landed and landless farmers and agitate separately, for the agitation then will have no strength nor will it carry any weight."[92]

(iv) The Shetkari Sanghatana in Maharashtra

The *Shetkari Sanghatana* (SS) in Maharashtra was led by Sharad Joshi, one of the most intriguing of personalities ever to lead a farmers movement in India. Sharad Joshi, a Brahmin, graduated in Economics and Mercantile Law,and passed the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) in 1957. He obtained a diploma in computer programming from the "Institute Programmex" in Lausanne (Switzerland) in 1974, and worked as Secretary in the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union, Bern (Switzerland). Joshi also founded a Commerce college in Kolhapur (Maharashtra). He worked as Assistant Director-General in the Indian Posts and Telegraphs and during this period, he was sent to Switzerland on an UN assignment. While there, he successfully organized a workers' struggle, even though he was an high ranking officer. When working on the Second Development Decade at the United Nations between 1967-76, Joshi was exposed to the agrarian scene in India, and studied its problems. He left the lucrative Swiss job in 1977.

Returning to India, Joshi took up farming to experience for himself the plight of the farmers in the country. He presently stays with his wife, Leela, in Pune - 40 Kms away from the 16-acre farm he acquired near Chakan, in Pune district. Leela herself runs a small broiler poultry farm and Sharad cultivates roses, chilies, paddy, onions, and fruit trees on an experimental basis.[93]

Joshi's economic analysis, in his own words, is that, "After the Second World War, practically every developing country was divided into an internal colony model, of the Rosa Luxembourg-type, with the towns choosing an accelerated rate for the growth of industries, on the basis of systematic exploitation of raw materials grown in the countryside." This is the essence of his theory on "INDIA" vs "BHARAT"! [94]

The early agitations launched by Sharad Joshi in Maharashtra were confined to Nipani and Nasik, but soon gained momentum and spread throughout Western Maharashtra. Between November 1980 and January 1981 Western Maharashtra witnessed unprecedented mass mobilisation and violence. During the course of the struggle, all major roads and rail routes were blocked and government officers were "gheroed". Elected representatives were subjected to humiliation.

At the height of the agitation, Joshi threatened that a million people would court arrest and occupy government offices to stop work, and force elected representatives to resign. The basic demands put forward in the Maharashtra agitations revolved around prices for cash crops especially onions and sugarcane. As Sharad Joshi described his goals and plans :

> "We have a single programme: pay higher prices to agriculturists. Step-by-step agitations will start, resulting in building up a farmers' union, on trade union lines, all over the country. Agitations need strategic planning. With only half a taluka backing me, I started the onion agitation and attained maximum impact. Maharashtra produces 35 per cent of the country's sugar and has the largest state-to-state transfer. From May 25 we will start a stir for increasing the price of milk. By that time we will be ready to launch a stir for higher prices for cereals."[95]

Sharad Joshi has also kept clear of party politics, although in the course of the agitations many Congress (Indira) M.L.A.'s actively supported the Shetkari Sanghatana. However, Joshi was successful in building up an image of an "independent farmers union" distinct from party politics. This further boosted the morale of his followers in Maharashtra.

Most critics have accused Joshi of being an "agent of the big farmers of Maharashtra". His response was plain : "So much the better, if they thought I was the spokesman for the poor, I might have been shot in an "encounter" by now... It is not that I am not aware of big farmers. In rural areas too we have those who represent "India"...(as opposed to his country which he calls "Bharat")...people who are India's agents, and who have been the vote banks of India's government. But everything will evenout once the farmers get higher prices for their products, and be able to stand on their own."[96]

3.6 Peasant Power : The Politics of Competitive Populism

The recent outburst of (rich peasant) "farmers agitations" have revealed a distinct new phase of class struggle in the Indian countryside. This is a marked change from the class struggles of earlier decades between antagonistic social classes : landlord-tenant, rich peasant-agricultural labourer. In contrast, the political significance of these new agitations lie in the fact that they reveal a resurgence of "peasant power" - albeit of a rich peasant variety - coupled with "competitive populism". The former has expressed itself in the political clout wielded by the leaders of these agitations and their class base. The latter, on the other hand, has articulated the class interests of the "surplus-producing farmers" as the interests of the whole peasantry, consequently, mobilising the bulk of the rural population in the process. It is this unique feature of recent farmers agitations that we need to consider seriously.

In the post-Green Revolution period, the rich peasant strata emerged as the rural elite to replace the landlord system of former times. This new class of "rural elite", therefore, came into prominence to symbolise commercialisation of agriculture, high technology and increased productivity in a largely stagnant agricultural section. Precisely for this reason they were patronised by the ruling government at the national and state levels:

> "Its essential and class principle is evasion of commitments on the basis of real economic and social differentiation in society. Its striking expression is reckless indulgence in welfare gestures and ready support to the demands and interests of any group or section, once it becomes articulate and begins to organise itself."[97]

In recent years, there has been an increasing differentiation and stratification of classes and consequent political realignments. The more powerful upper layers in the economic and social hierarchy have begun to exercise, with extraordinary power, influence on political formations and to secure their interests at the cost of the lower strata. This politics of competitive populism finds its most cynical expression in the rural social and economic set-up.

Therefore, in an economic situation where the bulk of rural surplus is controlled by a narrow strata of rich peasants, and who further monopolise inputs and rural technology and infrastructure; the contradictions of class exploitation are posed in a clear "false consciousness" - a conflict between (urban) "India" and (rural) "*Bharat*" ! The agrarian cycle (productivity - market - surplus profits) has a logic of its own and an inevitable contradiction : For increasing productivity and ensuring higher prices, the industrial sector needs to modernise (capitalise) further, and a profitable local market based on a stable - if not increasing - purchasing power of the population, ensured.

Yet, today India's market and industry is unable to provide the necessary infrastructural and technological back-up to agriculture, instead it further appropriates agrarian surplus leading to increasing pressures on the rural population - especially the poor peasants and agricultural labourers. As one estimate put it : "... a four per cent growth in agriculture is simply not possible to sustain under the existing institutional and technological set-up of Indian agriculture, unless industrial growth is of the order of at least 10 per cent."[98]

The process of differentiation and growth of Indian agriculture has therefore pitted the "rich peasant" class directly in conflict with the monopolistic industrial classes[99] : - both competing to "share the cake" of India's development and modernisation. All at the cost of the vast masses of tenant-farmers, agricultural labourers and landless peasants - who today stand marginalised in the process and converted into 'cheap' and "militant" political fodder for the rural elites during times of "farmers agitations".

The political irony of this situation is that the conflict between the rich peasantry (rural elite) and industrial monopolists takes place through the medium of Centre-State relations in India. In other words, the rich peasantry has come to exercise tremendous political leverage and influence on regional and communal parties and political processes to serve their own interests, accentuating the tensions prevelant in Centre-state politics, and, more important, giving way to fundamentalist forces of regionalism and communalism. It is precisely these political developments in recent years in India's agrarian scene that signals the resurgence of "rich peasant power", and, as some would like to call it, "Agrarian Fascism."[100]

CHAPTER 4

THE PHILIPPINES

4.1 History of Peasant Movement in the Philippines

(i) Peasant Struggles under Spanish and American Colonialism

For over three centuries (1565-1896) the Philippines was colonised by the Spaniards. During this period the Filipino peasantry were subject to domination and exploitation by the Spanish colonisers. Spanish rule brought with it an alien religion i.e., Christianity, and new forms of political rule and economic systems. The colonisers introduced the "*encomienda system*", a form of plantation system for export production, by which they confiscated large tracts of land belonging to the peasantry. They forced the peasantry to work on these lands and produce export crops viz., sugar, hemp, copra or tobacco.

Peasant revolts against Spanish colonialism during this period took the form of spontaneous anti-colonial revolts directed against the alien oppressor. Besides, these revolts also contributed to the rise of Filipino nationalism culminating in the formation in July 1892 of the *Katipunan* by Andres Bonifacio. This was a secret society of Filipinos whose aims were to spread nationalist ideas and to defend the interests of the poor and the oppressed against Spanish colonial exploitation, and to gain total independence of the Philippines.[1]

By 1899, America replaced Spain as the colonial ruler over the Philippines and maintained this control until the Second World War in 1942. During this period, the Filipino peasantry consolidated itself and took organisational form with the setting up in 1924 of the KPMP (*Katipunan Pambansa ng mga Magbubukid sa Pilipinas* or National Peasants' Union of the Philippines). This Union attempted to consolidate the existing peasant associations all over the Philippines.[2]

(ii) Peasant Struggles against the Japanese : The Huk Rebellion : (1942-1945)

The turmoil of World War II (1939-1945) was also felt deep within Asia. On January 2, 1942 Japanese forces invaded Manila and declared Martial law in the city. With the evacuation of the Americans, the Philippines was subjected to another imperialist power - the Japanese. The Japanese took complete control of the whole country and employed violent methods to suppress any opposition to their rule. However the PKM *(Pambansang Kaisahan ng mga Magbubukid* - National Peasants Union) - a large peasant organisation during the 1940s - intensified its campaign for national liberation and democracy, rallying thousands of peasants to confront the take-over by the Japanese. Most of the resistance was underground and peasants with old firearms joined together to establish effective guerrilla squads to fight the Japanese. The

motivation of the peasants who joined the rebellion is reflected in the following statement of one of its participants :

> "I had no choice but to fight against the Japanese. I believed that the Philippines should be independent. The Japanese had no more right to my land than the Americans did. When the Americans came back in 1945, I welcomed them only because they helped free us from the Japanese and because they promised us independence in one year."[3]

This underground resistance movement was called the *Hukbo Ng Bayan Laban Sa Hapon* (The People's Anti-Japanese Army) - more popularly known as the "*Huk Rebellion*". Its program included the following :

(a) restoration of the government of the Commonwealth of the Philippines,

(b) liquidation of the enemy, his agents and puppets,

(c) destruction of his supply bases and lines of communication, and

(d) elimination of banditry and lawlessness in territories under the Huk influence.[4]

At its birth in April 1942, the *Huks* comprised of less than 300 persons with 5 squadrons, and by the end of the War, its forces exceeded 10,000 persons and 76 squadrons.[5] The Huks were successful in launching militant actions and establishing control in the provinces of Pampanga, Nueva Ecija, and Bulacan in Central Luzon. They set up provincial revolutionary governments, divided land among the peasants left behind by the landlords, and exercised immense power in the areas under their control.

The *Huk Rebellion*, therefore portrayed a high level of political consciousness on the part of the Filipino peasants. Their underground strategies and guerrilla organisations provided the necessary training ground for future struggles to come. During the latter part of the 1940s, the *Huks* were to merge into the Peoples' Liberation Army of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and continue their struggles, although many of their key leaders and militant peasants were arrested or liquidated. Nevertheless, the struggle continued well into the 1950s.

In the height of the *Huk Rebellion* against Japanese aggression, the leadership appealed to the American forces in the region to aid the Filipino struggle. Luis Taruc, the Commander of the *Huks*, sent a telegram to General Douglas MacArthur, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army Forces in the Far East on March 29, 1942 which stated :

> "We, the people of the Philippines, loyal to the governments of the United States and the Philippines, are determined to offer our lives for the defense of democracy and territorial rights of both the Philippines and the United States. We wish that you will kindly grant your guidance and support to this newly born but militant force of the Filipino people."[6]

The Americans, however, while eager to provide military, technical and financial aid to the Filipino people to drive out the Japanese and regain control over the Philippines, were however suspicious of the political and ideological foundations of the *Huk rebellion.* Among others, the main reasons for the differences that emerged between the *Huks* and the American forces (USAFFE - United States Armed Forces in the Far East during World War II) in their common war against the Japanese included the following :

> (a) the US considered the Huks as communist-inspired and hence subversive - "The Hukbalahap is subversive...a radical organisation...(it) is reported to be modeled after the communistic organisations in China and is motivated by purely personal and political objectives...(it) is Anti-Democratic and Anti-Nippon, Communist by party affiliation, and Bolshevist in its tendency."[7], (b) the Hukbalahap was a popular-based guerrilla movement with political organisations in the villages. The USAFFE were opposed to the Huks creating these 'extra-governmental units' among the people, (c) The Huks aggressively resisted the Japanese forces, while the USAFFE 'consciously followed a more retiring strategy of collecting intelligence information and waiting for the American army to return'.[8]

US aid played a crucial role in providing the military and ideological weapons to the independent government of the Philippines after the defeat of the Japanese, to crush the radical Huk rebellion. Between 1946 and 1950 the US had provided over US$ 700 million to the Filipinos to rebuild after World War II and to help finance government armed forces. In addition, between 1951 and 1956, the US provided another US$ 500 million of economic assistance and US.$.117 million of military assistance.[9] Overall, the US provided nearly half of the funds designated for agrarian projects and the Filipino government's "psych war" against the *Huks* between 1951 and 1955. A Filipino Colonel who fought on the side of the US forces against the Huks stated in no uncertain terms that "U.S. aid was very important to defeating the *Huks*...I 'd say 30 per cent of the credit for stopping the Huks goes to the United States."[10]

US strategy to fight the *Huk* rebels included as well covert counter-insurgency methods, first developed by Lt Col Edward G Lansdale, Chief of the Manila station of the OPC (Office of Policy Coordination). The OPC was created in 1950 by the National Security Council of the US government. In a top-secret document (NSC 68) dated April 1950 the mission of the OPC was explained as "covert psychological warfare, covert political action, and covert paramilitary action including sabotage, countersabotage, and support to anti-Communist guerilla groups."[11]

Lansdale masterminded the US-planned election campaign that helped Ramon Magsaysay to become President of the Philippines in the National Elections of March 1953. Upon election to office, President Magsaysay provided a free hand to Lansdale and the OPC mission in Manila to wipe out the *Huk rebellion.*[12] Lansdale's strategy to fight the *Huks* involved organising Magsaysay's new agrarian and governmental policies to win over the peasantry, and, more important, a careful study of the folk traditions and lifestyles of the peasants who provided the fighters and support for the Huks. To this effect :

"Lansdale ordered a careful study of the superstitions of the Filipino peasants, their lore, their witch doctors, their taboos and myths. He then got hold of a small aircraft and some air-to-ground communications gear. He would fly the aircraft over areas where Huks were known to be hiding and broadcast in the Tagalog language mysterious curses on any villagers who deigned to give the Huks food and shelter. He actually succeeded in starving some Huk units into surrender by these means. The only drawback was that Lansdale could use the operation only in the rainy season when the cloud cover hid the airplane from its audience on the ground."[13]

On July 4, 1946 the Philippines was declared "independent" from US colonial rule. This was merely a formal gesture on the part of the Americans and did not in any fundamental way change the situation of the Filipinos. The various treaties signed between the Americans and the local ruling elites, continued to bind the country, economically and politically, to the USA. After 1946, Philippine government policy hardly deviated from the neo-colonial line of inviting multinationals, laying the country's resources open for foreign exploitation, allowing the violation of Philippine sovereignty in US military bases, and keeping wages down to suit the demands of foreign companies.

Following independence, various labour and peasant organisations were set up to assist the peasantry. These included : the Associated Labour Union (ALU); the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF): the National Union of Plantation, Agricultural and Allied Workers (NUPAAW); and the Philippine Labour Unity Movement (PLUM). Later many of these were co-opted by the rulers to ensure political control over the peasantry. All these formed a loose national confederation called the Philippine Council for Agrarian Workers (PCAW). Among these, perhaps the more effective peasant organisation was the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF), which was born basically as a reaction to the militant *Huk* Rebellion of the past.

The FFF was established in 1953 by a group of Catholic laymen headed by Jeremias Montemayor. In the initial stage under a relatively favorable climate, the FFF rapidly grew to over 36,000 members by March 1957, most of which were from Central Luzon - the same provinces where the *Huk Rebellion* had its strongest bases. The strong resistance by the landed gentry to solve the land disputes taken up by the FFF sparked off public demonstrations by the FFF members with strong support from students.

A spectacular 2-month long picket was launched by the FFF in Manila between September and November 1969. With a younger leadership taking over the FFF and the successes in solving land disputes through militant actions, the FFF made a significant shift to a more radical approach in addressing the agrarian question in the Philippines. Further, the assassination of eight local FFF leaders in the province of Laguna between 1957-1970 increasingly radicalised the movement.

(iii) The Peasantry and the Marcos Regime

On September 21, 1972 President Marcos declared "Martial Law" in the Philippines. This severely crippled the FFF which lost most of its militant membership and has today become an instrument of government control over farmers in the country.[14]

Martial Law was declared on the assumption by the government that tensions and conflicts were nearing an explosive situation in the Philippines. By 1970, the accumulated grievances of the various sections of the Filipinos against the Marcos regime and the blatant exploitation of US interests, escalated into unprecedented mass actions involving about 50,000 to 100,000 participants - these commenced with the January 26 and 30-31 demonstrations in which thousands of workers, peasants, students, intellectuals and others participated. These mass actions, which later came to be known as the "First Quarter Storm of 1970" was a historical event in the Philippines, because this contributed to the setting up of numerous mass organisations of students, workers, farmers, intellectuals, middle sectors, and others, who were determined to radically change the entire social fabric of Philippine society.

Martial law came in the form of institutionalising the Marcos dictatorship. The military was called in to control and eliminated the entire opposition and all human rights and civil liberties were curtailed and suspended. Trade unions, farmer organisations and student councils were banned and all publications were subject to strict censorship by the Martial law administration. Unable to persist in the wake of these stringent measures, most of the opposition and progressive forces in the Philippines went underground and joined hands with the 'outlawed' Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA).

(iv) The Armed Peasant Resistance

The present Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) was re-established, on December 26, 1968 - the 75th anniversary of the birth of Mao Tse Tung. It evolved after a split with the pro-Moscow CPP. A year later, on March 29, 1969, the *New People's Army* (NPA), which was the guerilla army of the Party was established. In the 1960s and 1970s the CPP's character was based on the adoption of Maoist precepts and life-styles. Amando Malay, Jr. notes :

> "Mao jackets, caps, and badges became status symbols, worn as so many political statements denoting either adherence to Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought... Pride in one's 'Asian-ness' as a reaction perhaps to the uncritical worship of things Western in the past, was an observable attitude during this period and Lin Piao's glorification of the Asian, African and Latin American 'countryside of the world' certainly reinforced this attitude."[15]

The declaration of Martial Law in September 1972 polarised the democratic struggle of the Filipinos. Following 1972, the primary struggle was enacted between the Marcos government and the Filipino armed forces (AFP), on the one side, and the underground resistance of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and its armed wing, the New People's Army (NPA),

on the other. As early as March 3, 1972 it had been estimated that "the NPA had wiped out some 800 enemy troops; some 900 informers, landlord despots and bad elements, and 22 military officers. It had also raided several major enemy camps, including the headquarters of Task Force "Lawin" and the Philippine Military Academy.

In less than 3 years, the number of fulltime fighting squads had increased eightfold, exclusive of the more numerous local part-time guerrillas and the people's militia".[16] In February 1986, at the time of the "People's Power Revolution" which brought Mrs Aquino to power - the NPA was still a formidable force in the Filipino countryside :

> "in 62 of the country's 73 provinces and...it controlled or influenced at least 20% of the barangays, the basic local political units of the Philippines. It had approximately 20,000 full-time armed guerillas in the field and perhaps half that number in armed militia units formed for local protection. Communist party leaders claimed a nationwide mass base of a million people, most of them farmers and workers."[17]

In 1970 the alleged Chairman of the CPP, Jose Maria Sison - more popularly known by his Party name, Amado Guerrero - presented the main ideological positions of the Party and its understanding of the Philippines society, in his major work, "Philippine Society and Revolution". This book found widespread popularity among Party cadres and activists in the Philippines, and until today remains one of the main doctrinal works of the Party. Since then, however, the ideology and strategy of the Party has undergone much review and a lot of new thinking has now entered the movement. The prime ideological basis and the strategic program of revolution of the CPP/NPA is enunciated in the "10 Point Programme" of the National Democratic Front (NDF) adopted on November 12, 1977 :

> "We basically rely on the people's armed revolution to overthrow and replace the fascist dictatorship with a coalition government of a national democratic form."[18]

The 10 Point Programme also highlights the strategy of agrarian revolution of the Party and its immediate demands for the peasantry :

> "We advocate for the moment a policy of rent reduction and elimination of usury as a realistic step towards the genuine emancipation of the peasantry. We urge landlords to agree to this reform as enlightened ones among them have done. We advocate the raising of agricultural productivity through simple exchange of labour, mutual aid and cooperatives. Fair prices should be arranged between the peasants and merchants. In the frontier areas, the national minorities and small freeholders should be assured of the ownership of their land. Landgrabbing by the big landlords and big capitalists should be firmly opposed.
>
> In farms run on a capitalist basis, the farm workers should have trade unions and should demand better working and living conditions. Farm workers in non-capitalist farms should organise themselves or join poor peasant associations so as

to get fair wages... They should also fight for genuine land reforms... The land problem, especially the problem of ownership, can be finally settle throughout the country upon the complete overthrow of US imperialist and comprador-landlord rule."[19]

Since its inception, the CPP/NPA combined have grown in strength and influence. In 1980, the Party issued a statement on the 11th Anniversary of the New People's Army dated March 29, 1980 which claimed : "Our guerilla fronts have a combined population of more than 10 million. We effectively reach more than half of the people here, and they support the revolutionary movement in various ways. The core of this mass base consists of some 40,000 mass activists and some 800,000 active members of the revolutionary mass organisations."[20] To quote another estimate : "The radical Left, however, increased its influence in the countryside through dedicated propaganda and recruitment activities of cadres of the NPA guerillas... They claimed to have guerilla fronts in 43 out of 72 provinces throughout the country. The National Defence College recently estimated NPA strength at between 3,000 and 3,500 armed men with a mass base of 180,000."[21]

The US Intelligence estimates acknowledged the overwhelming strength and popular support of the CPP/NPA. A US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report of 1985 stated : "The Communist-led New People's Army (NPA) has grown from a minor presence in the 1970s to a number now estimated at over 30,000 armed regular and irregular guerillas . The NPA in conjunction with the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) controls or is contesting control of settlements inhabited by at least 10 million people. The military initiative clearly rests with the NPA."[22]

The effective implementation of a progressive agrarian program is crucial to the future of the Left movement in the Philippines. In fact, it is crucial to the very survival of the CPP/NPA, as it is basically a movement that relies heavily on the peasantry for support and strength. The CPP/NPA's agrarian reform must therefore be able to appeal to the peasantry and mobilise them into its mass organisations in the countryside. The majority of the Filipino population lives in the countryside, and it is in the rural areas that the violence of State repression and the military excesses are rampant. This fact has resulted in a situation where the poor and the exploited peasantry have little alternative but to seek shelter and protection from the NPA cadres. The NPA has so far been successful in providing this "backup-armed forces" for the peasantry. It has also helped them to set up cooperatives to increase agricultural production, self-defence units to protect themselves, and so on. As one source puts it:

"Reflecting the numerical predominance of peasants in the national population, however, the vast majority of NPA guerillas are small settlers, poor farmers, tenants and landless labourers. Thus, while the NPA's ultimate goal is the defeat of government armed forced, this can be achieved only to the extent that the NPA succeeds in generating and leading the struggle for revolutionary land reform, thereby securing the lasting loyalty of the peasantry."[23]

After more than 20 years of armed struggle, the CPP/NPA claims to be at the "advanced sub-stage" of the "strategic defensive of peoples' war". It is said to have shifted from "early sub-stage" to "advanced sub-stage" of this defensive stage around 1982. Basically, this is a stage of consolidation of its forces and increasing coordinated armed struggles against the "enemy". Although it has effectively provided the chief opposition to the Philippine government and the Philippines Armed Forces, the CPP/NPA has to confront the counter-intelligence and anti-subversion operations of the Philippine Armed Forces, fanatical right-wing armed vigilante squads - like the "Rock Christ" groups in southern Mindanao, and many others.[24] And yet the fact that the CPP/NPA maintains a de-centralised structure at the base, coordinated by a centralised leadership, makes its total repression rather difficult.

The Philippine archipelago provides the most conducive geographical setting for a protracted guerilla war against the government. This geographical factor also explains the necessity for de-centralisation and self-reliance of the CPP/NPA. As Jose Maria Sison put it : "In the long run, the fact that our country is archipelagic will turn out to be an advantage for us and great disadvantage for the enemy...The enemy will be forced not only to the countryside but also to so many islands."[25]

In the recent past the National Democratic Front (NDF) has been successful in mobilising influential international bodies and forming support groups for the Filipino resistance. A significant number of Filipino and friendly foreign groups have been established to mobilise public opinion and propaganda against the Philippine government and the military repression in the country. A clear evidence of this international network was the convening of the "Permanent People's Tribunal of the Philippines" in Antwerp, Belgium, between October 30 to November 3, 1980.[26]

Ideologically, however, the CPP/NPA has also been affected by the political turmoils in Communist China. Many Philippine analysts claimed that the CPP/NPA made a tactical blunder in supporting the Chinese government's Tiananmen Square crackdown against pro-democracy demonstrators.[27] Perhaps China no longer remains the prime inspirer of the Philippine revolution, as perhaps it was in the past. Therefore, the implications of the political changes in China have become an important topic of discussion within the CPP/NPA ranks, in order to assess their significance and implications for the resistance movement.

Perhaps the CPP/NPA is learning more from the Nicaraguan experience today, than it did from the Chinese revolution in the past. These important changes in the international communist movement have directly affected the Filipino communists [28] How they would emerge from the present state of "ideological confusion" in the international communist movement today, can be determined only by the future of elite politics and the revolutionary praxis of the Filipino people.

4.2 Agrarian Reform under Martial Law

"Agrarian Reform is the cornerstone of the New Society", proclaimed President Marcos in September 1972 upon imposition of Martial Law in the Philippines, and issued Proclamation

No.2 declaring the whole country as a Land Reform area. On October 21, 1972 he issued Presidential Decree (PD) 27 limiting the coverage of land reform to only the tenanted rice and corn lands, excluding a large portion of lands devoted to export crops - especially sugarcane and coconut. PD 27 which provided the framework and the legal basis of the Marcos agrarian reform program, proclaimed "the emancipation of all tenant-farmers" in the country.

In this section we shall scrutinize some of the more salient projects and programs that were part of this agrarian reform, for these efforts were to bring about drastic changes in the Philippine countryside in the ensuing years. These were changes that failed to alleviate the situation of the tenant-farmers and landless agricultural labourers, who were intended to be the main beneficiaries of the agrarian reform program; instead it signaled a new era of agricultural boom based on highly capitalist forms of production and heavy foreign (transnational) investment in the agribusiness industry and export crop production. Further, we shall see how this sharpened the agrarian class conflict in the Philippines and fanned the flames of agrarian rebellion in the countryside.

We need to draw a distinction here between "Land Reform" and "Agrarian Reform" - Land Reform refers merely to changes introduced in the tenurial and ownership status of the land (sharecropping, rent tenancy or owner-cultivator farming); whereas, Agrarian Reform refers to the technical aspect of agricultural production that affect the productivity of farming i.e., methods of cultivation, seed varieties, irrigation, mechanisation - and changes in the politics of land control.

In the Philippines, the call for a "genuine land reform" by the radical peasant movement since the Marcos period in the 1970s has implied a programme to "transfer the ownership and control of land". This implies a transfer of economic and political power from the landed elite to the landless tenants and agricultural workers. This is how we must define Agrarian Reform and that is the central issue at stake in the Philippines today.[29] The three pillars of the "Marcos Agrarian Reform Programme" included the following :

(i) MASAGANA 99

Masagana 99 was basically a program to provide agricultural credit to rice farmers in order to enable them to increase the output of rice production through adoption of High Yielding Varieties of seeds, and utilisation of modern agricultural inputs, fertilisers, pesticides and farm machinery. Since farmers do not always have land to offer as collateral, the government provided a subsidy channeled through government and private lending institutions which provided non-collateral loans to rice farmers.[30] The program began in May 1973 and until the completion of Phase VI in March 1974, more than Pesos 2.5 billion had been channeled through the Philippine National Bank and the Rural Banking system to more than half a million farmers, in the peak year of 1974.[31]

"*Masagana*" is a *Tagalog* work for "*bountiful*" which was partially achieved through this program. In the 8 years since its implementation, the *Masagana 99* programme had contributed

to increasing rice production. As of 1977, the Philippines had been transformed from a rice importing to a rice exporting country. In 1979, rice (palay) production reached a record volume of 7.11 million metric tons.[32] However, the *Masagana 99* was unable to really alleviate the depressed economic situation of the farmers largely due to the institutionalised nature of credit provided by this program and the "peasant psychology" to depend on the more traditional credit sources viz., landlords and money lenders.

In fact, for many farmers, the program became increasingly unpopular. This is clearly indicated by the rapid drop in the number of borrowers from the credit scheme provided by the program during the various phases of its implementation - from 401,461 borrowers in Phase I (May-October 1973) with the total grant of Pesos 369.5 million, the number dropped to 85,401 in Phase XII (November 1978-April 1979) with a total grant of only Pesos 158 million - a decrease of over 78%.[33]

Clearly, for most of the *Masagana 99* loan recipients, this was the first experience dealing with institutionalised credit. They were threatened with prison if they did not repay overdue loans. Thus, either because of psychological preference or economic necessity, farmers again turned to the usurer for credit needs.

Additionally, the Rural Banking system gained considerably through the Masagana 99 program and rapidly expanded its business. Its gross income doubled from 1972 (before Masagana 99) to 1974, the first full year of implementation. By 1975, the net income rose to an all-time high of 20% of gross income. "The Rural Banking business became so profitable that 1974 saw the largest number of new banks opened in the system's history - 76 in all."[34] Moreover, these rural banks were owned by rural families who were to be the 'victims' of land reform. They were also the distributors of agricultural inputs in the rural areas, and hence came to reap the main benefits of the Masagana 99 program. Rene Ofreneo sums up the main impact of Masagana 99 in the following words :

> "Obviously, rural indebtedness remains a serious problem in the countryside. Poverty begets indebtedness, indebtedness begets poverty. It is a vicious cycle that Masagana 99 and land reform have not altered. What the two programs have simply achieved are, on the one hand, to increase rice production, and on the other to blunt sharp class contradictions by transforming the big feudal lords into a rural capitalist and confusing the farmers, who are now more or less independent farm operators, as to whom their exploiters are. The multiplicity of lending institutions is one major source of confusion. Before, there was only one institution that could galvanize the rural masses to action - the feudal lord, who was both the landowner and the credit institution in the village."[35]

(ii) SAMAHANG NAYON

The *Samahang Nayon* (SN) is a *barrio* (village) unit of a national cooperative structure conceived by Dr. Orlando Sacay. This program was established by a provision of the

Presidential Decree 27 issued on October 21, 1972 which stated that "membership in a cooperative is one of the conditions in the emancipation of tenant farmers" in the country. As described in the training package of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), the "Samahang Nayon" is an organization composed primarily of the farmers in one barrio with the underlying concept of mutual aid. It serves as an educational arm, a means of generating savings and a way of instituting discipline."[36] Membership in the *Samahang Nayon* was envisaged to provide the farmer the following : (i) assistance in his credit needs, (ii) to act as a channel for one package of technology, (iii) guarantee his land amortization payments, (iv) assure effective acquisition of production and farm supply requirements, and (v) a marketing channel for agricultural produce.[37]

This program too was far from being successful in the rural areas as studies indicate. It has been estimated that as of December 31, 1978 the program had been implemented in only 27,697 barrios, out of the total target of 55,000 barrios.[38] Also, the Samahang Nayon was a program that was strictly imposed from the top. Although they were called 'voluntary organisations' based on the free choice of farmers to seek membership, threats were used to bring in new members and pressure them to undergo the time-consuming training programs. Moreover, there were also false promises, like only those who join the *Samahang Nayon* will receive Masagana 99 loans.

In terms of membership, there was a discrepancy. The fact that membership in SN was open to all members of the rural community, there was the danger of the program ending up in the hands of the rural elite, rather than the rural poor. This unrestricted membership policy in a way explains why there were lawyers, school teachers, and other professionals leading the *Samahang Nayon's*. Therefore, the numerous landless rural poor, who were financially unable to contribute any savings to the *Samahang Nayon* were conveniently left out. "On the whole, the basic weakness of the SN program lies in the fact that there is minimal participation and control by the members as well as the rural masses in the planning and implementing the program."[39]

(iii) CORPORATE FARMING PROGRAM

Under the government's "Export-Oriented Industralisation" (EOI) programme, Presidential Decree (PD) 1159 provided for the launching of the Corporate Farming Programme in 1975. By 1981, it was estimated that over 276 foreign corporations and 95 corporate farms had acquired over 86,017 hectares of land. In the southern province of Mindanao alone : "the Dole Corporation controlled over 30,000 hectares of prime agricultural lands in South Cotabato. The Philippine Packing Corporation (owned by the giant Multinational Del Monte) controlled over 24,000 hectares in Bukidnon. Guthrie Palm Oil Plantation acquired over 8,000 hectares of land in Agusan del Norte, and finally, the Manila Paper Mills Corporation had amassed over 45,000 hectares of land planted to falcatta and ipil-ipil."[40]

Corporate farms have been defined as "the voluntary grouping of small individual cultivated farms of approximately equal productive capabilities into larger units, the aggregate are treated and operated as a single farm." This would mean that different farms would be

operated as a single farm, under one management, and the produce harvested, processed, stored and marketed under a pooled system.[41] This program's immediate effect has been the shift from rice production to the promotion and increase in the area of export crops planted in the Philippines. For example, "more than 80,000 hectares were planted to sugar in the crop year 1974-75 than just 2 years earlier. Based on field inspection in some of the areas where such crop conversion is taking place .... it seems likely that at least half of that was formerly planted to rice or corn. And of that 40,000 hectares at least, half again, was either purchased from cultivators or planted to sugar after ejecting or buying out the tenants."[42] It has also been estimated that as of 1976, 40 wholly foreign-owned corporations had established corporate farms in the Philippines. Some of these were Caltex, Shell, Citibank, Firestone, Goodyear, Ford, Union Carbide, International Harvester, Dole, and Del Monte.[43] Besides the above (*Masagana 99, Samahang Nayon* and Corporate Farming Program) other projects that were parts of the Marcos Agrarian Reform program included the following : fertilizer subsidy, crop insurance schemes, resettlement projects, and land transfer.

To summarise, the agrarian reform program we have reviewed above, hardly introduced any fundamental change in the socio-economic problems of the poor farmers in the Philippines. In fact, it strengthened the hands of the traditional rural elites and further subjugated Philippine agriculture to the control of Multi-national corporations in the profitable agribusiness industry. Yet, the preamble of the "Five Year Philippine Development Plan for 1978-1982" claimed successes in the land reform program : "Significant achievements marked the performance of the agricultural sector in 1973-1976. Self-sufficiency in rice production was attained; credit and government resources were mobilised for food production; the *Samahang Nayon* movement which is the biggest farmer institution was initiated; and the rural household income expanded, improving the income distribution pattern between the rural and urban areas."[44]

On the contrary, national surveys and studies conducted by various non-governmental and voluntary organisations have come up with quite different impressions and findings. For example, a National Survey conducted by the Major Religious Superiors in late 1973 concluded as follows :

> "Landowners throughout the country resist the implementation of land reform program. There have been numerous accounts of harassment and threats, outright eviction of tenants in many farms, conversions of rice and corn lands to other crops .... throughout the 11 regions of the country. Subdividing land among heirs and changing the status of tenants to agricultural workers is also fairly common. Politicians and government officials are generally not in favour of land reform. In some areas, they are the main obstacles to the implementation of the land reform program."[45]

The balance-sheet of the Marcos Agrarian Reform programme indicates that the programme was limited to just 22.2% of more than 6 million hectares of rice and corn lands, or only 13.7% of the entire agricultural land area of the country which is 13 million hectares. Besides, the number of beneficiaries was reduced to only 13.1% of the entire farming households in the country.[46]

During the period of Martial Law these programmes brought about significant changes in the Philippine countryside. It stimulated new forces of production and control over agriculture and a new thrust towards export-orientation. In sum, the significant changes introduced in the Philippine countryside through the Agrarian Reform program in 1970s include the following :

(a) Capitalism in Philippine Agriculture

The most significant impact of the Marcos Agrarian Reform program in the past decade has been the consolidation of the forces of capitalist production in the countryside. In its so-called attempt to alleviate the poor farmers from the bonds of "feudal" oppression and thereby eliminate backward relations of production in the countryside, the Land Reform program introduced and further consolidated capitalist forces, particularly through the patronage given to giant multinational plantations and export-oriented agriculture. In this sense, the Land Reform program modernised the production process in the countryside and thus sharpened the class polarisation of the rural Filipino society.

Opening up the Philippine countryside to foreign investment and multinational corporations, also made the peasantry more dependent on imported farm machinery, fertilisers, and inputs. The consumption pattern of the Filipino peasantry also underwent significant changes with the introduction of the . "Green Revolution" - peasants dependency on fertilisers, pesticides, machinery, which tied them more strictly to the capitalist market in the Philippines and the international market. According to the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), total fertiliser consumption rose from 101.2 million metric tons in 1956 to 563 million metric tons in 1972. At the same time, between 1956 and 1973, local fertiliser production rose from 29.3 million Kg. to 348.2 million Kg.[47]

Capitalism in agriculture can also be seen in the increasing commercialisation of food production. Vast expanses of rice fields have been converted into commercial plantations to produce export crops like sugarcane, coconut, banana, and pineapple. Owned and operated mainly by giant multinational companies, these plantations are run on a highly capitalist basis.[48] In this manner, the "Green Revolution" has not only shifted agricultural production from basic food crops to export-oriented crops, but it has also commercialised food production itself and "in the process paving the way for the integration of the traditionally isolated subsistence-oriented farmers into the mainstream of the capitalist economy. The small farmers now produce mainly for the market..."[49]

(b) The Multinational Corporations and the Agribusiness Industry

Penetration of capitalism in the Philippine countryside would not have been possible without the dominant role played by multinational corporations and international big business in the agribusiness industry. By 1980, an estimated 45% of the country's cultivated land was planted with export crops for the international market :

"The United States imports about 350 million tons of sugar, 315 million tons of coconut oil, 95 million tons of canned pineapple, and 22 million gallons of fruit juice yearly from the Philippines. The Philippines also exports about $ 80 million worth of fish and $ 100 million worth of bananas every year, mostly to Japan. While the average Filipino consumes only about 89% of the calories needed for an adequate nutrition, the country exports about 800 calories per person per day in the form of coconut oil alone."[50]

The US, Japan and the major capitalist countries in the West have always expressed keen interest in the agrarian sector of the poorer countries, like the Philippines, due to the latter's abundance of rich natural resources and human labour, and also the possibility to utilise these resources to satisfy the consumption demands of the these developed countries. Therefore, the "Green Revolution", invented by the capitalist world, was imposed on the Philippines. As pointed out by Ernest Feder : "The Third World countries' national agricultural policies and programmes are not anymore of the home-grown variety. They are, on the contrary, conceived and hatched by international agribusiness monopoly capital."[51]

(c) From Peasantry to Proletariat

There is evidence that the Agrarian Reform program and the "Green Revolution" in the Philippines have accelerated the process of "proletarianization of the peasantry". This is particularly true in the vast plantation areas and the mechanised rice production zones in the Philippines today. The further commercialisation of agriculture, the role of multinational companies and the agribusiness industry, the spread of industrialisation and modern techniques of farming, have all contributed to rapidly convert tradition share-croppers and tenant farmers into wage labourers and landless agricultural workers.

In other words, capitalism in Philippine agriculture is gradually destroying the traditional "patron-client' relationships and replacing it with a more sophisticated relationship based on the capitalist mode of production. As we have seen earlier, this has resulted in the decay of the traditional classes in the Philippines and new agrarian ruling elites (rich peasants, capitalist farmers) have emerged above the predominant class of rural labourers - the rural proletariat.[52] It is this volatile class of the rural proletariat at the bottom of the agrarian social structure in the Philippines today that possess the ideological potential and organisational weapon to rise up in revolt. As one source put it :

"....The displaced cultivator is most often reduced to sporadic wage labour. His bitterness is deep and his propensity to violence, great. All that is needed is leadership to turn that violence to political purposes. Thus increased rice, banana or pineapple production today may have been bought at the price of widening rebellion within the next few years."[53]

4.3 Land Reform as Counter Insurgency

Far from really tackling the basic socio-economic problems of the peasantry and "emancipating" them from the clutches of oppression, the "New Society's" agrarian reform program was basically intended as a counter-insurgency program to eliminate growing agrarian unrest in the Philippine countryside. As we have seen, in the years following the imposition of Martial law in the Philippines witnessed the rapid escalation of peasant resistance under the leadership of the New People's Army of the Communist Party of the Philippines (NPA/CPP). While the deteriorating economic situation of the poor farmers in the countryside was forcing them to join ranks with the NPA/ CPP and opt for armed revolution against the ruling classes, the Philippine government and US interests, alarmed at this explosive situation, hatched the ambitious land reform program to counteract this threat. To quote an USAID official :

> "Only if US security were threatened would we assist in realizing land reform in the Philippines. It would be difficult, but we could pull it off. If the Huks had been perceived as more of a threat, we would have done what we did in Japan, Korea and Taiwan".[54]

Since 1960s, USA had evinced a keen interest in the countryside of "under-developed" countries, like the Philippines, as the rural sector and countryside of these countries have bred and nurtured the most violent armed opposition to the ruling classes and foreign domination. Neglect of the agrarian sector would fan the flames of Communist-led peasant revolt - such was the firm belief of the USA and the local ruling elites. Counter-insurgency programs and numerous researches and studies on land reform and agricultural development, therefore, were keenly promoted and funded by the USA in the 1960s. The Philippines was indeed a fertile ground for such "counter-insurgency" experiments.[55]

Hence, it is not surprising to note that the developments in Philippine agriculture, particularly in the 1960s, were very much in tune with the foreign policy of the USA. It was in 1960 that the US-based Rockefeller Foundation, in cooperation with the Philippine government, established the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines to develop High Yielding Varieties of rice. Rice, which has been the staple food of the Filipino people and all over Asia, was seen as the basic tool to gain control over these countries. This was stated clearly by John King, who was closely associated with the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations in the USA : "There is urgent need for efforts to help the peoples of south and southeast Asia understand that the pretense and prosperity in China is a myth...The struggle of the "East" versus the "West" in Asia is, in part, a race for production, and rice is the symbol and substance of it."[56]

Thus, the IRRI was established in a predominantly rice-based agrarian economy and in itself, this was a political decision of the USA and the Philippine government. "The Philippine elite also viewed the selection of its country (as IRRI's headquarters) in openly political terms. President Macapagal was quoted as saying that IRRI would "save" the Philippines and other rice-producing countries the "time, expenses and efforts" in solving technical problems of rice production. He also wrote President Kennedy and said : "We consider this Institute as a potent weapon in the struggle against poverty and communism in Asia."[57]

The budget for the IRRI primarily came from the Ford Foundation with a contribution of US$ 1,229,260 in 1972, Rockefeller with US $ 810,745 and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with $ 1,532,237.[58] Further, funds from various multinational corporations, mostly US, were used mainly to finance researches on problems related to products, (like fertilisers, pesticides) which these corporations could supply to the Philippine farmers.

Similarly, the "New Society's Land Reform Program" was also very much keeping in line with US interests in the Philippines. Consider, for example, the areas specified for land transfer. "Out of 144,538 recipients of land transfer certificates as of January 7, 1974, as many as 84,061 come from Nueva Ecija (33,254); Camarines Sur (10,351), Tarlac (9,702); Iloilo (8,905), Pampanga (7,379); Isabela (7,307); and Cagayan (6,136), seven provinces which had a long history of peasant unrest and where there is today the greatest incidence of revolutionary activity."[59] In fact, in its first Annual Report dated September 1973, the Department of Agrarian Reform Planning Service, itself admitted that the selection of land reform pilot municipalities was partly based on "the existence of prevelant social unrest."

The World Bank was another major actor in aiding the counter-insurgency programme of the Marcos regime. The Bank participated in the "Integrated Area Development" (IAD) programs - ostensibly, a "development package" that offered residents services ranging from "security" and medical assistance to road building and technical agricultural aid; but which were clearly a military strategy of counter-insurgency against the revolutionary NPA/CPP.

In the 1970s these IAD programs were implemented in four major areas in the Philippines : Cagayan Valley in Northern Luzon, the principal base of the NPA, the Bicol region in Southern Luzon, the key expansion area of the NPA in the period 1971-1974, the island of Samar in the Eastern Visayas, where the NPA began organising in force in 1974, and Mindoro, a large southern island regarded by the authorities as a potential area for NPA expansion.[60]

Finally, if we look at the Military Assistance Program of the USA to the Philippine government during the period 1972-1978 (which was also the period of implementation of the New Society's Land Reform program) we see steady increases as follows : US Security Assistance program was 13 million in 1972, 16 million in 1973, 18 million in 1975, and 19 million US dollars in 1978.[61] Significant jumps can also be observed in the size of the Philippine Military during this period : the size of the armed forces (including paramilitary) jumped from 62,000 in 1972 to 120,000 in 1975 (and increase of 94%), and the military budget from 131 million in 1972, to $368 million in 1975 (an increase of 181%).[62]

4.4 People's Power and Agrarian Reform : The Continuing Struggle

The government of Cory Aquino which was swept into power in the aftermath of the "People's Power Revolution" of February 1986 which ousted the Marcos dictatorship, faced an explosive rural society that was ravaged by the lop-sided agrarian policies of the Marcos regime and extensively exploited by local landlord and foreign agribusiness corporations. The problem

of land monopoly remained unchallenged through attempts by the Marcos regime at land reform - nay, further oppressive creating the necessary conditions for armed rebellion of the peasantry.

In the 1980s, surveys conducted on the situation of land monopoly across the archipelago revealed the following : "in Mindanao...an estimated 80% of the total cropland area (3.1 million hectares) are tilled by peasants, leaseholders, freeholding settlers and farmworkers. In the Visayas, around 70% of the total cropland area (2.5 million hectares) are not owned by the actual tiller-producers. In Central Luzon, despite it being a showcase of Land Reform, 70% of rice farmers and 50% of sugar farmers remain landless."[63]

President Aquino on coming to power vowed to alleviate the hardships of the majority Filipino peasantry by declaring a "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme" (CARP). She announced : "the government will expand the land reform program in the country to reflect a true liberation of the Filipino farmer from the clutches of landlordism and transform him into a truly self-reliant citizen, participating responsibly in the affairs of the nation."[64] In the year following her installation in power, the Aquino government reviewed a number of drafts of the CARP. Finally, on July 22, 1987 President Aquino promulgated Proclamation No. 131 and Executive Order 229 which instituted the "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme". The main outline and time-frame of the CARP were :

(a) Programme A (1987-1989)

* Complete the Marcos programme
* Distribution of 557,000 ha of rice and corn land to 398,000 tenants
* Enforce fixed rent leasehold of less than 7 ha.

(b) Programme B (1987-1989)

* Implement reform on lands sequestered, foreclosed, idle, abandoned, expropriated and 'voluntarily offered';
* Distribution of 600,000 ha of 425,000 beneficiaries.

(c) Programme C (1989-1992)

* Implement reform in landed estates (or haciendas) under labour administration and tenanted non-rice and non-corn lands.
* Distribute 1.28m ha to 640,000 beneficiaries.

(d) Programme D (1987-1992)

* Implement land reform in public lands suitable for agriculture,
* Distribute 1.35m ha to 675,000 beneficiaries.[65]

The financial costs of this land reform program were collosal, it was projected that the total cost up to 1992 would be Pesos 58.7 billion (or US$ 2.87 billion). This enormous cost

would be covered during the 1987-1992 period through three potential sources : (i) 1/5th from budgetary support (i.e., Pesos 5.8 billion or US$ 283.6 million), (ii) 3/5th from the sale of non-performing assets (i.e., Pesos 20 billion or US$ 978m), and (iii) 1/5th from foreign borrowing (i.e., Pesos 6.5 billion or US$ 317.8m). This left a gap of about US$ 1.29 billion to be covered by additional foreign borrowings.[66]

The World Bank, which had always taken a keen interest in the rural development programmes of the Philippines through its massive technical and financial assistance to the Marcos regime in the 1970s, was once again invoked to assist the CARP of the Aquino government. Since the 1970s the World Bank laid particular emphasis on "rural development" having formulated this strategy in the early 1970s under Robert McNamara.[67]

The World Bank's rural development program in the Philippines was one of the largest in the Third World - "between 1973 and 1981, the Bank committed about US$ 1 billion - or over 40% of total lending to the Marcos regime - to rural development .. (and) .. the Bank played a major advisory role in the government's key programs, land reform and the Masagana 99 credit program."[68]

The World Bank expert, Mr Roy Posterman, the chief architect of the Land Reform program implemented by the US in South Vietnam, and El Salvador, visited the Philippines in 1986-1987 to advise the Ministries of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform on the content and implementation of the new Land Reform programme of the Aquino government. Among others, Posterman proposed : (a) land reform be continued in rice and corn through "Operation Land Transfer" (i.e., the continuation of the Marcos Land Reform program), (b) land foreclosed and sequestered be redistributed, (c) financial sources for subsidising the land reform program be taken from foreign aid - especially under the new provisions of Section 620 (g) of the US Foreign Assistance Act, (d) compensation for peasants to be based on their capacity to pay or by lowering exorbitant prices for land, and (e) land distribution or co-partnership (land sharing) with farmworkers and peasants in sugarlands be immediately encouraged.[69]

However, within a year the World Bank's assessment of the progress in the CARP became skeptical of the political will of the Aquino government to undertake any fundamental restructuring of land ownership and control in the countryside. In 1987, the Bank sent a team of experts to the Philippines which submitted a "confidential report" to the government, which concluded, among others :

> (i) "the most damaging to the ultimate goals of the land reform" are the plan to phase in the reform over a period of several years and the high ceilings on the acreage current landowners would be allowed to retain. The Bank suggested all phases of the CARP be simultaneously implemented.
>
> (ii) The step-phased strategy would give landowners the opportunity - even encouragement - to transfer parts of their holdings, usually to relatives, in order to evade the reform and thereby substantially reduce the amount of land available for redistribution to tenants and farmworkers. "Such an outcome would virtually

preclude any genuine and orderly land reform in the Philippines in the foreseeable future" (para 20, pp.6-7)

(iii) in relation to "just compensation", the report noted that "successful agrarian reform programmes have always included a confiscatory element".

(iv) "external funding is unlikely to be available for the purposes of land compensation to landowners and budgetary allocations would not be sufficient"

(v) The Bank recommended : lowering of overall costs of the land reform (through lowering the compensation paid to landowners), reallocating existing government resources, domestic borrowings and raising taxes (para vi; pp.72-74)

(vi) Finally, the report implicitly criticized the government for a centralised, top-down approach by recommending "local-level participation in all aspects of the agrarian reform." (para 19, p.vi; pp.72-74)[70]

Inspite of this critical assessment of the World Bank as well as increasing opposition from the militant peasant movement in the Philippines, the Aquino government bowed to pressure from the landlord lobby in Parliament to push through with its CARP without making any fundamental change in favour of the poor peasants and farm workers. Certain US interests also played a role in influencing the Philippine Congressmen in order to protect the interests of US transnational agribusiness corporations in the country. To quote one source : "...the United States, has reinforced the inherent bias within the landlord-dominated Philippines Congress against a truly redistributive agrarian reform programme. This is in marked contrast to the United States' earlier sponsorship and support for successful redistributive land reform in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan."[71]

The Aquino government's "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Programme" (CARP) was basically flawed especially in the following three areas, which were the main areas in which the intense debate between the pro-landlord lobby and the militant peasant movement took place after CARP was introduced as legislation :

(a) in its Program A phase, it basically attempts to complete the "lop-sided" Marcos Land Reform programme. It thus addresses only the issue of tenancy and not that of inequity. By postponing until 1989 the coverage of the land reform on non-rice and non-corn lands i.e., the major sector of agricultural lands planted to export crops and large *haciendas*, the programme aims to bow down to pressure from the World Bank/International Monetary Fund (WB/IMF). Thus, lands under foreign plantations and large estates controlled by local landowners will thus remain relegated to the background,

(b) the programme is centred on land redistribution per se, and does not include the provision of adequate support services (e.g., education, credit, infrastructure or irrigation) for the intended beneficiaries of the CARP. In this sense, it is repeating the same fundamental errors of the previous Marcos Land Reform programme, and

(c) the large chunk of financial expenditures under the programme are estimated to be payments for land compensation to landowners. As much 98% of the total costs of the CARP are envisaged to go for land compensation, as the CARP assures "just compensation at fair market value" for the lands it purchases from landowners.

Furthermore, the government has approached multi-lateral institutions for funding for the CARP - the World Bank has been requested for an initial funding of US$ 500 million which is intended to serve as the "seed money" for the planned Land Reform Fund.[72] As noted by Gerardo Bulatao - who worked 4 years with the Aquino government in the area of Agrarian Reform and later resigned :

> "If it is just a stone thrown into a corner rather than the cornerstone or if it is centrepiece only in the sense of a decorative vase on a side table, it will have little impact on national development. But if it is the key program of Government around which other programs are designed or the core of countryside development requiring adjustments in other programs affecting the rural areas, then agrarian reform can make a difference in national development."[73]

The "National Peasant Movement in the Philippines" - ***Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas*** (KMP) - which was formed in June 1985 comprising of all local and regional peasant unions and associations, especially in the Central Luzon province, provided the leadership to the peasant protests against the CARP. The KMP, in fact, had submitted a "Proposal for Genuine Agrarian Reform in the Philippines" to President Aquino herself as early as June 5, 1986 which urged the new government to, among others :

(i) Implement a genuine land reform programme, (ii) Promote a nationalist, independent, scientific agricultural orientation. Stop foreign monopoly and control in agriculture, (iii) Reduce the cost of production to a level that can be afforded by the peasants. Guarantee fair prices for the peasants' produce, (iv) Create a support program that will truly improve the livelihood of the peasants, and (v) Uphold the democratic rights of the peasants to collective, free and meaningful action as well as participation in decision-making and to stop repression in the countryside.[74]

The KMP further outlined a "Five-Year Program for Genuine Land Reform" which proposed the following :

> Phase 1 : "Confiscation and Distribution of lands owned by the deposed dictator and his crony fascist landlord-compradors (2 years);
>
> Phase 2 : The expansion of free distribution to all croplands (late quarter of the first phase up to the fourth year);
>
> Phase 3 : The nationalisation of transnational agribusiness plantations and the total abolition of feudalism (fifth year)".[75]

Anticipating formidable opposition from the pro-landlord lobby in Congress and the lack of political will of the Aquino government to undertake a radical land reform programme, the KMP launched its own initiative to implement its "Programme for Genuine Land Reform" in the country. Jaime Tadeo, the vocal leader of the KMP, declared in no uncertain terms within a year after KMP announced its own Land Reform program :

> "The KMP has its own program for genuine land reform, and it is actively implementing it. We made a promise before which we are making good now. We have promised that if the Aquino government fails to implement land reform, we will implement it ourselves. And we are doing just that...At present, our local organisations have taken over more than 50,000 hectares of unproductive, idle and abondened lands nationwide, more than 20,000 hectares of which have already been made productive by the peasants...in areas where the KMP farmer-members have remained tenants, we work for the reduction of land rent, and as far as possible, the abolition of usury."[76]

By 1988, the opposition against the CARP consolidated with the convening of the "Multi-Sectoral Conference for Genuine Agrarian Reform" between January 25-26, 1988 which adopted a "People's Agrarian Reform Code - PARCODE". Participants included over 600 delegates representing a broad spectrum of peasant organisations, sectoral and cause-oriented groups, non-governmental organisations and political alliances, as well as leading agrarian reform advocates and supporters. PARCODE called for : (i) Land to the Tiller and complete abolition of absentee landownership/absentee proprietorship, (ii) Comprehensive coverage of all types of arable lands, water resources, (iii) Progressive and selective compensation to landowners, (iv) Inclusion of all previous land rentals and unpaid labour as direct payments for the land, (v) Full participation of beneficiaries in decisions-making and implementation, (vi) Preferential option for cooperatives and collectives, (vii) Recognition of the rights of women to land ownership, (viii) Revision of Filipino control of all lands presently covered by multinational corporations, (ix) Recognition of the rights of small fisherfolk towards greater access to and use of water resources, (x) Recognition of the ancestral land rights of tribal communities and indigenous settlers, (xi) Use of local resources for financing agrarian reform, and (xii) Implementation of just labour conditions for farmworkers.[77]

In March 1988, *AMIHAN*, a peasant-based women's organisation, and *GABRIELA*, a national coalition of feminist organisations, adopted a Draft Program on "Women on Land Reform" which, among others, called for : (a) redistribution of the wealth and power of landowners to actual tillers and producers - the peasant men and women, (b) to uplift the status of rural women by recognising their right to own and rent land, promoting the equality of men and women in decision-making, (c) promote national industrialisation and to channel agricultural surplus to national industries rather than foreign controlled markets, and (d) to build real democracy by promoting the ability of men and women to determine the direction of their own development.[78]

The Aquino government, however, paid no heed to the radical call of the KMP and other peasant organisations and NGOs for an effective "pro-peasant" agrarian reform programme. In

fact, it has intensified its military operation against the militant peasant movement and alleged "front-organisations" of the New People's Army/Communist Party of the Philippines.[79] Furthermore, the fact that ownership and control of land in the Philippines is largely vested with private (both local and international) interests further explains the hesitancy of the government to upset the given rural political balance of power. As Tadem notes

> "Private lands lie at the heart of agrarian reform because it is here where the highest incidency of social injustice occurs. Intense conflicts between private landowners on one hand, and tenants of farmworkers on the other, have characterised history of the Philippine countryside. Performance in this sector is therefore the real test of political will and sincerity of government."[80]

4.5 Peasants and National Liberation

The Philippines has experienced a history of consistent peasant resistance against local domination and foreign exploitation. This history enables us to trace a process of growth and consolidation of a radical peasant movement supported by an armed communist movement in opposition to the ruling government. This history enables one to talk of a peasant movement in the Philippines, particularly in the post-World War II period.

Peasant resistance in the Philippines was initially sporadic and localised. There were no formal organisations or movements to coordinate or lead it during their early stages of resistance against Spanish colonialism, except perhaps in the South with the Moro resistance where once can find some level of coordination in their fierce fight against the Spaniards. Indeed, from the very beginning, peasant resistance was violent and protracted in the Philippines. The basic motivation behind peasant resistance during this period was the fact that they feared the sudden appearance of a foreign power to control and dominate their otherwise peaceful life in the country.

Despite defeats and setbacks, peasants learn their lessons from their own history. History taught the Filipino peasants that they were considerably weak, both militarily and in terms of organisational strength, to resist the colonisers. Yet, the organisations they initially formed lacked a clear political direction and understanding of the nature of the socio-economic changes that were sweeping the countryside during the time of American colonialism.

The aftermath of the Philippine Revolution and the coming of the Americans did permit a relatively more liberal atmosphere for the peasants to equip themselves and build up their own organisations. But these attempts too failed to really alleviate the peasants from their oppressive situation. Therefore, they needed a more radical organisation with a radical program of change in the Philippine countryside.

The Huk Rebellion (1942-45) was to provide the Philippine peasantry with this radical ideology and strategy for change. It was through this rebellion that the peasantry learnt its organisational capacity, strategy for resistance and coordination of its forces. Moreover, the

successful armed guerrilla warfare launched by the Huks against the superior Japanese forces set the stage for a new phase in the history of peasant resistance in the country. From that point onwards, it was to be armed guerrilla warfare that was to be the means of effective resistance against the Philippine elite and foreign domination.

The formation of the new CPP and the NPA in 1968-69 was another landmark for peasant resistance in the Philippines. This enabled peasants, as well as other sectors (e.g., workers, students, intellectuals and tribals) to join forces together under a national political coordination, with a definite political ideology and organisational structure.

CHAPTER 5

SRI LANKA

5.1 The Colonial Context and Introduction of a Dependent Export Economy in Sri Lanka

Traditional Ceylon was characterised by three main kingdoms : the Jaffna kingdom in the North, the Kandyan Kingdom in the central highlands and the Kotte kingdom in the south-west. Ceylon experienced a long history of colonial rule : the Portuguese first conquered the Maritime provinces in 1505 and later the Dutch ruled Ceylon for over two centuries. However, it was only with the annexation of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815 by the British, that the entire island came under one administrative rule under the colonial power.

It was under the British that the economy experienced fundamental changes. The British opened up vast areas of lands in the central highlands to introduce coffee plantations. In order to gain access to needed land for the expansive plantations, the British introduced various laws : the "Crowns Lands Encroachment Ordinance" (1840)[1] under which over 260,000 acres were alienated from the peasantry and sold to the British coffee planters at a ridiculous sum of "5 shillings an acre". In 1856, the "Temple Lands Registration Ordinance" was enacted by the British to take over "*chena lands*" ("slash & burn" or shifting cultivation) and rice lands which were under the control of temples.

The plantation economy itself was developed along modern capitalist lines : high capital investment and the use of advanced management techniques to facilitate production for export. Additionally, to provide the cheap and indentured labour required by the plantations, the British imported Indian labourers from Tamil Nadu in neighboring South India. This immigration, which began with about 3,000 workers in 1839, reached 72,000 by 1844. Housed in miserable living conditions ("*line houses*") and working under semi-slave conditions, this alien workforce provided the necessary labour on these plantations.[2] Shanmugaratnam describes the economic scenario at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century as follows :

> "The plantation system itself was implanted at a time when Sri Lanka's internal development had not yet thrown the conditions for a capitalist transformation. The nature of the plantation system was such that it did not, and was not intended to, serve as an exogenous factor to transform the pre-existing mode of production."[3]

The precise impact of the British colonial policy and the introduction of the plantation economy on the prevailing agrarian context in Ceylon, is the subject of an intense debate among Sri Lankan social scientists. Some argue that Ceylon emerged as a classical case of a "dual economy" defined as :

"The domestic agricultural sector was primitive, tradition-bound, un-organised, non-capitalist and engaged in subsistence production. This sector contained about 85% of the land area and 72% of the population. The export plantation sector was capitalistic, factory-based, centrally managed, hierarchically organised and 'modern'."[4]

Others, like S.B.D. De Silva have strongly argued that the plantation economy itself indicated signs of "relative backwardness" and therefore, unable to provide the "capitalist pull" to agriculture.[5] However, inspite of academic debates on the nature of the colonial economy under British rule, it is evident that the British colonial policy patronised the plantation economy at every stage of its development, while at the same time, taking adequate measures to "preserve the peasantry". Thus, by the early part of the present century, the imposed plantation economy indicated some specific features :

(i) British ownership and management of most estates,

(ii) provision of finance by British banks and agencies,

(iii) large-scale factory-type operation using massive forces of immigrant Indian labour especially imported for the purpose,

(iv) control of import-export trade by the British,

(v) complete reliance on imported supplies of capital equipment, estate supplies, and even food for the labour force,

(vi) complete reliance on foreign - especially British markets for the product.[6]

The rapid expansion of the plantation economy, however, necessitated the development of infrastructural facilities. By the mid-19th century, the British had established a vast network of roads and communication links between the plantations and the main port city of Colombo. This was possible because of the labour provided through "corvee" (the traditional "*Rajakariya* i.e., free service to the State) by the natives. It was evident that the roads and railways constructed by the British were primarily intended to make the plantations the main beneficiaries of the new communication system.[7]

The most severe impact of this British colonial policy on the Ceylon peasantry was the numerous taxes introduced during this period. The British assumed that the peasantry must share in the high costs of the plantation development. The "Grain Tax" was introduced as an attempt to draw the peasantry into the cash economy. The peasantry was thus forced to take up to cash crop cultivation or sell their labour in order to pay this tax. Moreover, the tax burden also resulted in land alienation and land transfer. The peasantry was forced to mortgage their small holdings or sell them off to absentee landlords, in order to meet the tax demands imposed on them. Data available covering this period clearly indicate the extent of impoverishment of the peasantry under the burden of the grain tax :

"According to the data recorded by the district administrators of the time, in the Udukinda division of Uva, for example, evictions and sales between 1882 and 1885 affected 2,930 heads of households; this number implies that 14,650 persons, or, 49% of the total population in the division were dispossessed of their paddy lands either in full or in part. It has been recorded further that about 20% of the number so dispossessed were compelled to leave their homes and that a majority of them became tenant cultivators."[8]

The heavy tax burden which was a result of the patronage policy of British colonialism on the plantation economy, imposed tremendous hardships on the subsistence-based peasantry. As Bandarage notes :

"..the incompatibility of the interests of capitalist export agriculture and that of peasant subsistence and smallholder production. It resulted in a conflict between opposing modes of economic production, a conflict in which the plantations were victorious because they had the support of the colonial state at every turn."[9]

Apart from this primary economic contradiction of British colonialism, a further cause of increasing discontent among the traditional Kandyan peasantry was the British policy towards Buddhism. When the British annexed the Kandyan kingdom in 1815, they assured the Kandyans of state patronage for the Buddhist religion. However, with increasing pressure from Christian missionaries to convert the natives, the government began to disassociate itself from Buddhism, and provided a free hand to the missionaries. Increasing discontent and resentment among the Kandyan peasantry, therefore, witnessed several outbursts of popular revolt against the British colonisers in the 19th century. The two most important rebellions during this period were the Rebellions of 1818 and 1848, which we will discuss in the next section.

5.2 The Colonial Period : Peasant Rebellions in 18th and 19th century Ceylon

The long period of colonialism that Ceylon experienced during the three centuries it was under the Europeans viz., Portuguese, Dutch and the British witnessed some of the most significant developments that have a bearing on the country's economy and polity even today. Colonialism brought capitalism to Ceylon in the form of the plantation economy which was imposed on a traditional subsistence peasant economy. The logic of this development was such that the peasantry in Ceylon had to bear the brunt of the high costs of the development of the plantation economy through taxation. Besides, British colonialism brought to the island an alien religion and lifestyle which disrupted the traditional social fabric of the existing society.

In the circumstances, therefore, the native population rose up in revolt on many occasions against the alien coloniser. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Ceylon witnessed numerous armed revolts and rebellions that shook the power of British colonialism on the island and nearly brought to an end colonial domination of Ceylon, if not for the betrayal of these rebellions by the feudal aristocracy and chiefs in the Kandyan region.

(i) Popular Revolts in the Maritime Provinces

Popular revolts in the maritime provinces occurred as early as the 18th century against the Dutch colonisers. These revolts erupted among cinnamon peelers who were of the Salagama caste. They were obliged by the Dutch authorities to peel a certain quantity of cinnamon in lieu of a poll tax and in return for grants of land.[10]

In 1723, the cinnamon peelers revolted complaining of "excessive burdens laid on them." Again, in 1734 some peelers who were sent to the Seven Korales refused to work because of exactions by officials in the form of extra cinnamon. They are said to have been joined by peeler from other districts. In 1760, a general rebellion took place among the cinnamon peelers in the Maritime provinces and this time they were supported by the Kandyan king. They "set fire to the cinnamon they had collected and fled to the Kingdom of Kandy."[11]

Soon after the British took over the maritime provinces from the Dutch, they imposed the "coconut tax" in 1796 whereby coconut growers were obliged to pay one silver fanam in cash on every coconut tree on property where there were 50 or more trees. Further, they abolished the service lands which had been earlier given on tenure, for which occupiers had to work free for the government for some day. These lands were then taxed at the rate of half the produce.

These taxes were greatly resented by the people, which was accentuated by the harassment suffered by them from the "Indian" tax-collectors the British recruited to collect taxes from the people. These tax-collectors were known to have used very harsh methods to collect the taxes and thereby evoked the resentment of the native people.

The revolts that erupted against these taxes lasted for one and a half years, and spread to the Northern, Eastern and South-western parts of the maritime provinces.[12] The initial protests began in Jaffna in September 1796 and by December, had spread to coconut growing areas of Rayigam Korale where the rent collector was seized when he tried to collect the tax. In many districts, the rebels carried out armed guerilla-type actions against British troops who were dispatched to quell the rebellion. According to one account of the 1797 revolt:

> "A body of Sinhalese took up arms and retired into the woods at the distance of a few miles from Colombo; several of the corles and districts at the same time declared openly in favour of the rebellion. A detachment of Sepoys was sent against them; several severe combats ensured; and it was not till a considerable loss of men on both sides that the insurgents were completely subdued."[13]

In the wake of this spreading rebellion, the British abolished the coconut tax in 1797. However, they used their superior military power to crush the rebellion. Many of the leaders of these revolts were hanged and by March 1798 the rebellion had ceased.

In 1800 another wave of violent revolts erupted on the issue of the imposition of the "Joy Tax" by the British. This tax was imposed on "joys" (jewelry and trinkets) made of gold, silver, pearls, ivory or bone. Any person wearing such an ornament had to pay a tax to the renters.[14]

The revolt against this tax began in June 1800 in Mannar, where "Colonel Barbut fired on 3,000 insurgents who threatened to kill the renter, killing one man and taking ten prisoners."[15] Resistance to this tax also took violent forms in Matara, Moratuwa and other areas. However, these sporadic outbursts of violence were easily crushed by the British troops.

Although these revolts were limited to certain pockets of resistance on the island and failed to become widespread, they nevertheless laid the basis for the more organised resistance that followed in the 19th century, particularly in the Kandyan region against British colonialism. The revolts we have discussed above were directed primarily against the tax-collectors and government officials and were led by spontaneous leaders who were able to gather together a band of fighters using traditional weapons.

The Dutch and the British colonisers were, however, alarmed at the prevailing discontent and fearing the spread of violent rebellion against their rule on the island, used their superior military might to crush these sporadic revolts. However, the spirit of resistance of these revolts against the alien rulers were not subdued. They were to emerge in a more organised manner in the later years and pose considerable opposition to British colonial power on the island.

(ii) The 1818 Rebellion Against British Colonialism

Besides the numerous tax burdens and exactions imposed on the Kandyan peasantry by the British, some historians have argued that the loss of the "Kandyan pride" among the chiefs and Buddhist clergy in particular, provided the immediate cause for the rebellion of 1817-1818. As we have noted, the disassociation of the government from the Buddhist religion deeply hurt the religious sentiments of the Kandyan nobility and peasantry. It is for this reason, besides others we have considered earlier, that the Kandyan nobility and clergy provided leadership and legitimacy to the peasant rebellions of 1818 and 1848.

A specific characteristic of the peasant rebellions of this period was the important role played by "pretenders" to the Kandyan throne. Claiming to be successors of former noble families, these "pretenders" were successful in mobilising the masses of peasantry in political opposition to British rule, seeking in the process, the restoration of the monarchy in the Kandyan region. Thus, a class-alliance is seen in these revolts between the nobility and the Buddhist clergy (the traditional ruling class hierarchy of the Kandyan kingdom) and the peasantry. They joined together to expel the British rulers and restore the feudal hierarchy of the traditional society.

In July 1817 it was reported that *Vilbave*, "who claimed to be a member of the deposed Nayakkar royal family named *Doraisvami*, made his appearance at the religious centre of Kataragama where he announced that God Skanda has designated him to be King."[16] Together with a band of *bhikkus* (Buddhist monks) he moved around *Velassa* armed with bows and arrows. It was precisely in these areas that the peasants rose up in revolt between September 1817 and January 1818. In many instances, the armed peasantry clashed with British troops and were subdued with heavy loss of life.

Geographically, the rebellion was widespread in the Kandyan region i.e., from Velassa and Valapane to Uva, Dumbara, Hawaheta, Matale, Nuvara-Kalaviya, Sabaragamuwa and the seven korales. Barring a few small regions of the Three and Four Korales, the Kandyan regions were all under the control of the rebels.[17] The rebels were said to have used guerilla tactics to fight against the British troops. "They were armed with bows and arrows and muskets and used charcoal, nitre and sulphur to manufacture their own gun powder." [18]

The British, however, were quite unprepared to confront an escalating armed rebellion of this sort. With the flames of rebellion spreading all over the Kandyan region, the British summoned more troops from neighboring India to quell the rebellion. Obviously, the British were faced with an imminent threat to their political power on the island, and in fact, expressed this alarm quite vividly.

The Governor stated in April 1818, while making an urgent appeal for troop reinforcements from Madras: "the spirit of the Rebellion still continues unbroken ... with unfortunate consequences for British national Honour and Interests", and that a successful Kandyan rebellion would threaten "the safety of the British Empire in India" and the reputation "of the invincible power of ... British Arms."[19]

It was only with the arrival of reinforcements made up of several battalions of troops from India, that the British were successful in defeating the rebel forces. The superior strength of the British troops and the vast numbers of British soldiers who marched into the Kandyan region from Colombo, Batticaloa and Trincomalee, were far too strong for the ill-equipped rebel forces. By October 1818 the rebels were defeated and the British captured and executed the leading rebel chiefs, Kappitipola and Madugalle, and another 25 chiefs and headmen were exiled to Mauritius. Fearing further reprisals, the British imposed Martial Law on November 21, 1818.

This rebellion - the first major attempt at armed resistance against British colonialism by the Ceylonese peasantry - has come to be known as the "Great Rebellion of 1818". In some ways, this rebellion was also a nationalist revolt, as it gave expression to their lost religious and social identity vis-a-vis the dominant Western and Christian social life imposed by British colonialism. As Bandarage observed "The 1818 rebellion was also a nationalist revolt. The nationalist sentiments shared by the feudal overlords (nobility and clergy) and the peasantry based on their common Sinhalese Buddhist ethnic identity came to the fore in their attempt to drive out the European Christian intruder."[20]

However, it must be noted that this "nationalist consciousness" had not crystallised sufficiently to lead to a more broad-based nationalist movement. In fact, the contradictions of British colonialism in the Kandyan region itself did not permit such a development. The 1818 Rebellion, therefore, was in essence a spontaneous revolt against the evils of foreign domination, and merely attempted to restore the pre-colonial feudal order in the Kandyan region.

Between 1820-1846 there were numerous other incidents of armed revolt against the British in various parts of the Kandyan region. All of these followed the general pattern of the 1818 Rebellion : they were provided necessary legitimacy by a "pretender" and some Buddhist

monks and Veddah chiefs, went about the villages arousing the peasantry into revolt. In nearly all these cases, the rebels were armed with traditional weapons and adopted guerilla-type tactics to attack the British troops.

The British, having learnt the lessons of the 1818 rebellion, and were quite aware of the widespread resentment to their oppressive rule in the Kandyan region deployed massive contingents of troops to violently quell these revolts, arrested and executed its leaders and exiled others to Mauritius. However, these attempts to crush the rebellions failed to dampen the spirit of resistance that had developed among the Kandyan people. By 1848 the British were to confront one of the most turbulent rebellions in the history of colonial Ceylon, which nearly brought to an end their control over the island.

(iii) The Great Rebellion of 1848

By 1840s the heavy tax burdens imposed on the Kandyan peasantry by the British was providing cause for increasing resistance to colonial rule. The factors that had a direct causal influence on the rebellion of 1848 were primarily economic in nature viz., the expansion of the plantation economy and its intrusion into peasant agriculture, the extraction of "forced labour" for road construction to serve the plantations, the various taxes imposed on the peasantry, and the disruption of the traditional way of life of the Kandyan by the imposition of a Western Christian lifestyle. Further, the numerous occasions of violent revolts, albeit in vain, against the British in the earlier decades provided stimulus to the Kandyans to once again rise up in revolt and attempt to overthrow British rule.

The 1848 Rebellion, however, in some significant ways was different from the earlier revolts. While the events of 1848 do reveal that the same sectors of traditional Kandyan society - bhikkus, chiefs and the peasantry - joined together in revolt as on earlier occasions; the rebellion of 1848 also witnessed the participation of sections of the urban workers from Colombo and elements of the middle classes and the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie, who were also in antagonistic relationship with British colonialism. It is this fact that contributed to the wider impact of the 1848 rebellion in the Kandyan countryside, and in fact, all over Ceylon.

The resistance against the taxes began in July 1848 in Colombo where protest meetings were held and petitions were circulated in the city and elsewhere, calling on the people to resist the new taxes and join the protest movement. On at least two occasions, violence erupted during these protest meetings in Colombo and armed clashes with policemen were reported.

In the Kandyan areas, the rebellion was more widespread. On July 6, 1848 about 3,000 people demonstrated outside the Kandy *kaccheri* (city hall) against the taxes.[21] After this event, the rebellion took more organised forms under the leadership of Gongallegoda Banda, Purang Appu and Dingiri Rala. As in previous rebellions, one of the leaders, Banda was "crowned King" in a "coronation ceremony" on July 26. In the following days the rebels banded together and attacked many government offices, magistrate residences, stores of coffee planters, jails and even a chapel of the Baptist missionaries. The Governor reporting on the rebellion stated : "the

houses and bungalows upon the Estates, upon the neighbouring hills were plundered and the whole country was in a state of terror."[22]

Once more, the British sought reinforcements from India to crush the rebellion and declared a state of Martial Law in Kandy on July 29, 1848 and extended it to the Seven Korales on July 31. The rebels attacked Kandy on August 1, and about 4,000 strong are said to have attacked Kurunegala the same day. This rebellion too was brutally crushed by the superior forces of the British who unleashed a wave of repression against the Kandyan people in the aftermath of the rebellion.

The repressive policy followed by the colonial administration to crush the 1848 rebellion was denounced by other British nationals who were generally sympathetic to the plight of the Kandyan peasantry. In fact, a key role was played by Christopher Elliot, editor of "The Colombo Observer" wrote a letter on July 3, 1848 criticising the colonial taxation policy and its detrimental impact on the peasantry, and called upon the people "to follow the example of the French (in 1848) to refuse to pay the new taxes and to agitate for the establishment of a radical democratic society based on racial equality and universal suffrage."[23]

This letter of Elliot was translated into Sinhalese and circulated among the Kandyan peasantry, and it is said to have had some impact on the events of 1848. In the aftermath of the rebellion, the British Parliament constituted an Inquiry Committee to investigate into the causes of the rebellion, and recalled Governor Torrington to London. Historians have expressed difficulty in ascertaining the precise character and background of the leaders of the 1848 rebellion. However, K.M. De Silva provides a general description of these leaders as follows :

> "They were all men of peasant stock, some of them hailing from the low country. Their aim was a return to the old Kandyan system with its traditional values, which - somewhat naively perhaps - they aspired to cherish by making one of their number King. Theirs was a blind protest against the changes and uncertainties brought by British rule, and they yearned for the old society, the only one they knew and understood. They had the support of a substantial section of the population and some at least of the bhikkus, though the aristocracy stood aloof from their movement."[24]

(iv) Traditional Nationalism in the 19th Century Rebellions : Its Origins and Consequences

The wave of armed resistance that erupted in 19th century Ceylon against British colonialism reveals a consciousness of "traditional nationalism" on the part of the Kandyan chiefs, bhikkus and the peasantry. While the overriding consciousness of popular protest was expressed in terms of the restoration of the traditional Kandyan kingdom with the expulsion of the British, the revolts brought together the specific grievances of the various strata of the Kandyan society to a meeting point of open revolt against the foreign aggressor. A revealing insight is provided into these specific grievances in a report dated July 8, 1848 filed by a Sinhala

Inspector of the Police Court of Kandy, based on interviews he carried out with about 1,000 individuals who lodged complaints against the British government's policies :

> "Every single person interviewed had a complaint against the new taxes...Some had misgivings about the Buddhist policy of the government...The plantations figured prominently in these complaints.. other complaints concerned the system of administration and the courts..."[25]

The Kandyan chiefs and aristocracy were by far the most disgruntled section of Kandyan society with the consolidation of British rule. While sections from among them had earlier capitulated to the British in signing the Kandyan Charter of 1815, on the whole, they were deprived of all their traditional status and rights in the Kandyan region. In particular, the abolition of the *Rajakariya* system by the British in 1833 deprived this class of the traditional forced labour exploitation of the peasantry.

Besides, the imposition of a cash crop economy in the Kandyan highlands based on a western-oriented administrative set-up and an immigrant labour force severely disrupted the traditional feudal order. In this situation, the Kandyan chiefs resented their loss of authority and privileges with the coming of the British. Hence, their participation in the 19th century rebellions can be seen as an attempt to overthrow the intruder and re-establish their traditional authority in the Kandyan region. The anti-colonial consciousness of the Kandyan chiefs, therefore, was not a progressive element in the rebellions. On the contrary, they represented the traditional feudal consciousness of a deprived aristocracy.

However, we must note that this elite strata of traditional Kandyan society was divided on its attitude towards British colonialism. While many Kandyan chiefs played an active role in the rebellion of 1818, others feared the repressive policies of the colonial power and stood aloof during the Great Rebellion of 1848. Perhaps they were also aware of the political power of colonialism and hence preferred to ally with the more powerful side in the conflict.

The British, on their part, were quite conscious of the fact that generalised rebellion in the Kandyan region, especially among the peasantry, would not be possible without the leadership of the aristocracy. In the aftermath of the 1848 rebellion, therefore, they made serious attempts to win over a section of the aristocracy on their side. As Bandarage noted :

> "By incorporating the native chiefs into the colonial political economy at subordinate levels, the British ensured that the chiefs did not join the peasantry in the nationalist struggles. Thus, the 1848 rebellion was the last major upheaval against the British in Sri Lanka in the 19th century."[26]

The Buddhist bhikkus also played an important role during the 19th century revolts. By far the most important cause for their resentment against the British was their total neglect and violation of the Buddhist religion. The bhikkus had always enjoyed a privileged place in the traditional kingdom under the political patronage of the aristocracy. Further, the fact that one of the most important relics of Buddhism - viz, the Tooth Relic - was located in Kandy, gave their

religion a certain sacredness in the Kandyan kingdom. It is for this reason also that we find the attempt to legitimise the 19th century rebellions by the "pretender King" claiming possession of this relic.

The bhikkus were not only leaders and inspirers of the rebellions, they were also some among them who were active militants of the revolts, taking to arms to oust the British from their land. Surely, the imposition of a Western religion i.e., Christianity, and the frantic work of Christian missionaries for conversion, added further cause to suspicion among the bhikkus of losing their traditional religion. The restoration of the traditional Kandyan kingdom would have ensured the reinstitution of the lost status of Buddhism. This is precisely what motivated the bhikkus to lend support and participate actively in the rebellions.

In the final analysis, it was the Kandyan peasantry who expressed the most genuine aspirations against colonialism. K M De Silva observed : "As for the Kandyans, by 1848, their real grievances against the coffee industry was not the physical presence of the plantations - these had existed for over a dozen years now and the peasants were sufficiently realistic to understand that they had to co-exist with the plantations - but the incidental inconveniences which arose from that presence." [27] Besides the heavy tax burdens imposed on the peasantry and the loss of their "*chena*" lands to the plantations, the presence of an alien labour force in their midst also caused some concern among the peasantry. Thus, the loss of the traditional Sinhala-Buddhist identity was most felt by the Kandyan peasantry in these circumstances.

Unable to posit a clear alternative to this imposed British rule and oppressive economic policies, the peasantry pledged their support to "pretenders", bhikkus and chiefs during the rebellions. It is not clear as to what extent the Kandyan peasantry were aware of the political aspirations of these feudal elites. Nevertheless, insofar as it provided cause to a relentless opposition to the taxes imposed by the alien rulers, the peasantry was determined to join in rebellion. The *Veddahs*, a warrior tribe from the eastern part of the Kandyan region were hunters by profession and renowned for their bravery and skill in traditional warfare.

It is this group that provided the armed militia for the 19th century rebellions. On many occasions their skillful methods took the British troops completely by surprise. Evading capture and attacking the enemy in small bands at the most inopportune moments, the Veddahs were truly the guerilla fighters of the 19th century rebellions. Since the rebellions, little is known of this tribe in Ceylon.

To sum up, the rebellions of the 19th century in Ceylon, for the first time, brought to the fore a nationalist consciousness on the part of the Ceylonese against British colonialism. However, we must qualify this statement by asserting that this nationalist consciousness, in an incipient stage, was actually a form of Kandyan nationalism. Its nature was as follows : "Kandyan Nationalism was essentially conservative - the product of a long historical development. It was nationalism of men rooted in the soil, men with 'a hierarchy of allegiances' to their village, to their district and to their country."[28]

It was this consciousness that prevailed, to varying degrees, among the Kandyan people which provided the necessary strength and direction to the 19th century rebellions. During this period, traditional nationalism displayed certain specific features which help us to understand and explain latter-day nationalist consciousness in Ceylon during the 20th century :

(1) It was territorial-specific i.e., confined to the Kandyan region. Except for the 1848 rebellion, all the other revolts were located in the Kandyan region and drew its participants from the same area.

(2) The important status of the Buddhist religion and the role of the bhikkus in the protest movements.

(3) In the protest movements of the 19th century, we also find the conflicts of interests between the Kandyan peasantry (Sinhala-Buddhist) and the immigrant Indian labour (Tamil-Hindu). In the later decades, particularly in the 1950s, this conflict developed into more aggressive ethnic conflicts within the labour movement in Ceylon. Thus, the incipient forms of this "Sinhala-Buddhist" identity vis-a-vis aliens, were visible in the 19th century itself.

(4) The negative impact of this traditional nationalist consciousness was expressed in the attempt to restore the old Kandyan feudal order by driving out the foreign ruler. In the process of the rebellions, the use of these feudal symbols i.e., pretender Kings, coronation ceremonies - was essential to legitimise this consciousness among the Kandyan peasantry.

As the events of the 19th century rebellions indicate, the ideological conflict between traditional nationalism and modern imperialism was an unequal relation. The successive defeats suffered by the rebels under the military power of the Europeans, severely weakened this traditional nationalist consciousness. Further, the post-1848 situation in Ceylon and the spread of industrialisation and the export economy, resulted in new class formations and alliances. The 1848 rebellion therefore, remained as the most significant and the last brave rebellion of the Ceylonese people against British colonialism in the 19th century.

5.3 Agrarian Policies and Change in Independent Sri Lanka

At the time of independence in 1948 Sri Lanka portrayed features of a classical export economy thriving on a stagnant peasant agricultural base. The three main export crops viz., tea, rubber and coconut accounted for over 95% of export earnings for the island, of which the prime export crop i.e., tea alone accounted for 60%. More than 40% of the country's GNP came from agriculture with the plantation crops accounting for more than half. [29]

The agrarian policies and programmes implemented by successive governments after independence merely attempted to accommodate and realign class contradictions and differentiations, rather than alter them in any significant way. In other words, they left intact the

structure of the colonial economy, only introducing changes that were necessary for increasing agricultural output and intensifying agricultural production to meet the needs of the local and international market. Before we survey the agrarian policies and reforms introduced in the country by the various governments, it is important to understand the agrarian class structure that development in Sri Lanka in the aftermath of colonialism.

British colonialism created a dependent merchant capitalist class in Ceylon that failed to emerge as a classical national bourgeoisie like in other countries. The contradictions of colonial economic policy, that we have reviewed earlier, did not allow for such a development. On the contrary, this class of merchant capitalism which was based on liquor trade and invested its profits in coffee, coconut, rubber and urban property, remained 'ideologically backward' with the limited possibilities for expansion and growth under the colonial economy. [30] Thus, the class structure that developed in Sri Lanka in the post-independence period, which had its origins in the 19th century itself - has been summarised by Newton Gunasinghe as follows :

1. The Traditional Bourgeoisie

This class had its origins in the mid-19th century, in the aftermath of the Great Rebellion of 1848. It developed basically as an appendage of British colonialism and proved to be its loyal ally. It therefore took to British values and lifestyles, and expressed its desire for the continuance of colonial rule on the island. This class comprised of two main sections :

(a) The Plantocracy and Traditional Landowners

They composed of both Sinhalese and Tamils, drawn mainly from the landed higher castes viz., the *Goyigama* and *Vellala* respectively. In terms of their values and lifestyle, they were traditional and feudal. However, many of them became early converts to Christianity and were faithful to the British. A section from among them were drawn from the traditional Kandyan aristocracy. Their ideological orientation is evident from the following :

> "Most of us are planters. Our interests are in many respects identical with those of the (European) planters. It is true that many of them have shown us the way and they deserve the credit for having brought capital into the country and shown us the path along which we may all win prosperity. We have followed in their footsteps and our interests are now the same."[31]

(b) The Merchants and Professionals

This is the class of enterprising merchants and traders who made productive investment of their capital and accumulated wealth basically through the liquor trade under British colonialism. But they lacked the interest and the initiative to channel this investment in industry or import/export trading. Many of them were drawn from non-agricultural groups from the coastal areas of the country.

2. The Petty-Bourgeoisie

This class also developed under the patronage of British colonialism. This group comprised of those employed under the colonial administrative service and the plantation economy - clerks, minor bureaucrats, shopkeepers and traders. They expressed their opposition to excesses of colonial policy and often supported social reform movements. Among them, "a group of the salary earner, who enjoyed job security, the office workers were highly unionised and were frequently engaged in industrial strife with their employers and the regime."[32]

3. The Working Class

Since the mid-19th century the working class had developed principally around the Colombo port, railway and transport services under the British. In later decades especially in the 1930s and 1940s they carried out militant actions under strong organised trade unions of the Marxist parties. In the plantation sector, the Tamil labour force also became unionised around this time and were to play a crucial role in trade union politics soon after independence. Thus, the two distinct sections of this class were the following :

(a) The Plantation Workers

Comprised basically of an immigrant labour force providing indentured labour on the plantations, this class continued to be the most subservient during colonial time and after independence. However, in the 1940s the plantation labour force became strongly unionised and gained franchise rights which they used decisively in electing Tamil representatives to the legislature with active support from the Marxist parties. The government's policy of disenfranchisement and curtailment of the voting rights of this predominant labour force in the country has reduced them to a semi-slave labour force, isolated from the political/democratic process and Left politics in the country.

(b) The Urban Working Class

Having its origins in the 19th century the urban working class in Sri Lanka by far expressed the most potential for militant trade unionism and Left party politics. Their experience of intense trade union activity in the 1920s and 1930s for economic demands had brought them under the influence of the newly established Marxist parties in the late 1930s and 1940s.[33] Today they continue to be strongly unionised, although highly fragmented under the various political parties and tendencies in the country.

4. The Rich Farmers

Of recent origin, this class forms a thin layer at the upper strata of the cash crop economy and peasant agriculture in Sri Lanka today. It reaped the main benefits of the Green Revolution strategy adopted by the government and the resettlement programme in the 1960s. It is

composed of primarily non-agricultural classes drawn from school teachers, retired government servants, and merchants, who took to agriculture adopting modern production techniques, capital and wage labour. In recent years, this class has shown remarkable potential and enterprise in cash crop production and marketing.

5. The Rural Petty-Bourgeoisie

Originating from the pre-capitalist economy and strongly rooted in the local religion (Buddhism) and language (Sinhala), this class has exercised significant control and influence in the peasant sector. It consists of small landowners, artisans, craftsmen, small traders and petty producers. "The rural petty bourgeoisie's ties with land were close and firm, its prejudices relating to caste, rituals and other archaic notions were strong. But its very identification with aspects of Sinhalese culture, language, Buddhism, *Ayurvedic* medicine and above all, its role as a rural intelligentsia held forth for it the potentiality of a dynamic force."[34] This class was, however, not exclusively an agrarian class for it contained within its fold sections drawn from outside the peasant society but who had interests tied to agriculture.

6. The Peasantry

The peasantry in Sri Lanka comprise primarily of small-holding peasants many of whom are owner-cultivators holding small parcels of land which they cultivate themselves using family labour with occasional use of wage or hired labour. This class can be sub-divided into the following :

(a) The Middle Peasants

This section of the peasantry "cultivate their lands primarily with the use of family labour, with occasional recourse to wage labour or exchange labour .... find themselves productively employed in their land most of the year, which furthermore generates sufficient income. They are not obliged to hire themselves out."[35]

(b) The Poor Peasants

They work the land primarily with family labour but often hire themselves out as wage labourers to supplement family income. Some of them would be owner-cultivators, but many are tenant-cultivators.

7. The Agricultural Workers

This class has grown rapidly since independence especially with the land alienation policy of the governments in power and through losing their small plots of land to big landowners and moneylenders due to their inability to productively engage in agricultural

production. Now transformed into landless wage labour force, they are employed as farm labourers in the lands of the rich peasants and middle peasants. Particularly in the Jaffna peninsula this class also belongs to the lowest caste, most of whom remain unorganised. An estimate in 1982 put the number of landless agricultural workers in Sri Lanka as approximately 800,000.[36]

Successive governments of Sri Lanka have implemented a variety of agrarian reform programmes and policies since independence. These can be categorized into the following periods : (i) Peasant Colonisation and Green Revolution : 1948-1971, (ii) Land Reforms and Nationalisation : 1972-1977, (iii) The Open Economy: 1977-1985.

Since independence, there has been a determined policy of the various governments to strengthen their respective social bases in the agrarian sector and consequently enact reforms/policies to conserve the interests of certain sections of the rural populace. Thus, every attempt at Land Reform and government policy to 'preserve the peasantry' have been politically motivated to serve the needs of the ruling regime in power. In the process, these policies have triggered a process of class differentiation in the rural society resulting in the emergence of non-agrarian classes to positions of power and influence in the Sri Lankan countryside. The lack of a strong and independent peasant movement in the country, therefore, strengthened the hands of the rural rich and relegated the peasantry to the backstage of peasant politics and agrarian reform.

(i) Peasant Colonization and Green Revolution : 1948-1971

The problematic of peasant agriculture in Sri Lanka had long been viewed by the State as one of landlessness in the Wet Zone due to the high population density, when compared with the sparsely populated Dry Zone which indicated possibilities of agricultural expansion in paddy cultivation. Hence, in the 1930s the State adopted a strategy of setting up "Peasant Colonization Schemes" in the Dry Zone ostensibly to relieve the pressures of the Wet Zone peasants. However, it was under the first independent government of D.S. Senanayake of the United National Party (UNP) that this strategy was adopted as a major agrarian policy involving massive finance and resources. The stated objective of this policy was "to create a class of peasants owning 8 acres and a cow."[37]

The Government assumed that by bringing virgin jungle lands in the Dry Zone under intense cultivation through state-sponsored irrigation facilities and credit institutions; paddy cultivation could be increased rapidly. Further, this would also ease the pressure on land and production in the Wet Zone and provide for possibilities of intensified agricultural production through the use of modern inputs and subsidies/incentives from the State to the peasantry. The Dry Zone colonisation scheme, therefore, addressed itself to the following objectives : (a) to protect the peasant farmers as a class, (b) to solve the growing unemployment problem in the Wet Zone, (c) to increase food production, and, (d) to establish new settlements as dynamic growth centres.

This ambitious programme was implemented at collosal costs to the State - in 1947, for example, there were already 12 major Dry Zone colonisation settlements established at the cost of over Rs 30 million and having about 3,000 settlers. In 1949, the most pompous programme of all under this scheme - the Gal Oya Multi-purpose project - was launched at a cost of over Rs 910 million. While inaugurating this programme, D.S. Senanayake stated on August 28, 1949 :

> "Gal Oya has become almost a house-hold word. It is symbolic of the New Lanka. May it obtain fulfillment speedily and herald the progress of our march towards self-sufficiency."[38]

In the later decades the amount invested by the State per colonist settled in the Dry Zone, particularly for land development and irrigation facilities, increased rapidly - from Rs 9,000 prior to 1956 to Rs 16,000 in the 1960s and by the 1970s it had risen three times more.[39] Far from protecting the farmers interests and increasing food production, the Dry Zone colonisation schemes basically resulted in transferring the problems in the Wet Zone to the new colonised areas of the Dry Zone. Although the government tried to ensure that the incentives and subsidies provided would benefit the peasant colonisers, in actual fact it could not prevent these incentives from passing from their hands into the hands of a selected few.

It was observed that in these schemes the more enterprising farmers with some capital at their disposal and who could productively exploit the benefits of credit and irrigation, who accrued power and influence in the area. On the other hand, a large section of farmers became dependent on traditional sources of credit (moneylenders) because of inaccessibility of governmental sources.

In the above process many lost their lands to the moneylenders through mortgage and became tenant cultivators or worked as hired hands on the lands that once had belonged to them. Gradually the structure that prevailed in the Wet Zone earlier began to be reproduced in the newly-colonised areas of the Dry Zone. As Gunawardena notes : "...a small category of rich farmers operating large extents of paddy land came into existence side by side with a large group of small subsistence farmers, tenants and increasing number of landless labourers. Superimposed on this structure was the rich group of absentee landlords, merchants, moneylenders, tractor owners and a cadre of officials of state institutions, who also contributed to the emergence and perpetuation of a stratified agrarian structure in the Dry Zone colonies."[40]

The rich farmers who appropriated the benefits of the colonisation schemes naturally became loyal supporters of the UNP government. The large mass of small and poor peasants, including landless labourers,failed to emerge as an enterprising class of "peasant proprietors" as envisaged by the State. Although this programme did bring about an increase in paddy production during this period, it was in essence a patch-work solution to the more fundamental problem of class differentiation and landlessness in peasant agriculture. Thus it was noted by Richards and Gooneratne in an ILO study : "... a politically more neutral solution to the problem of landlessness in the Wet Zone then, for example, land reform, which could have been less costly but more sensitive." [41]

In May 1956 a new coalition government came to power composed of the SLFP, VLSSP and the *Sinhala Bhasa Peramuna* which claimed to advocate "socialism for Sri Lanka". Its agrarian strategy stood in sharp contrast to the UNP government earlier, in that it advocated intensive cultivation rather than extension of the area through colonisation. Philip Gunawardena, Minister of Agriculture in the new MEP government stated this policy in clear terms : "I am not a believer in peasant proprietorship because I do not think that the prosperity of agriculture in this country can be built on peasant proprietorship."[42]

In 1958 this government formulated the Paddy Lands Act which was intended to provide security of tenure to cultivators (*ande*), abolish joint-ownership systems (*thattumaru and kattimaru*) and the setting up of cultivation committees to fix the share of produce between the landowner and the cultivator.[43] The Act's lofty aims were stated as follows: "to emancipate the peasant farmer from the condition of impecuniour servitude and insecurity and bring into existence the climate and environment which stimulate the progressive outlook and enthusiasm essential for increased production."[44]

The Paddy Lands Act of 1958 is said to be the first serious legislative attempt to regulate share tenancy in Sri Lanka. Its main features comprised the following :

(a) To confer permanent and heritable tenancy rights on share croppers. The tenants were empowered to name their successors. Eviction were thus made an illegal and punishable offense. Landlords were given the concession of resuming cultivation on a maximum extent of 5 acres after meeting valid claims for compensation by the tenants affected.

(b) To restrict rents to a maximum of 25% of produce or 12 bushels per acre, whichever is less, or a minimum of 2 bushels per acre or one-eighth of yield whichever is less, the variation being related to yield differences in different areas.

(c) To regulate interest rates and hire charges for implements and draft animals provided by landlords or tenants.

(d) To organise cultivation committees which would: (i) act as village level instruments for implementing the reforms, and (ii) undertake the organisation and development of paddy cultivation.[45]

Numerous studies undertaken to assess the effectiveness of this Act have revealed that in most cases the provisions of the Act were not realised in practise. The tenant cultivators could not ensure security of their tenure or stop eviction from powerful landlords who exploited the loop-holes of the Act.

Thus, during the first ten years of the implementation of the Paddy Lands Act, recorded evictions alone numbered 35,465.[46] A survey undertaken in Poolanaruwa as part of a country-wide study stated : "In Poolanaruwa, where more than 50% of the sample cultivators are tenants, it has been observed that the constitutional safeguards provided by the Paddy Lands Act for safe-guarding the interests of the tenants have proved ineffective. 'Some of the landlords in the

village had omitted names of their tenants from certain official records, such as the Paddy Lands Register, which they themselves prepared as the officials concerned. This enabled them to have complete control of their tenants.'" [47] The same study has also shown that in most cases the average rate of rent paid by tenants were far in excess of that stipulated by the Act. In the Poolanaruwa, Ussapitiya and Minipe colonies, "tenant cultivators still continue to pay 50 per cent of their crop by way of rent...(which) has been found to be much in excess of that fixed under the Paddy Lands Act."[48]

The Cultivation Committees were to be composed of elected groups of farmers' representatives to take care of paddy cultivation and allied activities in the villages. Its main responsibilities were to include : (i) to maintain a Paddy Land Register and record area under cultivation, yield, names of cultivators, (ii) to maintain and develop minor irrigation works and ensure the distribution of water for cultivators, (iii) to deal with incidents of crop damage by trespassing animals, (iv) to fix wages for farm workers employed by cultivators, and (v) to settle problems of dispute regarding tenurial arrangements.[49]

While this was a noble idea of introducing cooperative efforts in the cultivation of paddy, in reality, these committees ended up as tools in the hands of landowners to ensure their control and domination on paddy agriculture. They were able to exploit the functioning of these committees to serve their own interests and prevented the tenant cultivators from playing an active role in making them effective at the village level.

The UNP government which returned to power in the general elections of March 1965 adopted a rigorous policy of import substitution in agriculture. It formulated the Agricultural Development Proposals 1966-1970 which constituted a 'package programme' under the Green Revolution adopted by many countries during the same period. Like in other countries, in Sri Lanka too this strategy intended to rapidly increase paddy production - from 50 million bushels in 1964 to 70 million in 1970. This package programme included incentives such as : a) High-yielding varieties of seeds, b) chemical fertilisers and pesticides, c) tractors and agricultural machinery, d) agro-chemicals, e) extension services, and f) agricultural credit institutions with inputs.

During this period the Sri Lankan government provided a range of incentives and inputs to stimulate peasant farmers to rapidly increase rice production. Thus, between 1960 and 1970, more than 5,000 four-wheel tractors were imported with another 5,000 two-wheel tractors every year thereafter which was made available at subsidised rates to the farmers. In the 1966-67 season, it was estimated that 84% of cultivators in Amparai, 74% in Poolanaruwa, 73% in Hambantota and 69% in Vavuniya districts were using tractors for ploughing land. [50]

Paddy production witnessed a sharp increase with the adopting of these advanced inputs during this period. Between 1966-70 it showed an increase of over 55% over previous years. To some extent at least, the set targets for paddy output were realised. However, the consequences were far beyond expectations and stated intentions. Without sufficient security of tenure the small cultivators had become increasingly dependent on rich farmers and business interests in the rural areas who controlled the incentives provided by the State. To quote Neville Jayaweera :

"The subsistence farmer cannot now return to the use of the buffaloes. He is caught in a vice-like grip of the tractor-owning affluent farmer...In the tractor owner, who is invariably an affluent farmer, the subsistence farmer has acquired a new oppressor, more intractable than the feudal landowner. A new feudalism of technology has grown up around the tractor owners. The Paddy Lands Act notwithstanding, the small-holder subsistence farmers are slowly losing operational control of the paddy lots to the tractor owners."[51]

To sum up, in the period under review (1948-71) a range of agrarian policies and strategies were implemented by the governments of Sri Lanka. All of them were basically oriented towards increasing paddy production and making the country self-sufficient in food production. However, this implied further dependence on foreign imports by the governments in power besides providing the necessary conditions for strengthening the hands of the rich farmers in the countryside.

While such efforts did bring about some significant changes in the agrarian sector - especially increased production of rice, adoption of new techniques and technology, expansion of the area under paddy cultivation - its main consequences, however, were quite detrimental to the real intentions of the governments and the expected recipients of these programmes. By far the most important consequence of these agrarian policies during this period was the emergence of a new strata of rural elite composed of rich farmers, absentee landowners, moneylenders and merchants, who directly benefited from these programmes and accumulated capital by exploiting the state subsidy and incentives provided. It was this class that became loyal supporters of the government and ensured their political and economic hegemony by dominating and effectively controlling the village-level distribution of resources and incentives.

Moreover, it was precisely this class of rich farmers - many of them drawn from non-agrarian groups - that were preserved and promoted by the agrarian policies adopted by the government during this period. In short, the agrarian programmes we have discussed above inspite of their stated noble intentions of reducing inequalities in rural society, actually resulted in the further polarisation of the agrarian classes in peasant agriculture in Sri Lanka.

(ii) Land Reform and Nationalisation : 1972-1977

In April 1971 the elected government confronted a serious armed opposition - the JVP-led youth insurrection which attempted the capture of State power through an armed uprising. The insurrection was a result of numerous problems and accumulated grievances of the youth, particularly in the rural areas. The economic policies followed by the various governments were unsuccessful in checking and controlling inflation and high unemployment among the educated youth. Moreover, the pretentious socialist slogans of Left parties in parliamentary coalition created a great amount of disillusionment and frustration among the rural youth who sought immediate remedies to their long-standing problems.

While the 1971 insurrection was largely a youth phenomenon, it also witnessed the participation of sections of the rural population and was an occasion for them to vent their grievances against the State after independence. This insurrection was put down with brutal force by the ruling United Front government (composed of the SLFP, LSSP and CP, all variants of the Left tradition), with an estimated 5,000 youths or more killed and many thousands more detained for several years. In assessing the causes for the widespread rebellion of April 1971, the UF government concluded that rural unemployment and landlessness were by far the main ones. It therefore attempted to address itself to these problems by enacting the Land Reform Law of 1972.

The preamble of the Land Reform Law No. 1 of 1972 stated its aims as follows :

(a) To establish a Land Reform Commission (LRC) in Sri Lanka,

(b) To fix a ceiling (25 acres for paddy lands and 50 acres for other lands) on the extent of agricultural land that any person may own in Sri Lanka,

(c) To provide for the vesting of lands owned in excess of the ceiling in the LRC, subject to a statutory leave in favour of the former owner,

(d) To prescribe the purpose and manner of disposition of lands vested in the LRC by the law in a manner so as to increase productivity and employment, and

(e) To provide for payment of compensation to persons deprived of their lands under the law and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. [52]

Under the first phase of the Land Reform Law of 1972, over 563,411 acres of private lands were vested in the LRC. However, the land reform did not cover the lands owned by temples and public companies in this phase of its implementation. The second phase was enacted in 1975 which provided for State take-over (i.e., nationalisation) of large estates owned by public companies. Under this phase of the Law, over 395 tea and rubber plantations with a total extent of 417,975 acres were acquired by the LRC. Of this, 56.8% of the area consisted of tea plantations and 22.5% of rubber plantations.[53]

The management of these acquired estates were handed over to state corporations specially created for the purpose, namely, the *Janawasama* (People's Estate Development Board), the *Usawasama* (Upcountry Cooperative Estate Development Board), the State Plantation Corporation. Studies conducted on the functioning of these state corporations after nationalisation have revealed that they have not significantly changed, either in productivity or management-labour relationships on the plantations.

The Land Reform Law of 1972 and 1975 were clearly aimed at the Kandyan peasantry which had suffered tremendous hardships since the advent of the plantation economy under British colonialism. Further, there were also a number of other factors that necessitated this Land Reform Law. These included :"(the) concern about the plantations; fragmentation of paddy

holdings; emergence of insecure and unproductive land tenure system in the peasant sector; growing unemployment among rural youth; neglect of estates by management in fear of nationalisation and the desire to speed up the repatriation of Indian estate workers."[54] While these problems had prevailed in the Sri Lankan countryside ever since independence, it was with the 1971 insurrection that they were for the first time brought to the fore of the country's economic policy and priorities and demanded the urgency for adequate reform.

The Land Reform Law failed to alter drastically the agrarian social structure in that it did not touch the sensitive paddy lands and temple lands. The temple lands, which were concentrated in the Kandyan region, remained outside the purview of the Law and intentionally so promulgated by the ruling government. Similarly, the Act failed to alter the land ownership patterns prevelant in peasant agriculture. As Poonambalam notes: "...it is in the ownership of paddy lands that the economic and political power structure in the villages is based. In this sector the Land Reform Law failed to touch even the fringes of land concentration."[55]

Besides, rural unemployment was indeed one of the serious problems for the UF government. The Land Reform Law attempted to tackle this problem through utilising cooperative programmes for youth. In 1971, it was estimated that there were over 3,998 graduates unemployed in Sri Lanka, which increased to over 5,500 to 6,500 in 1975 with the large majority of them from the rural areas. The Law provided for the setting up of youth cooperatives to provide incentives to educated unemployed youth to take to peasant agriculture.

In 1973, for example, 18 youth cooperatives covering an acreage of over 5,240 acres and consisting of about 1,161 newly-recruited members was established. By the end of 1976, 200 youth cooperatives covering an area of 50,000 acres and a membership of 143,000 existed in Sri Lanka.[56] This programme was only partially successful as the educated unemployed youth were more keen on finding employment in the urban areas and the cities, rather than take to agriculture in the rural areas. Like other initiatives, therefore, the youth cooperative movement also fell under the influence of the landed rich and merchants in the countryside.

In the final analysis, therefore, the Land Reform programme failed to make a dent in the unequal pattern of land ownership in the countryside, nor did it succeed in the equitable distribution of nationalised lands to the landless. Its total impact was, in the circumstances, inadequate and detrimental to the interests of the small-holding peasantry and particularly the landless. As an ILO study pointed out :

> "... despite its extent, the rural social and economic structure was hardly changed. Firstly, the ceiling, which was probably ineffectively some 70 acres on average, left the larger village-based landlords untouched. Popular participation was discouraged in favour of indirect participation through, and direct control by, political representatives. Largely as a result of these facts, estates and villages were no more integrated afterwards than before ... One might indeed say that the State was insufficiently prepared for land reform and for the inevitable demands which would be made by the local politicians on the government side."[57]

Although intended to be the main beneficiaries of the Land Reform programme, the peasantry were left powerless to take advantage of the benefits and were therefore silenced into submission. The Land Reform programme, in other words, was yet another miscalculated State policy towards peasant agriculture which diverted the benefits to the already-rich and powerful landowners and merchants in the countryside. In this situation, the peasantry was but a mere by-stander, as Newton Gunasinghe notes :

> "There was no land reform in Sri Lanka till 1972 as there was no independent peasant movement in the country that demanded it. When the reform finally arrived in 1972, it bypassed the peasantry, as the peasantry subjected to the ideological domination of the rural petty bourgeoisie was powerless to intervene and benefit from it."[58]

(iii) The Open Economy : 1977-1985

The return of the UNP to power under the leadership of J.R. Jayawardena with an unprecedented majority in the general elections of 1977, commenced an economic policy that stood in sharp contrast to that of the previous government. The UNP's economic policy was based on private enterprise and liberal foreign investment. It, therefore, sought to liberalise imports, attract foreign investment and generally throw open the economy to the forces of international capitalism. This policy was clearly spelled out by its Finance Minister, Ronnie de Mel, when he addressed the British press in October 1977 :

> "My government welcome trade, aid and foreign investment. These are the cornerstones, the very foundations of our economic policy. It is our objective to maximise foreign investment in Sri Lanka by giving foreign investors the necessary incentives and the necessary guarantees and safeguards consistent, of course, with our national sovereignty and economic goals. We expect aid and support from the World Bank and the IMF and also from the countries of the Aid Group ... We shall give the private sector its due place in our economy... The basis of a free and just society, in my opinion, is a free and just economy. We will accordingly move away from restrictive policies and controls of the last seven years to a more liberal economic policy."[59]

This liberal economic strategy was keeping in line with the dictates of the World Bank, the IMF and various other international financial and business institutions. Since 1977, therefore, all these interests came to play a dominant role in determining the economic policy and programmes of the UNP government. The government, on its part, provided the necessary safeguards and guarantees consonant with this liberal policy: abolition of food subsidy, devaluation of the rupee, lifting price controls, and tax reductions for imports. In its bid to attract foreign investment the government also imposed strict regulations on workers and trade unions and made every attempt to suppress dissension, in order to provide a cheap and controlled labour force for exploitation by private interests and Multinational companies.

The main programmes launched during the initial phase of the Open Economy policy was the acceleration of the *Mahaweli Ganga Development project*, the establishment of Free Trade Zones and the setting up of institutions for promoting foreign investment and local infrastructural development, such as, the Greater Colombo Economic Commission (GCEC). Further, the government announced a "five year tax holiday" to foreign investors and companies engaged in food processing, industry and deep-sea fishing.

Turning to the agrarian sector, the Open Economy policy sought to provide incentives to private investors in agricultural production, horticulture and animal husbandry. The basic strategy was to promote export-oriented agribusiness industry through multi-national collaborations. These areas were declared as 'Agricultural Promotion Zones' (APZ). The main provisions of this policy towards agriculture included the following :

(a) to promote public investment in land and irrigation infrastructure and land settlement,

(b) rehabilitation of export crops (in plantation and peasant holdings) including subsidies for replanting, fertilisers,

(c) liberalisation of internal trade in farm products and changes in price policy,

(d) intensification of administrative control over the peasant sector through the new Agrarian Services Law,

(e) changes in land policy to enable the flow of private capital and enterprise into agriculture and agro-based industries to produce for the local and foreign markets,

(f) involvement of the private sector in the management of land settlement projects in the Mahaweli areas, and

(g) special incentives like tax-holidays for non-traditional exports and for the processing of sugar, milk and milk products, livestock production and fisheries.[60]

The accelerated Mahaweli Development programme was "the centrepiece of the present government's development strategy both in terms of public investment and agricultural modernisation."[61] Besides creating the necessary political base for the UNP's politics in the rural sector by meeting the aspirations of the class of rich farmers who directly benefited from this programme, the liberal economic policy also enabled more direct foreign interests in the Mahaweli project. The government decided to lease out over 24,000 acres of irrigable land in the Mahaweli area to a foreign company for oil palm cultivation and another 8,000 acres to a sugar company for sugarcane cultivation.[62] Moreover, incentives were provided to non-peasant groups to take to a more technologically-oriented cultivation in an attempt to supplement peasant production in these areas. This policy was therefore clearly one of providing the necessary conditions for non-peasant and foreign interests in a stagnant agricultural situation that could not keep up to the expectations of the economic planners in Sri Lanka.

In recent years a number of foreign collaborations have been signed for the development of agro-business industry in Sri Lanka, opening up the agrarian sector to foreign interests and multinational corporations.[63] Some examples of foreign collaborations are :

(a) Lankem (Ceylon) Ltd has been involved in the manufacture of fertilisers and agro-chemicals, in joint collaboration with Shell Company.

(b) Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC), a subsidiary of the British- American Tobacco Company, extensively involved in tobacco cultivation in over 8,000 acres, has now been granted permission to extend its operations to sugarcane cultivation, orchids and vegetables. The government has further allocated about 5,600 acres in the Mahaweli Scheme (H9 area) for the CTC to take to sugarcane cultivation.

(c) The Guthrie International - a British-owned Malaysian company - was granted 24,000 acres in the highlands for palm oil cultivation. But this contract was later suspended.

(d) Three districts declared as "Agricultural Promotion Zones" have seen a number of foreign collaborative efforts. Three multinationals have been invited for sugarcane cultivation in Monaragela, Pelwatte and Nakkala.

(e) Nestle Ltd. has been granted a Rs 4,450 million project to develop diary farming (for milk and milk products) in three districts - Kurunegala, Puttalam and Anuradhapura, involving over 40,000 farmers.

This opening up of the agrarian sector to international private enterprise was seen as a strategy to promote export-oriented production of primarily non-food crops. It was clearly an attempt to turn to the rural sector when similar initiatives in the urban centres has failed to meet the required targets set by the government. After an initial period of boom, the country found it stagnating under heavy foreign debt and balance of payments.

The sudden liberal economic policy with its heavy and near total dependence on foreign private capital and technology, resulted in unproductive consumerism and speculation by local economic interests instead of any determined attempt to accumulate capital and productively invest in the economy. This also brought in a gluttonous market for second-hand commodities and luxury items which met the rising aspirations and desires of the urban middle classes. Quite in contrast, the rural areas remained largely untouched by this urban economic boom.

The consequent stagnation of the economy and fear of capital withdrawal by Multi-national companies and foreign governments in the context of an unstable political climate marked by violent racial conflicts, pressurised the government to turn to new sectors to attract foreign investment and assure a conducive atmosphere for investment opportunities. Necessary political legislation were thus enacted to provide this climate and the government vowed to ruthlessly suppress "terrorism" and "violence" and provide the required political stability to ensure foreign investment in the country.

In this regard, the government offered to provide lucrative investment terms for agro-business industries development with foreign aid and assistance. In 1983 this offer paid off well, in that an estimated Rs 4.14 billion were invested in agricultural, fisheries and animal husbandry sectors, out of a total of Rs 7 billion in 102 projects.[64]

Besides opening up the rural sector to foreign companies, the UNP government also launched a series of Rural Development Programmes aided by the international banks and institutions. For example, in 1980 the Asian Development Bank (ADB) formulated a US $ 39.6 million project consisting of irrigation schemes, livestock development, agricultural services and infrastructural development. This project which was located in the Dry Zone district of Anuradhapura, was jointly funded by the ADB, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Swiss Government.[65]

To sum up, the period of the UNP government's Open Economy policy was characterised by extensive liberalisation and foreign investment both in the industrial and agricultural fields. This policy commenced a new phase in Sri Lanka's history of economic growth, from which time onwards it has become totally dependent on foreign aid and investment under the dictates of the World Bank and the IMF. The country's foreign debts has soared in the past few years further resulting in its dependence and subjugation to the power of international capital and MNCs.[66]

Inspite of this policy's detrimental impact on local industry and food production, the government continued to invite foreign interests in those sectors where local initiatives have been lacking. In March 1981, the Minister of Land, Land Development and Mahaweli Development, while speaking at a symposium on "Foreign Investment Opportunities in Sri Lanka" reiterated this invitation in the following words :

> "...we would invite you to take a good look at the down stream development patterns of Sri Lanka, the potential for land development, the investment guarantees offered and if possible, join us to undertake the development not only of an economy but of a people, because here in Sri Lanka, we have a manageable population."[67]

The UNP government in the process of liberalising the economy and inviting foreign investment, also launched a programme of creating village-level institutions for administration, rural development and agriculture, which were basically meant to strengthen its political base in the rural areas. The benefits of the Integrated Rural Development Programmes under the new economic policy were meant, not for the weaker sections of the rural population, but for the middle class groups who constituted the power base of the UNP government.

Thus, the traditional 'village headman' system was abolished and replaced by the 'Gram Sevakas' who were normally political appointees of the UNP, and carried out its dictates and programmes. The local Members of Parliament (M.P.) were given extensive powers to decide and implement the rural development programmes and ascertain their benefits to the rural people. Further, they introduced the *job banks* system to provide employment to village youth

and were to approve the re-registration of Rural Development societies and select settlers in agricultural settlements.

All these functions significantly augmented the local power and dominance of the M.P.'s over the rural population and they used it for party supporters and sympathisers. In the circumstances, nearly all village-level societies and institutions created for the purposes of facilitating rural programmes and agricultural development were controlled by the UNP cadres. Thus, any individual or group known to be non-supporters of the ruling party found it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain services from such institutions and thereby exploit the benefits of the agrarian programmes under the liberalised schemes introduced by the government. Therefore, obviously, the political implications of the new economic policy in agriculture were clearly towards strengthening the UNP's base and enabling its party officials to wield the power bestowed in their hands ruthlessly and arbitrarily.

The impact of the new economic policy on the agrarian class differentiation was quite apparent, in that its benefits went to the emerging class of rich farmers and middle peasants. Taking advantage of the liberal economic policy the rural petty bourgeoisie emerged into prominence in the agrarian social structure. It is precisely they who took to mechanisation and intensified agricultural production, the use of fertilisers and chemicals, tractors and farm equipment. This class, therefore, in the aftermath of the New Economic Policy since 1977, has come to dominate the rural society and provides the necessary political base for the ruling UNP government.

In this situation, the poor peasant, tenant cultivators and landless labourers unable to complete with the new forces in the market, had to remain content with the menial benefits of these programmes and foreign investment. Moreover, in their struggle to eke out a living from a stagnant agricultural economy based on paddy agriculture, these lower strata of the Sri Lankan countryside have no other option at their disposal but to work as hired hands on the projects and plantations in the process losing their lands to moneylenders, merchants and the rising petty bourgeoisie. Those that were successful in evading the appropriation of their lands by these groups, however, were unable to resist government decision to parcel off their lands for so-called "land development programmes" or "intensified agricultural development schemes".

Finally, as Shanmugathasan has noted, the absence of a "pull" from industry and capitalist agriculture which inevitably leads to a process of "proletarianization", the reality of the small-holding peasantry in Sri Lanka is one of "pauperisation" : "pauperisation operates as a vicious circle within the agrarian structure in the traditional village and the new settlement alike."[68] The new economic policy of the UNP government, in essence, was a strategy of patronising a rising rural petty bourgeoisie at the cost of a pauperised peasantry.

Impact of the Open Economy on the Jaffna Peasantry

The UNP's post-1977 agrarian policy was based on free import of onions, chilies and potatoes. This severely affected the Jaffna peasantry who, until recently, had virtual monopoly

of sales of these cash crops all over the island. "To the Jaffna farmers, the free import policy had a depressing effect on prices, particularly of chilies and onions, partly because of the ill-timed imports that often tended to continue with the harvests. The disincentive effects made cultivation less remunerative - of chilies, in particular." Thus, between 1977-78 and 1979-80 the acreage in chilies in the Jaffna district dropped by nearly 20%.[69]

In such circumstances, there was a tendency in this region to give up cash crops and revert back to traditional subsistence crops, especially those that can also be marketed locally. The main grievance of the Jaffna farmers, therefore, is that "they were unable to obtain a remunerative price for their produce in the context of imports and buffer stock programmes (and the way this policy has been implemented)."[70] It is in this sense, that there are clear indications in the region of a process of retardation of capitalist relations in agriculture in recent years.

The economic impact of the ethnic conflicts, especially in the post-1983 period, has been severe on the Jaffna peasants. The militarisation of the Tamil areas and the virtual encapsulation of the Jaffna peninsula by the armed forces have crippled the movement of goods and produce from the North to the predominant market in the South. The goods that have been sent to markets in the south included onions, chilies, tobacco, potatoes, cement, and asbestos. And in return, goods imported into the North included groceries and textiles.

This has also meant very low prices for goods and produce in the North when compared to the South. For example, tomatoes were Rs 3 per kilo in Jaffna compared to Rs 15 in Colombo, grapes at Rs 8 to 10 per kilo are sold at Rs 30 in Colombo.[71] Further, cultivation of many cash crops which earlier fetched high prices in the country's market, mainly in the south, have fallen due to the lack of access and sales in the south. The Central Bank of Ceylon Review of Economy 1984 indicated that production of red onions in Sri Lanka (nearly all of which is produced in Jaffna) was in 1984 at only 12.2% of its 1983 level, because there was a 67.8% fall in area sown and a 60% fall in yield.[72]

The plight of the Jaffna peasant today is well summed up by one peasant :

> "We used to pray for a good harvest. Now we have to pray that we can get it to market too."[73]

5.4 International Capital and the Sri Lankan Peasantry

The problematic of peasant protest in modern Sri Lanka can be presented in the following manner: Right through colonial history and after independence from the British, the Sri Lankan peasantry have been subjected to a variety of welfare measures and State-sponsored resettlement schemes. The basic objective of this policy on the part of the Sri Lankan state was one of increasing agricultural production without fundamentally altering the agrarian relations in the countryside.

Superimposed on this economic policy was a system of hierarchically-ordered 'patronage system' over the peasantry which conditioned peasant response and ensured the effective incorporation of the peasantry into the State policy and programmes. The result was a scenario in which the peasantry was unable to rise up against lopsided Government policy and land concentration in the hands of a few rural entrepreneurs; and relegated to the backstage of the country's politics. Even the militant Left movements in the years immediately before and after independence in 1948, were unable to break this 'ideological bloc' of patronage imposed on the peasantry in Sri Lanka. Thus, the occasional outburst of peasant protest were basically restricted to peasant response to issues detrimental to their immediate interests, and were clearly devoid of any long-term perspective to pressurise the State to implement radical land reforms for the benefit of the peasantry as a whole.

This situation was based on a predominantly small-holding peasantry (petty commodity producers). The lack of sharp class differentiation in the agrarian countryside in Sri Lanka further enable the patronage system to entrench itself, economically and ideologically, over the peasantry. In the post-1977 period of "Open Economy" of the present UNP government, the process of integration of this small-holding peasantry into the world capitalist system developed on a rapid scale.

The commoditization of petty production of the peasantry and increasing integration into the world market was an inevitable consequence of State's agrarian programme. The most important consequence of this new strategy of economic development was the systematic breakdown of the traditional patronage system, and the successful penetration of more sophisticated domination of the peasantry by local and international capital.

While the Sri Lankan peasantry is clearly differentiating under the various new schemes and programmes of the UNP government - which is merely a continuation of earlier State policies - the differentiation on a class basis is not seen sharply as yet. The process of State and international capital penetration into the countryside in recent years merely reveals a process of new forms of incorporation of the peasantry into the world market - a process in which the peasantry retains some of its traditional characteristics but more directly serves the needs of the market and produces within a predominantly capitalist system. Therefore, inspite of increasing landlessness and land concentration among the newly-emerged rural rich, the peasantry and landless agricultural workers remain in a state of ideological passivity exemplified by their continuing "survival consciousness".

By far, the most significant development in the Sri Lankan countryside in the post-1977 period has been the penetration and control of agricultural production and the peasantry by international capital, that is, through the intervention of TNCs. In the earlier section we looked at the Open Economy policy of the present government and highlighted the extent of integration of agriculture into world capital through the numerous TNC operations in the country today. Thus, the precise impact of TNCs on Sri Lankan agriculture, and the peasantry in particular, is of great significance in order to understand the process of transformation in the agrarian systems of Sri Lanka.

We shall briefly survey three cases of international capital penetration in Sri Lankan agriculture in recent history, in order to highlight this process. The three cases include the following : (i) The Mahaweli Development Scheme, (ii) The Ceylon Tobacco Company, and (iii) Sugar TNCs in the Agricultural Promotion Zones.

(i) The Mahaweli Development Scheme

With the acceleration of the Mahaweli Development Project (MDP) by the present government, the programme is now composed of three main components: (i) the headworks projects at Victoria, Kotmale, Maduru Oya and Randenigala, (ii) the downstream engineering and irrigation works, and (iii) peasant settlement and agricultural production. The MDP has been described as one of the biggest investment ventures by the Sri Lankan state, which accounts of approximately 35% of the government's budget.

The original cost estimate in the early 1970s on this 30-year project was about Rs 7 billion, which was later increased to Rs 15 billion. The costs again skyrocketed by 1984 when over Rs 25 billion had already been spent and another Rs 16.5 billion was due to be spent in the next 5 years. Undoubtedly, therefore, the MDP was "the most ambitious scheme ever to be undertaken on the island and has been the keystone of the government's development programme since 1977."[74]

The MDP was originally intended to irrigate over 900,000 acres of land and develop 15 multi-purpose projects, 4 trans-basin diversion canals and several power stations with a total capacity of over 500 megawatts. Moreover, it was envisaged to settle over half a million people who would earn their livelihood in the area by involving in agricultural production under direction of the project. Nearly all the required capital to finance this huge operations came from international sources. Sri Lanka obtained funds for the MDP from the USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Federal Republic of Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Japan and international funding agencies, like the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.[75]

A major aspect of the MDP, about which we are concerned here, was the settlement of landless farmers from the south west and central areas in the MDP areas. The project provided these settlers with land and irrigation facilities to induce them to take to high-yielding varieties of crop production. Later, the project attempted to develop 'cluster settlements' whereby a number of hamlets were grouped into a village, and several villages in turn, were linked with a township.[76]

Various studies on these resettlement schemes have revealed that these cluster settlements did not solve the problem as envisaged by the State and the MDP policy makers - that resettlement would enable shifting of pressure of population from the heavily-populated Wet Zone areas and open up productive new settlement in the Dry Zone. Besides the difficulty of convincing the peasant settlers to take up dwellings in unfamiliar areas, the resettlement programme created new tensions between the resettled farmers and the local farmers in the areas.

Critics of the MDP have cited the following as the salient reasons for the failure of the project to deliver the goods : (i) Government's attempt to achieve physically impossible goals within the given technology, (ii) lack of necessary resources, (iii) total dependency on foreign assistance and expertise, (iv) lack of understanding and knowledge on the part of the government on its role, the means available and the possible consequences of the MDP. Thus, the most ambitious agrarian programme of the UNP government suffered from lack of foresight and realistic assessment of its potentials and capabilities.

The UNP's attempt to accelerate the MDP seems to be intended to carry through the dictates of powerful international institutions and allow for the free interplay of international capital in Sri Lankan agriculture, in keeping with its Open Economy policy. In the circumstances, the MDP is perhaps the classical example of "a wrong step towards development, and a costly one at that."[77]

The significance of the MDP, however, was the attempt to introduce commoditization in the predominantly petty production agriculture in Sri Lanka. This policy was aimed at enticing the resettled farmers to take to modern techniques of cultivation by offering them the necessary incentives and assuring them of a market for their produce. By laying the necessary conditions for TNC involvement in peasant agriculture, the MDP witnessed largescale transfer of policy decisions and management control to experts from TNCs and foreign agencies. Consequently, agricultural production and the ordering of relations in the MDP area was basically determined by these foreign personnel at the dictates of TNCs. The resettled farmers and the peasantry were merely a passive participant in this sophisticated international strategy to dominate Sri Lankan agriculture.

The policy of Land Settlement which has been followed by the Sri Lankan State for many decades has revealed clear political options vis-a-vis the peasantry. Resettlement of the peasantry from the Wet to the Dry Zone was seen as an easier option on the part of the State, than the programme of radical Land Reforms which would imply altering the prevailing agrarian relations, land ownership and control patterns in the countryside, particularly in the Wet Zone. As Piyasiri Wickramasekera notes : "The creation of a class of independent peasant proprietors who would represent a 'stable element in the social order' was regarded as a desirable objective. The possibilities for opening up of unutilised crown land in the Dry Zone meant that the agrarian structure in the Wet Zone could remain intact."[78]

The process of Land Settlement sponsored by the State was also an effort to contain peasant unrest. The increasing agrarian tensions in the Wet Zone, sparked off by growing landlessness, unemployment, land transfer to non-peasant groups, was stifled by shifting the landless to the Dry Zone and offering them lucrative incentives, including land, for agricultural production. It is perhaps for this reason that the policy of Land Settlement of the State has continued uninterrupted with no opposition from the peasantry. We shall return to this point later in this chapter.

A classical example of TNC incursion into peasant agriculture in the MDP is the case of the Ceylon Tobacco Company. This company was perhaps the first to be invited to participate in

the MDP and coordinate agricultural production through introducing modern techniques and regulating cultivation and marketing.

(ii) The Ceylon Tobacco Company

The Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC) - a subsidiary of British American Tobacco - is one of the 5 major tobacco TNCs that account for about 80% of all tobacco manufacturers in the capitalist countries. CTC first started its operations in Sri Lanka in 1900, and by 1954 was converted into a public limited liability company, with complete monopoly over tobacco production and cigarette manufacture in Sri Lanka.[79]

As elsewhere on the island, CTC introduced the system of 'contract farming' in the Mahaweli areas. CTC was granted about 5,600 acres in the H9 Mahaweli area in 1979. This area was settled by about 2,000 families, each granted 2.5 acres of irrigated land and 0.5 acres of highlands. The CTC introduced the crop-rotation scheme whereby the peasants cultivated paddy during the Maha season and subsidiary food crops and vegetables in the Yala season. CTC has defined its role in agricultural production as follows:

> "the Company provides the farmer with all agricultural inputs, arranges farmer credits through the Bank of Ceylon and the People's Bank, organises and motivates the farmers to produce high-yielding crops. The farmers are supervised throughout the cultivation period and the repayment of bank credit is carefully watched by the Company staff. The farmers are also given the guarantee of purchase of all their produce at market prices."[80]

In this manner, the CTC retained complete monopoly of peasant production through the contract farming system. C Abeysekera points out two significant aspects of this strategy of CTC towards peasant agriculture in Sri Lanka : (a) a TNC is stepping into a role hitherto performed by the State and its agencies. In other words, a private sector takes over all the roles of the various government departments, state agencies, banks, and marketing services. Consequently, insofar as the peasants are concerned, the TNC in effect replaces the State, and (b) it is an alternative attempt to transform peasant agriculture into large agglomerates run on basically capitalist lines, and with very little "freedom" left to the peasants in terms of choice of crops, cultivation practices, marketing, etc.[81]

The contract farming system is indeed a new strategy of TNCs towards agriculture as shown in the role of CTC in Sri Lanka today. Its nature is well summed up by its very proponent, the British American Tobacco Company, as follows :

> "We as a Company do not grow tobacco. It is not our policy to own plantations. What we do is to encourage and assist farmers to grow the crop. Our field staff then go in and show the farmers what to do - how to plant and tend the crops, what fertilisers to apply and so on, a complete extention service...When the

farmers' crop is ready, he brings it to us and we buy it direct from him; as you can expect, we pay him promptly."[82]

The overall impact of this new strategy of TNCs has become apparent in the Mahaweli area where the peasant settlers have become completely subservient to the control and management of these international institutions. The attempts of TNCs, like the CTC, to take to "contract farming" is clearly intended to overcome the limitations of widespread plantation agriculture. In many Third World countries, like Sri Lanka, labour on the plantations operated by TNCs have been the hotbed of unrest and labour agitations. Moreover, it has become economically and naturally impractical for extensive plantation agriculture and the employment of a vast labour force.

With fertile lands and cheap labour increasingly becoming a rare commodity in many Third World countries, TNCs are now turning to alternative strategies of controlling production and marketing, without direct ownership of land and labour. While this approach regulates production and distribution in the local economy, it facilitates the continued exploitation of natural resources and the appropriation of the produce by the TNCs from peasant producers. It is precisely this new strategy of international capital and TNCs that is transforming the small-holding petty commodity producers in Sri Lanka today.

(iii) Sugar TNCs in the Agricultural Promotion Zones

Here, we shall review the nature of TNC operation in one of the Agricultural Promotion Zones viz., the Pelwatte Sugar Co. set up on a collaborative agreement between the Government of Sri Lanka and Booker Agriculture International Ltd., a British owned TNC. This company was the first to commence operation of a sugar factory and regulate sugarcane cultivation in the APZ under the government's declared policy of opening up the APZs for foreign investment and international capital.

According to the agreement signed between the Government of Sri Lanka and Booker Agriculture International Ltd., dated May 24, 1984, the Government made a commitment to contribute a basic equity of Rs 184 million for the period 1982-1985 together with another Rs 33 million as grants for settlers, social infrastructure, road construction.[83] Booker Agriculture International was granted a 10 year Tax holiday and duty-free import facilities of machinery, and exemption from income tax. Annex 1 (h) of a letter from the Government of Sri Lanka to Booker Agriculture International stated in clear terms its commitment that "payments of interest and principal to foreign lenders, of dividends to foreign investors and of management fees may be made free of any withholding or other tax."[84]

What is perhaps significant regarding this agreement is the concept of 'outgrowers' introduced by the TNC in sugarcane cultivation. The various aspects of the operation of this TNC through the Pelwatte Sugar Co. is as follows : (a) an area of 7,600 hectares of rain-fed sugar cane cultivation, comprising of a nucleus estate of approximately. 4,500 ha, and a

settlement area of approximately 3,600 ha to be cultivated by "outgrowers", (b) establishment of a sugar factory with a total capacity of about 2,800 tonnes of cane per day, which could be expanded to a capacity of over 4,000 tonnes of cane per day.

The land area that comprise the location of the Pelwatte Sugar Co. was drawn from two main sources: (i) State Lands : that is, areas that have been deemed as Crown Lands, on which the factory and the nucleus estate are located, including Crown lands that will be taken over by the company for settler ("outgrowers") sugarcane cultivation; and (ii) Private Lands: that is, land belonging to the Ruhunu Maha Kataragama Devale and other private owners. The total area thus taken over by the Pelwatte Sugar Co. include approximately 9,500 hectares of State Land and 2,000 hectares of Private Lands.[85]

The outgrowers system introduced by the Pelwatte Sugar Co, under direction from the TNC - Booker Agriculture International, is another form of 'contract farming'. The peasants in the settlement area would produce sugarcane under a "contract" to the sugar factory and provided with the necessary incentives, which includes guarantee of full purchase of their produce after harvesting. However, according to this 'contract' the sugarcane farmers will not be permitted to sell the produce to any other buyer or market. In addition to providing necessary resources and incentives, the Company also ensures the levels of production and regulates inputs and credit facilities to the settler farmers.

The outgrowers system is a new experience for the local farmers in the area. In many of the APZ areas in Sri Lanka, the cultivation of sugarcane had been traditionally undertaken by the local farmers for many years on a small scale. Under the SLFP government in the 1970s, the import of sugar was restricted which was a boost to local small-scale production of sugarcane as there then prevailed a good market for jaggery. During this time, sugarcane cultivation was undertaken on uncultivated lands by the local farmers themselves and could earn as much as Rs 10,000 to Rs 20,000 from just one acre of sugarcane produced.[86]

The SLFP government provided necessary assistance for sugarcane cultivation through easy credit facilities, and permits for sugarcane cultivation. It was only in 1977 with the UNP government's Open Economy Policy that this situation was drastically altered with the liberalisation of imports on sugar. This led to a sharp fall in local sugarcane production as farmers abandoned its cultivation no longer able to obtain necessary facilities from the new government.

The country then became totally dependent on imports of sugar. The incursion of TNCs into sugarcane cultivation and sugar production in Sri Lanka came with the declaration of the government in 1982 for opening up three districts to foreign private capital and TNCs, as "Agricultural Promotion Zones". Thus, sugarcane production in the country was virtually handed over to the TNCs to manage and produce for the local market. The issues thrown up by this government's strategy are the following:

(a) Traditional sugarcane cultivation has provided more employment to farmers than the TNC-operated sugar factories and "outgrowers" system,

(b) Profit repatriation from sugar companies will not allow capital accumulation in the area or the country from sugar production,

(c) It has been argued that "small-scale sugarcane cultivation" is found to be more suitable to the country's needs, which also ensures control over production and marketing by the peasants themselves,

(d) With improved credit facilities, building-up a good local market system and arrangement, credit facilities and irrigation the farmers in the declared APZs could viably produce sugarcane for local consumption without being dependent on TNCs and international capital.[87]

It is, however, too early to assess the precise impact of the Pelwatte Sugar Company or other sugar TNCs in the APZ. What seems clear at this stage is that the contract farming (out-growers system) method of TNC operation in the APZ would significantly change the prevailing pattern of agricultural production and peasant farming in Sri Lanka. While the issue of defending the peasants land from TNC incursion provides necessary stimulus to escalating peasant protest against TNCs, what is of more significance would be the changes being introduced by TNCs in agriculture and peasant production in the Sri Lankan countryside, and its long-term effects on the agrarian economy.

The operation of the Sugar TNCs in Sri Lanka today, perhaps provides us a good case-study of new strategies of TNCs to dispossess petty commodity producers of their land and gain control over production and marketing, and in the process, incorporating them more firmly into the world capitalist market. Increasing TNC penetration into the Sri Lankan countryside would reveal the successes and limitations of this new strategy of international capital towards peasant agriculture in countries like Sri Lanka.

5.5 Agrarian Protest : The Politics of a Marginalised Peasantry

The agrarian policies and programmes we have reviewed above brought about drastic changes in agricultural production and consequently had a detrimental impact on the farmers. The opening up of the agrarian sector to foreign agribusiness interests in particular, aroused the peasantry of Sri Lanka who saw this as an effort on the part of the government to favour foreign interests to their own. The grievances of the peasantry found expression through the All-Lanka Peasant Congress (ALPC).

(i) Brief History of the All-Lanka Peasant Congress (ALPC)

The *Samastha Lanka Govi Sammelanaya* (All Lanka Peasant Congress) was established around 1942 and is perhaps the only peasant organisation that has existed in Sri Lanka with branches spread over the various districts across the island. The ALPC claims to have led numerous militant struggles of the Sri Lankan peasantry against the European colonisers, and

provided a platform for the peasantry to express and assert their grievances against colonial exploitation. The ALPC further has a national organisational setup which enables it to channel the grievances and demands of the peasantry.

The main motivation and initiative for the formation of the ALPC came from the then undivided Communist Party which attempted to organise the peasantry around issues that were so blatantly neglected by the colonial government. The cadres of the ALPC were largely drawn from this political party, while others emerged from and were strongly influenced by the militant trade union movement that developed in the country during the 1940s and 1950s. The methods of organisation and strategies of struggle adopted by the ALPC were, therefore, very much similar to that of the trade union movement in the country.

The ALPC suffered a major setback in 1971 during the JVP-led insurrection. Some members of the ALPC joined the JVP movement, and suffered arrest and detention for many years. JVP politics had a strong influence on the ALPC, although the Peasant Congress was critical of the clandestine nature of the JVP movement. With the repression of the JVP insurrection, many activists who were very disillusioned with the JVP-style politics, joined the ALPC. It is only in 1976 with the release of some key leaders from prison that the ALPC could revive itself. The ALPC has described itself as a peasant organisation that seeks to bring about the economic, social and cultural upliftment of the Sri Lankan peasantry. Its main objectives have been stated as follows :

(a) To bring about unity among the peasants in the country by organising them in the ALPC,

(b) To struggle for the demands and rights of the peasants and to orient peasants towards such struggles,

(c) To create awareness among the peasants on democratic rights and on national liberation, and

(d) To work towards worker-peasant unity in order to progress towards a new society.[88]

While these broad objectives have provided the necessary guidance for the ALPC, the organisation has specifically been concerned with issues that effect the poor peasantry. The ALPC states that in taking up these specific issues affecting the poor peasantry, their over-all objective is to strive for a socialist society in Sri Lanka. The ALPC's programme and methodology of work has attempted to impart this vision through concrete issues confronting the peasantry in Sri Lanka. Its programme includes an educational aspect which is aimed at exposing the peasants to the exploitative nature of the capitalist system.

In order words, this implies mass mobilisation of the peasantry around issues that come up from time to time, and launching non-violent protests to bring pressure on the government and officials. The methods of protest adopted by the ALPC have included demonstrations, signing petitions, picketing, *satyagrahas* and public rallies.[89] Further, the programme of

recruitment and training adopted by the ALPC has comprised of a theoretical and a practical component. The theoretical component former included a series of lectures and discussions that covered broad areas of enquiry into the country's economic and political systems and government policies towards peasant agriculture. The major themes covered in this theoretical component included the following :

(a) The national history of Sri Lanka,

(b) History of the All Lanka Peasant Congress,

(c) The Constitution of the ALPC,

(d) How the agricultural policies of the government affect the peasantry,

(e) The legislations that are relevant to the peasants,

(f) Services performed by various government departments,

(g) The religious and cultural aspects of peasant organisation, and

(h) Orientation on the programmes of work among the peasants.

The practical component of the ALPC's training programme seeks to build up a cadre of politically-advanced people to study the specific issues confronting the peasantry and to organise them into peasant organisations based on these issues. The plan of action to follow is based on the following guidelines: (i) those that can be solved by the sharing of labour (*sharmadana*),exchange of labour among the villagers themselves, (ii) those that can be solved by negotiating with officials and power groups, (iii) those that require collective pressurising agitations, (iv) those that require solutions at national level through nation-wide pressure and agitations, and (v) those that could only be solved by a change in the social system.[90]

Since its revival in 1976 the ALPC has been able to set up its branches in various parts of the island, including the districts of Anuradhapura, Kurunegala, Trincomalee, Polonnaruwa Hambantota, and Galle. In the Tamil-dominated areas of Jaffna region, the ALPC has maintained links with the Rural Labourers' Union (RLU) for many years. This has resulted in the ALPC establishing a nation-wide organisational setup and can, therefore, be termed as the only national peasant organisation in the history of modern Sri Lanka. On the other hand, since independence various Left political parties (e.g., CP, LSSP, SLFP) have also set up their own respective peasant unions. But these, however, are confined to particular pockets in the country and so far been unable to develop a nation-wide organisational structure.

The ALPC has maintained a consistent critique of the various government policies towards agriculture and its impact on the peasantry. These views have been regularly expressed during the annual conventions of the ALPC, and have been turned into slogans to rally the peasantry under the banner of the ALPC for various agitations and protest meetings. For

example, the 36th Annual Convention of the ALPC held in 1979 adopted the following resolution on the UNP government's economic policy towards agriculture and its detrimental impact on the peasantry :

(i) The All Lanka Peasant Congress registers its vehement protest regarding the aggravation of the oppression of the people, decreasing the subsidies subtly under cover of introducing food stamps in place of rice coupons, increasing price of goods by devaluing the rupee and exactly executing the advice of the World Bank,

(ii) While the prices of tractor hire, fertiliser, farming tools, etc. is increasing rapidly, the peasant is heavily burdened with the new water tax and indebtedness. Therefore this conference demands that the peasant also should be provided for crop cultivation, such as tea, rubber and coconut.[91]

In the following sections we shall review two recent peasant struggles led by the ALPC in Sri Lanka. They are : (a) The Water-tax struggle which is based on a recent levy by the government to tax farmers for using the facilities of the country's irrigation systems, and (b) The militant peasant struggle in Monaragela district against foreign sugar multinational companies that are taking over the lands of the peasants for plantation cultivation of sugarcane. A discussion of these two peasant struggles would perhaps enable us to critically review the strengths and weaknesses of the ALPC and also highlight the potentials of modern peasant protest in Sri Lanka.

(ii) The Peasant Struggle against Water-Tax

In 1983 the UNP government imposed a "water-tax" levy, which it termed the "Maintenance and Management Charges" for farmers who cultivated lands under major irrigation schemes. The imposed levy was to be Rs 100 per acre every year, which was to be increased by Rs 20 every year thereafter up to five years, until the amount reached Rs 200 per acre. Farmers who were unable to pay this tax were to be charged for violation and brought before the court. This sudden tax imposition on the peasantry led to widespread resentment, and the ALPC took up the issue to mobilise the farmers for a nation-wide agitation against the water tax. It initiated the formation of regional and district-level peasant committees to rally the farmers together. Such committees were formed in the districts of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Kurunegala, Ratnapura, Hambantota, Monaragela and even Colombo.[92] Under the leadership of the ALPC the struggle gradually intensified into widespread agitations and protest gatherings.

In Batalaguda village, for example, the peasants sent a petition and met the local Member of Parliament to protest against the tax. In two weeks time they collected over 4,000 signatures from farmers who were opposed to the levy. In this and many other villages, numerous cases were filed against offenders who refused to pay the tax. In response, the farmers organised protest rallies outside the courts during the hearings.

In Siembalaguma village where similar cases were filed against 7 offenders, more than 1,500 farmers including about 75 Buddhist monks demonstrated.[93] In a year's time, the peasant agitations against the water-tax developed into a nation-wide upsurge of the peasantry led by the ALPC. Some opposition parties like LSSP, SLMP, CP also issued statements supporting the farmers agitations against the unjust water-tax imposed by the government.

The ALPC saw the imposition of the water-tax as a discriminatory policy against the peasantry while, on the other hand, it had opened up its agricultural sector to the exploitation of MNCs who were exempted from such taxations. The 12th Congress of the ALPC held in April 1984 adopted the following resolution on the current water-tax agitations :

> "Foreign companies invited for agriculture and agro-business industries have been offered large tax concessions and they are allowed to take away their profits without any taxes. But the small farmers (local population) who benefit from irrigation facilities have been asked to pay a water tax of Rs 100 per acre at the beginning which is to be increased to Rs 200 later....
>
> We strongly oppose these unjust taxing of the poor and appeal to the people to unite in the struggle against them."[94]

The escalating opposition to the imposition of the water-tax was unheeded by the government. In its desire to carry out the dictates of the IMF, the government adopted strict measures to ensure payment of the tax by the farmers. Failure to do so were dealt with sternly, with the offenders being dragged to courts and charges filed against them. Such harsh measures on the part of the government further aggravated the situation, with the result that the agitating farmers found increasing sympathy and support from many quarters including opposition political parties. For its part, the government in fact admitted that during the first year of its imposition, the collection of the water-tax had been largely a failure.

While the ALPC was spear-heading the nation-wide agitation against the water-tax the issue of the invasion of Monaragela by sugar multinational companies was also raised. The ALPC and other peasant organisations came together to form the "Joint Committee of Peasant Federations" to better coordinate the struggle on these two issues. This Joint Committee brought together the following peasant organisations : a) *Govijana Maha Sabbawa*, b) *Jathika Govi Sammelanaya (CPSL)*, c) *Samastha Lanka Govi Sammelanaya*, d) *Sri Lanka Krushikarmiyinge Maha Sangamaya (LSSP)*, e) *Govijana Sammelanaya (NSSP)*, f) *Sri Lanka Mahajana Govi Sammelanaya (SLMP)*, g) *Sri Lanka Nidhahas Govi Sammelanaya (SLFP)*, h) *Heladiaa Govi Sammelanaya (MEP)*, and i) *Samajawadi Govijana Sangamaya (JVP)*[95]

The formation of the JCPF was definitely a major step in the attempt to revive the peasant movement in modern Sri Lanka, especially because it has brought together most of the major opposition political parties into one coordinated front to provide leadership to the developing peasant struggles in the past years. The JCPF set up two issue-oriented fronts viz., the *'Jathika Jala-badhu Virodhi Kamituwa'* (the People's Anti-Water Tax Front) which coordinated the anti-water tax agitation, and, the *'Monaragela Govijana Sahayogitha Kamituwa'* (the Monaragela

Peasants United Front) to coordinate the peasant struggle against the granting of lands to sugar multinationals in Monaragela district.

The resurgence of peasant struggles around these two issues in recent years has brought the peasant movement in the forefront of the country's politics. In the process these peasant struggles have been able to mobilise support from urban centres and various national peoples organisations. However, the apparent weakness of these struggles has been that they remain confined to specific area in the country and coordinated by exclusive peasant organisations (like the ALPC) which in fact has posed limitations in broadening the struggles into wider national and political protest movements. Critics of these current peasant struggles have pointed out that the main weakness lies in the fact that these struggles are primarily issue-oriented and imply a vain attempt to preserve the encroacher small-peasantry in Sri Lanka.

(iii) The Peasants' Struggle against Sugar TNCs in Vellassa

The location of the recent peasant struggle against sugar MNCs in Monaragela is a region known as *Vellassa.* Vellassa literally means "a hundred thousand paddy fields" to signify the area where, it is believed that, "a large population who worked and lived from generation to generation for the past 2,000 to 3,000 years of the island's civilisation", until the time that the British destroyed this area during the militant peasant struggles against the colonisers in 1818. The Vellassa peasantry is said to have risen in armed revolt against the British invaders in 1818 which initiated widespread protest that spread to other areas of the Kandyan Kingdom.

Among the many peasant leaders thrown up during the 1818 peasant revolts, Butare Rala, Kohnkumbure Rala, Polgahagama Rala, Madugama Rala and others came from Vellassa. In the aftermath of this rebellion, Vellassa was virtually in ruins. The British massacred its population, burnt its crops and destroyed almost all its irrigational works and hamlets. Thousands of Vellassa people are said to have died of starvation and hunger during the repression. It is clear that this armed revolt of the Vellassa peasantry shook the power of British rule on the island.

The above was evident from the urgent appeal from the then Chief Administrator of Uva, John D'Oyly, to the Colonial Secretary at London which stated that "this defeat suffered by the British in the Golden Age (sic!)of British military history which started with wars with Napoleon, will encourage and instigate even the people of India for insurrection and ultimately can lead to the loss of British possessions in the East."[96]

The repression unleashed on the Vellassa peasantry was followed by the region being administered under Martial Law by the British from 1818 to 1844. Moreover, as in other parts of the Kandyan Kingdom, the British took over the lands of the peasants through arbitrary laws and handed them over to private British capitalists to set up plantations and take to cultivation of export crops.

The recent peasant struggle against sugar multinationals (including British) in this region of Vellassa has evoked memories of this earlier history of armed peasant conflicts with the

British invaders. Under the Open Economic Policy of the UNP government, the three districts of Monaragela, Vavuniya and Mannar were declared as Agricultural Promotion Zones. In Monaragela, three giant multinational companies set up local sugar companies in joint-collaboration with the Sri Lankan government, ostensibly as a disguise to facilitate the exploitation of local resources and to gain legal credibility. The three sugar companies set up for this purpose were the following:

(a) The Pelwatte Sugar Co. Ltd

This company has established sugar plantations in the Wellawaya area and has already begun to construct a giant sugar factory. It was formed by the following partners: Booker Agriculture International of U.K., Commonwealth Development Corporation of U.K., Kerry Engineering Ltd. of Hong Kong, Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, Standard Chartered Bank of U.K., and the Government of Sri Lanka and the Bank of Ceylon. The Sri Lankan ownership in this company is estimated to be around 60%. This company is also the largest agricultural project in the country with a total capital of Rs 2500 million. The company has been granted a total of 24,000 acres of land to establish its factory and plantation - this would include about 17,000 acres for the Central Zone and a peripheral zone of about 7,000 acres.

(b) The Monaragela Sugar Co. Ltd

This company was set up as a joint venture between the Government of Sri Lanka and Metha International - an Indo-African multinational company based in Bermuda. The Monaragela Sugar Co. has been granted over 52,000 acres in Siyambalanduwa A.G.A. Division of Monaragela district to establish its factory and plantation. The central zone of this plantation is estimated to cover about 10,000 acres and the peripheral zone about 42,000 acres. The factory will have a capacity of processing over 2,200 tons of sugarcane daily.

(c) The Nakkala Sugar Co. Ltd

Another joint venture between the Government of Sri Lanka and a Dutch Multinational company - H.V.A. International Ltd. This company has been granted about 6,000 acres in the Nakkala region for sugarcane cultivation and for setting up a factory to produce sugar.

The basic strategy adopted by these multinational sugar companies would be such that each of them will set up its own sugar plantation in the specified central zone with a giant factory and an administrative complex. In addition, there will be a peripheral zone of private small farmers which will consist of the surrounding areas cultivating sugarcane with advice and aid provided by the company, with the farmers selling the total produce to the factory at a price fixed by the company. The peripheral zone will also be administered by the company unhindered by the regulations of the government.[97]

The establishment of these three sugar companies was a result of prolonged discussions between the Government of Sri Lanka and many multinational companies since January 1981 on the possibility of setting up sugarcane plantations and giant sugar factories in the three Agricultural Promotion Zones. But it was only towards the end of September 1982 that the ALPC and other opposition political parties became suspicious of the plans and intentions of the government and the multinational companies and its consequence for the Vellassa peasantry.

In the same month the ALPC and some opposition parties signed a petition which was handed over the President protesting against the intentions of the government to hand over irrigated lands in the Mahaweli project, APZs to foreign companies. This petition found no response from the government or the companies themselves. The ALPC continued to press the issue and published articles in its organ - *Goviya*- titled "Vellassa to Foreigners" exposing the government's plans.

It was through these articles that the peasants in the region became first aware of the plans drawn up by the government and the MNCs to take over their lands and set up sugar plantations. They, therefore, sent many delegations to meet Members of Parliament to seek more information on the precise plans drawn up for this purpose, but found the M.P.'s denying any knowledge of such plans. The suspicions of the farmers were confirmed when in early 1982 the Grama Sevakas' of the affected areas were ordered by the Government Agent (GA) to conduct a survey of certain villages, collect data on the people, property, lands, crops, and resources. It then became certain that the peasants would lose these lands to the foreign companies.

In 1983 Metha International began clearing operations in Monaragela to set up its nursery in the central zone. In a short time the company began to work its way into the fields of the peasants and expand its central zone. It cut through trees, peasant gardens and uprooted the lime and orange shrubs that belonged to the farmers. This initial operation was stunted when the peasants began to protest and intervened to stop the further expansion of the nursery in the central zone.

The company officials who first met the peasants stated that all the land in the area had been handed over to them by the agreement with the government, and they showed a map to the peasants which indicated the precise location of the sugar factory and the plantation. Two Indian engineers with the A.G.A. acting as an interpreter - explained to the peasants the contents of the map as follows : the central zone would enclose about 10 villages with a population of about 3,000 people cultivating about 1,500 acres of lands. The temple lands of about 60 acres will also be taken over, and the central location of the company will be about 600 acres in the Haddawa forest reserve which had for so long been maintaining the ecological balance of the whole region, and was now to be replaced by the sugar factory.[98]

One peasant woman in Kivaleyaya village in Monaragela district explained this first interaction with the company officials in the following words :

> "We first came to know of the company through newspapers and the ALPC activists in 1982/83. Then the company officials came to make boundaries by

cutting through our gardens. They explained that they wanted to survey the land and conduct soil tests to make soil maps. These officials were accompanied by the Grama Sevakas. The officials had a map of the area where the precise location of the company was marked out. They told us that the factory will be set up on State lands. But we knew that sugarcane cannot just be cultivated without using the private lands belonging to us in the area. They told us: "We are only doing a survey, but we won't take lands. We are from India, but we are not Tamils." We responded: "We have no special anger with India, but we are angry with you because you are taking our lands."[99]

This peasant women went on to explain that the next day the company officials returned with the AGA and spoke to the assembled farmers. They claimed to develop hospitals, schools, and roads in the villages. The farmers merely responded : "We do not believe this. We only want to be left alone to cultivate our lands for our children."

Under the initiative of the ALPC the peasants in Monaragela organised themselves into peasant action committees to protest the intrusion of the sugar multinationals. On July 28, 1984 the ALPC organised a Press Conference in Colombo which brought together various opposition parties and peoples organisations to rally support for the Monaragela peasantry. ALPC leaders, Buddhist monks and politicians addressed this conference. At this conference, Appuhamy, an elderly peasant leader from Madugama, described the situation he had to encounter, as quoted by Gamini Yapa:

> "..the company had ordered him to leave a part of the land which he had cultivated for nearly 40 years. When he refused to do so the officials of the company had the audacity to lodge a complaint at the AGA's office to the effect that he was encroaching on the Company's property. Regarding this he met the Monaragela GA at the latter's office on July 23 and there had been a heated argument between them. At the end, the same officer who the previous week categorically denied the intention of taking over the property of the peasantry had told him that he had received instructions to remove all those living in the Central zone to make way for the company and the bulldozers."[100]

An important outcome of this Press Conference was the formation of the 'Monaragela Peasants Solidarity Committee' which consisted of representatives of various peoples organisations and pressure groups in the country.

The government, however, continued to turn a deaf ear to the protest of the Monaragela peasants. In fact, it went about explaining the benefits of multinational companies operations in Sri Lanka. One politician elucidated this as follows :

> "The sugar companies coming here will plough your land for you. They will give you saplings. Will give you fertilisers. Will give you credit for cultivation. All you have to do is to sell the yield to the sugar company and pocket the money. Is it a hard thing? In the past people bought oranges calling them Bibile oranges. In

a short time they would buy sugar calling it Monaragela sugar. Then who would be proud of that? Those who distribute pamphlets are defeated political groups. They are lying. They are not telling you peasants the truth. This is for your benefit."[101]

Such was the extent of ridicule that the government and its politicians could go to justify their economic policy and the intervention of multinational companies in Sri Lanka.

The ALPC, on the other hand, in its 12th National Congress resolution in April 1984 had stated in no unclear terms its total opposition towards the government's policy of throwing open agricultural areas to multinational companies and to foreign private investors. The Resolution stated :

> "Monaragela, Vavuniya and Mannar districts have been named as "Agricultural Promotion Zones" open to foreign and local companies for export-oriented agriculture and agro-based industries. They are offered large tax benefits and other incentives similar to those in the Free Trade Zones.....We express our opposition to these moves and emphasise that no country that permits multi-national companies to have control over such a wide range of activities could protect its national sovereignty, a democratic rule, and independent economy and its cultural values. We appeal to the people to organise themselves to protect our valuable land. Do not sell our land and the people (peasants) to foreign companies!"[102]

The legal conditions of land holdings in the Monaragela area is still a point of bitter debate between the government and the peasants. The government, which is said to have used a 1948 map of Sri Lanka during the process of allocating lands to the sugar multinationals, holds that the area is "state property" as this particular map showed the area as "reserved forests" at that time. The peasants, on the other hand, claim that for many years they have settled on these lands and cultivated it through chena cultivation and possess some legal rights to their holdings. It is therefore important to look more closely at the legal conditions of peasant holdings in this area which remains a crucial point of dispute between the government and the peasantry

(a) By 1930 the Land Settlements Department had demarcated the boundaries of the old villages declaring them as areas belonging to the people settled there. In such area, the government possessed only those lands that were allocated to schools and government buildings. The rest of the area - about 200 acres - were claimed as the village lands by the chiefs. Apart from this, there are other lands outside the village which had not been settled between the government and the people,

(b) With increasing population the people cleared the land and built their houses and cultivated perennial crops. After 1950 this land was also marked out and given to the possession of the people. This area of about 800 acres then became the property of the villagers and they even paid their Surveyor's fees for these lands,

(c) The government also gave some villagers about 2 acres each under the Land Development Ordinance on a 99 year lease. They were also given housing. Land kaccheries were also held for this purpose. The acreage obtained on this 99 year lease was about 200 acres,

(d) Still other lands have been settled by people resident for over 10 years which they had continued to cultivate without any authorisation. People expected that these lands would be legally given to them in the future by the Land Settlement Department following the earlier practise. Such lands include about 1,000 acres,

(e) There are others too who had settled permanently on land that they obtained on annual permits, which is extended every year. They have also cultivated permanent crops. This acreage is about 200 acres, and

(f) Lastly, there are those who have settled in lands but have not renewed their annual permits. They occupy about 800 acres in this region. [103]

The formation of peasant action committees in Monaragela together with the establishment of the Monaragela Solidarity Committee to mobilise nation-wide support for the struggle against the MNCs, began a process of militant opposition against the sugar companies. In October 1984 a statement was brought out expressing concern over the transfer of lands in Monaragela to three multinational companies : "By arranging for the destruction of both the villager and the temple, the damage caused to the cornerstone of the traditional religious way of life to the peasantry is immense. Not only that. Hotels and holiday resorts for the rest and recreation of the foreigners will make their entrance. The havoc caused by the destruction of culture, evident in areas dominated by foreign companies and around tourist hotels, will visit this area too."

Among the prominent people who were signatories to this statement included the following : about 35 Buddhist monks, 10 Catholic and Anglican priests and nuns, prominent politicians like Dinesh Gunawardena MP, Vijay Kumaratune (SLMP), Bernard Soysa (LSSP), K.P. Silva (CP), several trade unionists, representatives of peasant organisations and well known academics like Professor Sarachachandra, Professor Carlo Fonseka, Professor Kumari Jayawardena and Professor Wiswa Warnapala.[104]

In November 1984 Metha International commenced clearing operations in the Haddawa forest area to set up its factory. The company's plans was that "600 acres of the central forest is to be cleared to erect the giant factory of the sugar company milling 2200 tons of sugar cane per day and its office complex. And water for the factory has to come from Heda Oya."[105] The peasants, on the contrary, had argued that when Heda Oya dries up after the Haddawa forest is cleared, the factory will have to utilise the water facilities of Muthukandiya, thereby depriving them of water resources.

Further, it is feared that the clearing of the Haddawa forest area would seriously effect the ecological balance of the whole region. The Haddawa area had been divided into 10 plots and

ten contractors were granted permission to fell and remove the timber and clear the area. When this work began, the peasants made enquiries and discovered that Metha International had employed the contractors for the job.

On November 7 the peasants marched to the office of the Government Agent in Monaragela to lodge a complaint and discuss the matter with the GA. This delegation included over 250 peasants and several Buddhist monks, headed by the leaders of the Monaragela Solidarity Committee and members of the ALPC. In the discussions with the GA it was revealed that the GA himself was not aware of the situation and he assured the peasants that no permits were issued to anyone to clear the Haddawa forests. The GA then visited the area and ordered all the contractors to leave the area immediately. However, a few days later, the State Timber Corporation entered Haddawa with a government permit claiming to merely thin down the overgrowth in the forest. The peasants, however, kept up their vigilance to prevent the destruction of the forest reserve.

Meanwhile, the peasants had sent a petition letter to the Parliament Petitions Committee demanding the immediate stoppage of eviction of farmers lands by the sugar company. The letter called for an immediate and thorough enquiry from the Ministry of Agrarian Research and Development into the operations of the company. In its reply, the Parliament Committee stated that only 19,000 acres of land were proposed by the government to be given to the sugar company which they would cultivate directly, while the rest would be cultivated by the farmers with necessary assistance provided by the company. Further, the Commissioner of Parliament requested the petitioners to come to Parliament office on January 15, 1985 to discuss the issue of the sugar multinationals in Monaragela.

This meeting of the peasant leaders and the Parliament Committee was the highest level of discussions that took place on the issue of the sugar companies in Monaragela. The peasants' delegation included Mr. Ananda Weerakoon and the Organising Secretary of the ALPC, Patrick Fernando; who met the Commissioner and his assistants, the Monaragela GA, and a top government official incharge of affairs with the sugar companies.[106]

During the deliberations that followed the GA admitted that the attempt to clear Haddawa was made without his knowledge. He admitted to declaring about 350 acres of Haddawa as forest reserves and that valuable timber had been shifted before his order was promulgated. None of the government officials, however, seemed to possess any knowledge as to who sent the illegal lumberjacks to fell trees in Haddawa earlier, exactly at the same location where the central office and factory of the Monaragela sugar company was to be set up.[107]

With the peasant protest in Monaragela developing into a widespread upsurge, guided by the ALPC, support and solidarity actions were carried out by various urban-based pressure groups and peoples' organisations through the National Solidarity network. Many delegations and representatives of women's groups, workers, Buddhist monks and others paid visits to Monaragela to meet with the farmers and express their support and solidarity for the struggle against the sugar multinationals.

In March 1985 twelve women's organisations in Sri Lanka issued a joint statement of solidarity with the Monaragela peasantry in which they appealed to the people of the country to oppose the MNC. The signatories included the women's fronts of various political parties *Mahajana Paksha*, Ceylon Merchantile Union, LSSP, NSSP - and independent women's groups viz., Voice of Women, Negombo Women's Committee, Women and Media and Progressive Women's Front.

It is essential to emphasise the important role played by peasant women in the Monaragela struggle. The Progressive Women's Front (PWF) took the main initiative to form peasant women's organisations/societies in Monaragela to enable to participation of women in the peasant struggles. The strategy adopted by the PWF was to use the issue of MNC intervention into Monaragela to conscientize the women to actively involve themselves in mass organisations. However, as the struggle developed and the ALPC set about organising peasant societies in the various villages, these women's groups gradually dissolved into the peasant action committees. The reason for this was that the women did not feel the necessity any longer for separate women's organisations, but to join the general movement of peasants to fight against the sugar companies.

Women, however, played a key role in the struggle - in one village for example over 30% of the women were involved in the peasants struggle, most of them coming from families from which other members (fathers, brothers and relatives) were already active in the movement and in peasant societies. This issue of sugar MNCs in Monaragela has greatly helped in raising the general consciousness of the women in the area and to provide a platform for them to express their own identity and grievances and to participate in equal terms in the peasants struggle to defend their lands.[108]

The Monaragela struggle has also been able to mobilise the Buddhist monks - who are an influential group in the country's political process and particularly in the village set-up - onto their side. In June 1985 a delegation of over 150 Buddhist monks visited Monaragela to express their support for the struggle. Moreover, Buddhist monks have also participated actively in the various demonstrations organised by the ALPC and the Solidarity Committee against the MNC and the government's policy towards peasant agriculture.

The Monaragela struggle began to take an aggressive turn from May 1985 onwards. The ALPC had organised its May Day rally in Siyambalanduwa to "boost the morale of the peasant struggle" and to highlight this issue and rally support. It was around this time that Metha International also began to bull-doze the lands which was to constitute the nursery area for the sugar plantation. The farmers protested and tried to prevent the bulldozers from leveling their lands. In this incident alone over 83 farmers were arrested and charged with "sabotage of the company and damaging property." In an effort from preventing the company from laying claims to their lands, the farmers planted banana saplings on the bull-dozed lands. The company retaliated by uprooting the saplings with the help of the local police force.

In August 1985 the company began to plant sugarcane saplings in the nursery area inspite of the great resentment caused to the peasants of the area. As a show of strength, on August 30,

1985 over 500 farmers and ALPC activists gathered together and held a protest rally in the location of the nursery and uprooted the sugarcane saplings. Although no confrontation took place during this incident, the company officials brought in about 15 armed police battalions from Badulla and Bandarawela to intimidate the peasants and threaten them with dire consequences if they continue to protest and oppose the company's operations in the area. To protect itself from the peasants protest, the company also erected a barbed wire fence around the nursery area, enclosing over 400 acres which included lands belonging to the Madugama and Kivaleyaya villagers.

The Government's attitude towards the peasants plight in Monaragela has been one of indifference and evasion and also ignorance of the lower-rank government officials on the plans drawn up by the multinational companies to take over the peasants lands. When questioned by the peasant delegations which met the AGA of Monaragela, the latter seemed to be quite ignorant of the company's plans although he is said to have sent the police with those who went to mark the boundaries of the area that had been allocated to the Monaragela sugar company.

Further, the Members of Parliament of Bibile and Monaragela too seemed unaware of the details drawn up by the company. Besides mere indifference and ignorance, government authorities also have used strong-arm tactics to threaten and intimidate the peasants and the ALPC organisers in Monaragela. When farmers held meetings in the villages to oppose the company's operations, the government took a decision in mid-August to ban such meetings in the villages using the pretext of the "State of Emergency" prevelant in Sri Lanka.

What is indeed ironic in this situation is that the government had for long been clamoring for "self-sufficiency in sugar production", while at the same time, it had been importing thousands of tons of sugar under its Open Economy policy. And now, it has virtually handed over the entire sugar production in the country to foreign multinational companies to enable it to achieve this self-sufficiency. The government has justified this policy by stating that the benefits of the foreign sugar companies will accrue to the people of Monaragela which has been used to rationalise its total sell-out to foreign companies.

The Government-company collusion in this operation in Monaragela has become quite evident. From the moment the company set foot in Monaragela, they have come to dominate the entire administrative and state machinery in the area. As Gamini Yapa notes : "Making the Government Agent a mere officer in service they take all decisions at Colombo and dictate terms to all government officers and even to the police. Their payments are heavy and the gram sevakas and policemen serving them are getting attractive sums. It is suspected that some high bureaucrats are also on their payroll."[109]

It is important to point out that the leaders of the two peasant struggles we have discussed above, including the activists of the ALPC, had been subject to severe repression - not only from State and its security forces, but also from paramilitary vigilante groups. After the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord which was signed on July 29, 1989, a movement calling itself the "Patriotic Peoples Movement" (*Deshpremi Janatha Vyaapaaraya* - DJV) shot into prominence by unleashing a wave of terror and killings of prominent opposition politicians, human rights

workers, student leaders, peasant activists, religious leaders and NGO workers. This movement was in fact a front-organisation of the "People's Liberation Front" (*Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna*) the militant group that led the abortive insurrection of 1971 in Sri Lanka.

Among the ALPC activists assassinated by the JVP during 1988-1989 included the following : Mr. Ananda Weerakoon - a veteran activist of left-wing politics since the 1940s and had spent his entire life working with the poor peasants of Uva province. Ananda was a prominent leader of the ALPC and was the undisputed leader of the peasants struggle in Monaragela against sugar transnational companies. Mr Jamis Athugala - a peasant leader who was the Assistant Secretary of the Kurunegala District Committee of the All-Lanka Peasant Congress.[110]

5.6 The Politics of Agrarian Radicalism in Sri Lanka Today

The significance of the two major peasant struggles in recent history of Sri Lanka that we have discussed above lies in the fact that, perhaps for the first time, the Sri Lankan peasantry stands in open confrontation with the forces of international capitalism and imperialism. Besides, the resurgence of peasant protest in recent years has marked a significant step forward for the peasantry against a backdrop characterised by the lack of a peasant movement and general passivity of the peasantry. The UNP government's Open Economy policy while sharpening the contradictions of peasant agriculture in Sri Lanka, has also enabled the peasantry to identify critical areas and issues that expose the fundamental weakness of the economy and to utilise these issues to mount pressure against the ruling elites.

The post-1977 economic policy of the UNP government hastened the process of imperialist expansion in this small island and accentuated the contradictions of modern capitalism in predominantly agricultural Third World countries. In other words, with the plantation economy already decisively determining the major sector of the Sri Lankan economy for export-orientation, with the economic policies of the UNP government, new sectors of the local economy were thrown open to exploitation from foreign private interests and multinational corporations. It is a plain fact that the invasion of MNCs into the agrarian sector was to be a new experience for the peasantry in Sri Lanka which thereafter posed the forces of imperialism and multinational corporations as the targeted 'enemy'.

I am inclined to suggest that this is a 'new experience' for the Sri Lankan peasants mainly because it has, for the first time, brought the peasantry in open conflict directly with foreign interests in the rural sector, and to confront the forces of modern capitalism in peasant agriculture. In the Monaragela peasant struggle, however, it still remains unclear whether the struggle against the sugar MNCs is basically a struggle of an encroacher peasantry to defend their lands from a 'multinational encroacher'; or it is a struggle of a 'nationalist peasantry' against the forces of imperialism. There does not seem to be much clarity on this question, both on the part of the ALPC organisers as well as the peasantry in Monaragela.

The struggle of the Monaragela peasantry, therefore, is a struggle to defend their rights to land they had cultivated for many years, although many of them are basically 'encroachers' on these lands and cultivating them under the traditional 'chena cultivation system'. In Sri Lanka, encroachment has been a widespread phenomenon in peasant agriculture. Investigations conducted by the Land Commission have revealed that "over 292,000 acres of state land which had been demarcated for forest reserves, public purposes, climatic reserves and other reserved areas by the government, are now occupied by encroachers."[111]

Earlier, a survey done by the same Commission in 1979 stated that over 940,000 acres were occupied by unauthorised persons, and such encroachments had been recorded in the districts of Kurunegala, Anuradhapura, Ampara, Hambantota, Monaragela and to a certain extent in Colombo. Based on these findings the government has argued that "State lands" in some districts would be handed over to MNCs and that the encroachers on these lands have no legal right of land holdings ('unauthorised persons'). The peasants, on the other hand, have firmly stood to their position that they had occupied these lands for many years, and overtime they had been granted some legal rights to their holdings and their village settlements. The legality of this problematic is also a crucial element in the present struggle against sugar MNCs in Monaragela.

The peasant struggle in Monaragela highlights many fundamental questions that have plagued the peasantry of Third World societies in the context of the inevitable development of capitalist production. This problematic can be stated in the following manner - with reference to Sri Lanka : The predominant agrarian sector of the Sri Lankan economy has for long remained stagnant and small-producer oriented with only some peripheral sectors under intensive capitalist agricultural production through cash cropping.

It can therefore be argued that the struggle of the peasantry of "self-preservation" in such a social formation is a 'reactionary response' to the forces of modern capitalism and the inevitable assimilation of local economies into the world capitalist system. This process of assimilation brings into the local economy modern productive methods of agricultural production, technology and class polarisation in the agrarian sector. In many Third World societies, this remains an inevitable process of capitalist development in agriculture.

Therefore, we need to pose the question : "Is it a futile attempt for an encroacher (small-holding) peasantry to confront giant multinational corporations ? On the other hand, should the strategy be one that views this intrusion as inevitable in the circumstances and perhaps desired, in a situation where the State and the forces of 'national capital' are extremely weak or absent and unable to provide the alternate avenue for development of the productive forces and capitalist relations in agriculture?" This is precisely the problematic posed by the present Monaragela struggle, which has differed the attitudes and positions taken by various political parties and Left organisations towards the Monaragela peasant struggle.

Hector Abewardena of the LSSP stated the problematic we have outlined above by arguing that :

"The peasantry in Monaragela is basically a poor, subsistence-based peasantry. Subsistence needs to be seen as a process of marginalisation. Can we, therefore, preserve the peasantry in these marginalised conditions? The MNCs are investing capital which the State is unable to provide, thereby creating a labour market for the employment of the peasants in Monaragela. We need to promote market economy in the country today. Hence, the need is to fight for compensation and rehabilitation of the peasantry, unless we ourselves can provide the required capital and employment in this area. It is therefore futile to "preserve" the peasantry under these conditions."[112]

The leadership and the participants in the Monaragela struggle, on the other hand, have viewed its scope as one that strengthens the organisational and political power of the peasantry to defend their lands from being appropriated by a foreign company, and thereby expose the contradictions of the path of economic development adopted by the UNP government in Sri Lanka. It is precisely this conviction that has provided the rallying point for the development of peasant organisations initiated by the ALPC, and coloured the slogans of the struggle itself.

Then, one would need to pose the question : "Does this understanding or conviction suffice as a justification to launch a militant peasant struggle against MNCs? And if so, what are its political consequences for the peasantry and for the economic development of a backward agricultural base of the Sri Lankan economy today?" Peasant activists have often viewed every grievance of the peasantry as a potential for launching peasant struggles, and in the process often overlook the broader political and economic implications of which the grievances are, in fact, only a response.

At the other end of the political spectrum, we have the orthodox Marxists in Sri Lanka who believe in the 'inevitable doom of capitalism'. From this firm conviction emerges the opinion that modern capitalist relations and advanced productive forces are bound to sharpen the contradictions and eliminate backward agrarian relations and 'feudalism' in the countryside. The Monaragela struggle has, perhaps for the first time in Sri Lanka but also in many other parts of the Third World, highlighted once again this conventional Marxist dilemma and problematic in post-colonial agricultural societies. The allies and critics of the Monaragela struggle stand parallel to these divergent and contradictory theoretical positions.

It was precisely for the above reason that the peasant upsurge in Monaragela has found little support from opposition political parties and broader political movements in the country. Inevitably, therefore, it has been confined to the area of struggle and the organisational backing of the ALPC which has for long been supporting the struggles of the peasantry in Sri Lanka.

In the past years, with the various forms of non-violent peasant protest launched by the ALPC in Monaragela and elsewhere gaining little ground in restricting the expansion of MNCs, sections from among the activists are drawn to suggest more aggressive and violent forms of protest. This has often implied 'adventurist tactics' of sabotaging the company and its operations, eliminating officials and government allies. This has been a recent development in the Monaragela struggle and has consequently polarised the struggle into two sections : one

which argues for the withdrawal of the struggle as it seems a futile attempt to confront the giant MNC and government support for its operations and hence to take up employment with the company, the other, which seems convinced of a more aggressive method of struggle and prepared to go to any length to ensure the protection of their lands from take-over by the company.

The ALPC and the peasant societies in Monaragela are caught in between those polarising sections within the peasantry and the activists. The manner in which this debate will be resolved would be determined by the following factors : (a) how the issue of sugar MNC penetration in the agrarian sector can be linked to broader economic and political policy options of the Sri Lankan government in the post-1977 period ?, (b) what forms of support can be mobilised from non-peasant sectors, especially left parties, workers, trade unions, students, and professionals ? (c) how to advance the stages of struggle against MNC exploitation to one that would challenge the whole economic setup and the class alliances (both national and international) of the UNP government and the ruling classes ?, and (d) who would exercise the decisive leadership within the peasant struggle and what ideological inclinations and alliances prevail ?

It is important in this regard to mention here another level at which this conflict of interests and political inclinations is taking place presently in Monaragela. With some of the farmers taking up employment with the sugar company after losing their lands, a conflict of interests has emerged between those farmers who would want to pursue the struggle against the MNC, and those who have begun to work for the company basically to make ends meet. The latter have been quickly transformed - through a process of rapid imperialist intervention - from an "encroacher" small-holding peasantry to an agricultural labour force employed for wages.

In such circumstances, therefore, the dominant conflict of interests between the Monaragela peasantry and the foreign MNC, has resulted in a subsidiary - yet crucial - conflict of interests among sections of the Monaragela peasantry itself. This is yet another level at which the problematic we have outlined above is prevelant in the Monaragela peasant struggle today.

It is not surprising that the Left movements in Sri Lanka have been largely indifferent to the Monaragela peasant upsurge. This has indeed been a tradition in this country where the inception of Marxist politics began with a dominant Trotskyist tradition that always under-played the potentials of the peasantry. Therefore, the Left parties in Sri Lanka have seen the peasant sector only as a 'last frontier' in their stated revolutionary path to achieve socialism. The inevitable result of this history has been that the peasantry and peasant organisations (like the ALPC) have been unable to identify channels and platforms for developing class alliances with the militant industrial working class in Sri Lanka, or for that matter, the plantation labour force. Thus, even in those situations where there have been events of militant peasant protest (like for example, the Water-tax struggle and the current Monaragela struggle against sugar MNCs), barring formal expressions of solidarity and adopted political resolutions in Party Congresses, the Left parties in Sri Lanka have largely ignored the possible potentials that lie behind these peasant struggles.

At the same time, we must also point out that this is precisely the factor that has played into the hands of the ruling parties. In a situation where the Left has largely neglected the agrarian sector and peasant organisations, the UNP and the SLFP have been able to canvass the support of the agrarian population over the years and have built up an effective "patronage system" that flows from the "top" (government) right down to the "bottom" (village). This patronage system has secured for the ruling parties the important agrarian bloc in electoral support and passive political participation.

In such a situation, it is quite understandable that peasant organisations, like the ALPC, find themselves quite isolated in their struggles and always confront barriers of political ideology and party policies when attempting to mobilise support for peasant struggles. The current peasant struggle in Monaragela has also felt the effects of the above, and perhaps, it is precisely this fact that may decisively determine the outcome and future course the Monaragela peasant struggle will take.

Lastly, there has also been a strong tendency among peasant organisers and some peasant organisations in Sri Lanka to 'romanticise' the peasantry and bestow on it tasks which it has been unable to perform in the country's history. Some have gone to the extent of arguing that perhaps the current Monaragela peasant struggle signifies a continuation or reenactment of a historical struggle of the Vellassa peasant against foreign intruders a century ago.[113] Such an assumption gives way to mere speculation that perhaps gives the Sri Lankan peasantry much more credibility than it has historically taken upon itself.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Our review of peasant protest and rural elite strategies in Asian societies has shown that the peasantry has time and again risen up to challenge the status quo, and attempt to liberate themselves from foreign and local domination. This history reveals that the Asian peasants have repeatedly disproved Marx's polemics against peasants : "Clumsy but cunning, rascally but naive, oafish but sublime, a calculated superstition, a pathetic burlesque, and inspired but stupid anachronism, a momentous, historic piece of buffoonery, an undecipherable hieroglyph, for the understanding of the civilised..."[1]

For Marx, therefore, the peasantry - and he was polemicising about the French peasantry of his time - was surely a "dying class". But other revolutionary thinkers had different conceptions about peasants : to Fanon, the peasant is "the motive force behind the revolutions of the dispossessed and the outcaste"; to the Maoist, he/she is the "backbone of the revolutionary army of national liberation"; and to Cabral, "the repository of the finest and the best of the culture of the colonised." These varied conceptions, however, developed through peasant revolutions in former colonies after Marx's death, added increasing glamour and intrigue to the study and analysis of peasant protest and agrarian struggles.

The history of Asian societies has been replete with anti-colonial peasant struggles. These struggles did not subside with the gaining of independence from colonial rule. Rather, peasant struggles in post-independent Asian societies - as we have seen in the case of some Asian countries - intensified and gained ideological and organisational strength and vigor.

Thus, "in the post-independence era, peasant groups have engaged in mass protests in pursuing specific demands for agrarian reform, and, in some instances, have actually been successful. As a consequence, the political structure in most Asian countries is unfavorable to the development of genuine, peasant-based organisations. The ruling elite feel threatened by such organisations, which are frequently perceived as subversive and a variety of measures have been employed to suppress them."[2]

The first part of this chapter will attempt to answer the first question posed in Chapter 1, viz., "Have there been significant shifts overtime in the form and impact of peasant protest and agrarian movements - in particular relation to the ideology of protest, role of the leadership and social base, class alliances and strategies?" This will include a review of our main conclusions from the three case studies - India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. The second part of this chapter will address the remaining questions in Chapter 1.

6.1 India : Agrarian Protest and Agrarian Populism : The Escalating Conflict

India has experienced a rich history of peasant protest against foreign colonial domination and against the independent Indian state and rural elites. Colonial Indian history had witnessed numerous peasant struggles - although many of them were "suicidal" in nature and posited a "millenarian vision" of social transformation to replace alien rule by a "home-made rural order". The formation of the All India Kisan Sabha and its impact among the Indian peasantry provided, for the first time, an organisational base for peasant protest during the period of nationalism led by the Congress party. While the AIKS was truly the first national-level peasant organisation in India, the fact that it was still dominated by the rural elite resulted in its capitulation to the elite politics of the Congress during the communist-led *Tebhaga* and *Telangana* struggles at the time of independence. Learning from the experiences and mistakes of the AIKS, the communist party led radical peasant movements in *Tebhaga* and *Telangana* that sought to confront colonial rule and the Indian state and replace it with a socialist society. Inevitably therefore, both these peasant movements armed themselves against the onslaught of the State and the vigilante groups of the rural elites. The leadership of these two radical peasant movements remained in the hands of poor and middle peasants with the vital impetus provided by the trained communist cadres of the party.

It is for the above reason that the gains of the Tebhaga and Telangana peasant movements reached high levels of organisation, strategy and tactics and the establishment of "peasant self-administration" (Village governments) in the Indian countryside. These successes notwithstanding, the experiences of the Telangana movement, in particular, also resulted in serious ideological rifts within the leadership and the communist party.

It is at this juncture that the influence of the international communist movement - more precisely, the impact of the Chinese revolution and Mao Tse Tung Thought, and the growing Moscow-Peking rifts within the communist movement worldwide - on the Indian communist party, became a decisive factor that resulted in two major splits in Indian communist movement. The first major split in 1964 and the second in 1969 in the CPI and the CPI (M) respectively, resulted in the consolidation of two contradictory approaches of the Indian Left to the direction and leadership of peasant protest in India - (a) the communists who chose a "parliamentary path" to achieve "national socialism", and (b) communists who believed in waging an "armed struggle" of the peasantry in order to establish a "People's Democracy".

While the All India Kisan Sabha under the CPI, and the CPI (M) symbolised the first approach in the ensuing years after independence and to the present day, the Naxalite movement of the 1960s and early 1970s - led by the CPI (ML) - symbolised the extreme case of the second approach to peasant protest and agrarian revolution in India.

The chief problematic of peasant protest in contemporary India is located primarily in the ideological shifts and dogmatic politics of the Indian communist parties. The Indian peasantry has often been a faithful follower of the leadership and direction provided by the communist parties, but have not reaped the benefits of the successes gained through this rich history of peasant movements. On the contrary, their militant strategies of struggle and mass participation

has often been usurped by the leadership of the communist party and/or the charismatic leaders among the more-affluent peasants themselves, to provide electoral support for parliamentary politicking or misguided into adventurous and suicidal "annihilation campaigns".

In the aftermath of the Naxalite movement, the rural elites - learning from the lessons of the communist-led peasant movements - evolved alluring strategies to unite the peasantry and provide the mass base for "agrarian populist movements of the rural elites". Once again, the Indian peasantry experienced manipulation from an "external force" that enticed their consciousness and dictated the form and nature of their struggle - without addressing their fundamental grievances that remained basic to the very cause for which they had time and again risen in revolt.

Summarising our review of the history of peasant protest in India, we derive three main issues that appear central to modern peasant movements and peasant consciousness in particular viz., :

i. The political dynamics of rural class differentiation and its impact on the nature of peasant protest,

ii. The perceptions (ideology) and programmes of the (external) political party, activists, forces, and

iii. The class nature of the State and rural elite power at definite historic junctures and its response to peasant protest.

Let us briefly discuss these three central issues against the backdrop of the history of protest and elite strategies in India which we have considered in Chapter 3 above :

(i) The Political Dynamics of Differentiation in the Indian countryside

Our discussion will be limited to the processes of differentiation among agrarian social classes as reflected in political praxis in the Indian countryside since independence. The crucial question to be posed is : "What are the political implications of the processes of differentiation taking place in the Indian countryside today? Further, what does it signify for the future perspective and strategy of peasant protest and rural conflicts in the coming years?"

It is certain that the capitalist forces of production have increasingly penetrated Indian agriculture, drawing the peasant into (direct or indirect) relationship to the local/international market, and consequently, commercialising agricultural production to serve the needs of this market. However, this has not been an even or "classical" process of capitalist development in agriculture - in the Marxian sense. On the contrary, capitalism in Indian agriculture has been significantly uneven, dependent and diffused.

The direct consequences of this process - and in some ways specific to Indian conditions - but also more generally prevelant in other Asian countries to varying degrees[3], is that class contradictions operate at varying levels in different parts of the country.[4] Thus, there are regions (e.g., East, North-east and Central) in rural India which remain "backward" and essentially "semi-feudal" in nature, and others (e.g., South, Western India, North-west) which show more clearly the prevelance of "capitalist" relations of production.[5] With such a frame of reference and from our review of the peasant struggles in contemporary India the following conclusions can be drawn :

(1) Peasant revolts of the 'Naxalite type' which erupted in the 1960s and 1970s have occurred primarily in the East and North-east regions of the country, i.e., regions of semi-feudalism. These revolts, therefore, were basically anti-feudal in ideology, but went further to posit a radical agrarian programme of socialism.

(2) The fore-runner of the above type of peasant revolts in an earlier period of Indian history was the Tebhaga and Telangana movements in the mid-40s, which interestingly, also occurred in the same semi-feudal regions of the east and north-east, as well as the south-central parts of India.

(3) On the other hand, the more recent farmers agitations led by the rich (capitalist) peasantry in the early 1980s, seem to have occurred in regions of intense capitalist development or Green Revolution areas, viz., Coimbatore (south), Punjab (North-west) and Maharashtra (West).

The emergence of the rich peasantry to the pinnacle of the agrarian social structure and as the potential leadership of recent "farmers agitations" needs special attention, for it indicates a radical shift in agrarian politics and signals dire consequences for protest movements among the rural poor in the future. Gail Omvedt notes :

> "Capitalist farmers are the main force behind the 'farmers agitations' that are dominating the rural political scene : it is no accident that these agitations are centering in the more capitalistically developed regions, that their main demand for higher crop prices itself indicates the commercialization of the rural economy, and that in contrast to pre-independence peasant movements, they are not directed against any rural exploiter but rather seek to unite 'all peasants' with an ideology that claims the 'city' is exploiting the "countryside"."[6]

This new phenomenon of - what we can call, "agrarian populism" - is politically significant. Its importance lies precisely in the fact that the "class power" of this rich peasantry is drawn not only from the traditional or commercialised rural sector; but also through close linkages with commerce, industry, the world market and urban politics. This new "class enemy", therefore, exercises an alarming political force in the Indian countryside, far more threatening than the "zamindari-landlord" power bloc of earlier decades.

(ii) The left parties and the peasantry in India today

In our survey of peasant struggles we have noted the key role of "external elements" (e.g., party, activists, forces) which have been crucial to peasant movements in Indian history. Normally the "peasant microcosm" has been too predominant to provide necessary impetus to class-based and ideologically-oriented peasant movements that could trigger a sustained process of agrarian change. This has been possible, on the contrary, only in those situations where there has been a crucial intervention of an "external" force or political party, activists, or others, who bring to the peasant a radical ideology and organisational know-how to build such a peasant movement. As Hobsbawm notes : "...the idea of a general peasant movement, unless inspired from outhside or even better, from above, is quite unrealistic. (Emphasis added)[7]

This "outside or external factor" to stimulate peasant protest, in other words, also implies that the peasantry is always subjected to a "superior authority or power" over itself; even in situations where they rise up and participate in militant peasant struggles. This is indeed an important contention that enables us to understand the possibilities and limits of "peasant consciousness" in modern societies.

Thus, often in Indian history this "master" or "authority" over the peasantry has been a role exercised by Left parties in the course of peasant struggles; except in the recent "farmers agitations" where the class of rich peasants have taken over this role to the detriment of the genuine aspirations of the toiling peasantry. Surely the leadership provided by the Left parties during these peasant struggles has been decisive, and yet, especially in the Maoist tradition, they have expressed an "ideology of agrarian radicalism" that seemed to have promised "rain and sunshine from above." It is precisely this dialectic (between "theory" and "praxis"; "derived" and "inherent" consciousness) that seems to be the crux of the problematic of peasant politics and class consciousness in post-colonial Indian history.

My inference, therefore, is that : Post-independent or modern peasant struggles were characterised by an ideology that was alien to the peasantry and external to its class position. The peasant's receptiveness to this ideology and the ideologically-motivated organisations (communist parties, in particular) is explained more because of the fact that this ideology symbolised the "peasant utopia" of "agrarian socialism", rather than any conscious 'class-for-itself' reason on its part.

(iii) The State and Peasant Protest

In order to understand the class response of the Indian state and the rural elites to peasant protest at different historical junctures, it is necessary to see how "power" and "hegemony" of the State operate in conditions of revolutionary peasant protest. Gramsci's concepts of "hegemony', "subaltern classes", "common sense" and "ideology" are very relevant to this discussion. To Gramsci, "hegemony" was not only "political domination", but also the "subjectivity of subordination" of the peasantry. In other words, it was not just externally imposed (through force, economic and political structures), but was internalised by the peasants themselves as part of their culture and their consciousness.[8]

It is this subjectivity of subordination that explains a whole range of "patron-client" relationship[9] that operate in the Indian countryside today, their prevelance and their continuous reproduction. The caste system, in this context, is one of the most symbolic of examples in this country. "Like family, partly because it is in fact an extension of the family, caste has been a persistent and portentous form of social organisation and consciousness in the evolution of India's peasant and emerging post-peasant society."[10]

On the other hand, the "subjectivity consciousness" of the peasantry is also revealing when we explore the precise linkages between "state power" and "peasant consciousness". For the peasant, the State is a "negative quantity", an "evil" that has to be immediately replaced by a "home-made social order".[11]

Its immediate response, therefore, has been active support to a strategy of revolution that attempts to "smash the Indian state power", without any articulated or conscious vision of reconstructing that State after the revolution. This is indeed typical of Indian "peasant consciousness" as it has clearly expressed itself time and again in our post-independence history.

Moreover, as Goran Therborn notes "...."force" and "violence" operate as a form of rule only through the ideological mechanism of fear...(and) .. fear plays a great role in the maintenance of bourgeois-democratic rule."[12] In India it has been the same "force" and "violence" unleashed on the revolutionary struggles of the Indian peasantry that have repeatedly been decisive in crushing peasant protests, with the latter unable to defend itself and fleeing further away from the centres of State power and hegemony in order to protect itself. Thus, the tragic logic of peasant protest in the Indian countryside has been as Scott describes it :

> "The elite, by and large, abandons the countryside and moves for protection into the provincial towns or the capital itself where the coercive power of the state is concentrated. The peasantry often leaves the villages and heads for the hills, at the farthest possible remove from the state...the peasantry retreating 'back' down a rung of civilisation to the independence of primitive society; the elite retreating 'up' a rung of civilisation where its interests are best defended."[13]

It is this movement of the peasantry "downward" and the rural elite "upward", so to speak, that today symbolises the nature of class conflict in the Indian countryside. The Indian state, therefore, is able to effectively isolate - if not the peasantry "voluntarily" isolating itself - agrarian protest and curtail its growth to a significant degree. Peasant struggles in the coming period, therefore, need to take careful note of this tendency in Indian politics, and evolve necessary defensive measures to overcome these implicit limitations of agrarian protest of this type.

My inference from the above is that : Post-independent peasant struggles have portrayed a rather 'negative and polemical attitude' towards Indian state power. This is because at the very root of peasant consciousness there prevails a layer of "subjectivity" that implies acceptance of the hegemony and traditional authority of rural elites, and the formidable state power - expressed through the medium of caste, religion, language and culture. Thus, the objectification of peasant

consciousness in ideological terms have been unable to challenge and eliminate this underlying layer of peasant subjectivity and consciousness.

6.2 The Philippines : Peasant Protest and National Liberation

The Philippines has experienced a long history of peasant movements, beginning with the struggles against the Spanish, and later against American and Japanese colonial rule. A major landmark in this rich history of peasant protest in modern Philippine history was the Huk Rebellion (1942-1945) against Japanese colonialism. The Huks were successful in confronting the Japanese domination and establishing their control over large sections of Philippine society in Central Luzon. Although the Huks comprised of a relatively small number of fighters, they were able to effectively utilise guerilla warfare to challenge the Japanese. Also, the Huks were able to establish their dominance through "self-government" in the villages under their influence, and to carry out pro-peasant agrarian reform and land distribution. This symbolised a high level of political consciousness among the Huks.

However, we must note that in the Huk Rebellion one also identifies the contradictions prevalent between the rural elites and the poor peasantry. While the rural elites - who had initially supported the Huk Rebellion, desired to restore American rule and thus united to drive out the Japanese, the poor peasantry, on the other hand, were determined to replace Japanese colonial rule with a new social order that was revolutionary in nature and assured the poor peasantry of freedom from foreign domination, land reform and a socialist model of development of Philippine society. It was precisely this radical perspective of the poor peasantry - who constituted the bulk of the Huks - that alarmed the Americans and resulted in their connivance with the Filipino rural elite to crush the Huk Rebellion after the defeat of the Japanese in World War II.

In the aftermath of the World War, the defeat of the Huk Rebellion left a vacuum - which was to be filled with the formation of the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) in 1953. The FFF developed as a genuine peasant organisation during the initial period prior to the capitulation of some of its leaders to the Marcos regime when Martial Law was declared in 1972. While the FFF showed signs of developing into a nation-wide legal peasant movement, the capitulation of its key leaders to Marcos resulted in yet another vacuum - this time, which could only be filled by the underground communist movement - with the brutal repression unleashed by the Marcos regime under Martial Law on all popular and democratic movements in the Philippines.

Martial Law and the Marcos regime, therefore, provided the necessary impetus for the consolidation and growth of the underground Communist Party of the Philippines and its New People's Army (CPP-NPA). Under the repression of military rule, thousands of students, workers, professionals and others joined the underground movement in the countryside. There, these new recruits, came in contact with the already-politicised peasantry and were to provide the necessary intellectual and organisational know-how to strengthen and elevate the armed struggle and mass organisations of the CPP-NPA. The formation of the National Democratic Front

(NDF) soon after signifies the crucial role played within the underground movement by the new recruits and professional groups in the urban sector.

The New People's Army (NPA) is predominantly a "peasant army" and claims widespread support in the Filipino countryside - a mass base that initially consolidated during the repressive government of Marcos, and continues to develop under the present government of Corazon Aquino.

Although analysts expected a relative openness on the part of the NDF-CPP/NPA alliance in 1986 with the "democratic space" provided by the "People's Power Revolution" of Corazon Aquino - the continued military influence over the Aquino government, for example, the declaration of a "Total War" policy by the government to fight the CPP-NPA - pushed back the "democratic and legal agenda" of the Filipino Left. Successive failures in cease-fire agreements and "peace talks" between the NDF and the Government of the Philippines since 1986, further strengthened the widely-held suspicion on the part of the progressive forces in the Philippines that, although the Aquino government puts up a front of "democratic system based on people's power", its sustenance is propped up by the USA and the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).

There is some indication that in the past few years - especially after the "People's Power Revolution of 1986" - the CPP/NPA is in a general state of decline although the Armed Forces of the Philippines have yet to achieve a "strategic victory" over the communist movement in the Philippines. The AFP, however, claims to have reduced the number of NPA fronts, or base areas, from 71 to 57 over the past three years - a figure which even the CPP appears to acknowledge.[14] The reasons for the decline of the CPP/NPA, as one source put it, are the following : "One in particular has been a steady improvement in military coordination and intelligence-gathering. Another has been the failure of the party leadership to keep pace with changing political conditions at a time when communism itself is under worldwide siege."[15]

At present the Left in the Philippines finds itself in a baffling situation, as Tadem notes : "After laying the groundwork for the anti-dictatorship struggle and leading it for many years, they suddenly find themselves at the tail-end of the popular movement. Worse, the dictator they had been fighting for fifteen years with a combination of legal, extra-legal, and armed struggle had suddenly been forced out with very little participation on their part."[16] The contemporary peasant movement in the Philippines, therefore, continues to survive on two main fronts : (a) the "open and legal" front - led by the *Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (KMP) - a mass-based peasant movement.

The KMP has enjoyed widespread support all over the Filipino countryside with a rich history of successful peasant struggles against the agrarian policies of the Marcos and Aquino government's, and (b) the "underground and extra-legal" front - led by the New People's Army (NPA) of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) - a predominantly peasant-army exclusively involved in waging an armed agrarian struggle of guerilla warfare against the Philippine State and the AFP as well as the right-wing para-military forces and vigilante groups in the countryside.

6.3 Sri Lanka : State Patronage and Peasant Passivity

Sri Lanka has been a particular case of peasant protest which was dominant during the period of colonial rule but subsided into passivity in the post-independence period. In Chapter 5 we observed that the Sri Lankan peasantry carried out successful struggles against the political domination and economic policies of the alien British colonisers. The imposition of the plantation system of agriculture coupled with the British taxation policies were detrimental to the interests and aspirations of the Sri Lankan peasantry. The rural elites, however, provided the necessary leadership for these peasant struggles against British colonialism. The ideology of these struggles - while rooted in the anti-colonial sentiments - were, however, characterised by a type of "traditional nationalism" that was fundamentalist (Sinhala-Buddhist) and in contradiction with the aspirations of the poor peasantry.

It is this phenomenon that provides an explanation for the agrarian policies of the independent Sri Lankan state after British rule. Colonialism had effectively transformed the "self-sufficient" small-peasant based economy of Sri Lanka, into a classical case of an export economy in the Third World under colonial domination. The post-independent Sri Lankan state (including the UNP, SLFP and other coalition governments that came to power) continued to follow the same colonial policy of export-orientation, while developing new policies to appease the disgruntled peasantry and ensure their continued political patronage over the Sri Lankan countryside. The phenomenon of State patronage over the Sri Lankan peasantry is the key to understand its political passivity in the country's recent history.

The context in which the various forms of State patronage over the peasantry prevail can be summarised as follows : The agrarian society of present-day Sri Lanka is basically characterised by a predominant small-holding peasantry. Class differentiation has not developed sharply and therefore, the large majority of the peasantry in Sri Lanka can be defined as "petty commodity producers". This peasantry, however, while operating chiefly self-sufficient holdings, have shown an increasing desire to adopt modern techniques of production and commercialisation. It is only in some areas of the country - mainly the North, North-east, and the new settlements areas of the Mahaweli Development project - where relatively more visible polarisation of agrarian classes have been noticed. In these areas with increasing commercialisation and TNC intervention, we find the rapid growth of a class of agrarian landless labour, especially in the post-1965 period. There is clearly the lack of a landlord class in the Sri Lankan countryside, due to the absence of large holdings.

However, the most conspicuous landlords in Sri Lanka are the State and the Buddhist temples who possess ownership of vast areas of land in the countryside. Further, a emerging phenomenon observed in the Sri Lankan countryside is the growth of a rural entrepreneur class, or an enterprising rich peasantry, drawn from non-peasant groups and closely tied to the commercialisation and transnational capital in agriculture. This class is yet to consolidate itself into a powerful rural lobby, but nevertheless shows signs of emerging as a powerful agrarian elite linked firmly to the State and transnational capital.

Viewed in this context, State patronage over the peasantry has played a crucial role in the formulation and implementation of the various State programmes towards agriculture and rural development. The initial stages of state patronage can be identified during the colonial times, when British land policy was oriented towards establishing an export-based plantation economy on the island, and at the same time, to "preserve" the character of the small-holding peasant producers. Colonialism, therefore, did not fundamentally alter the prevailing relations in the peasant economy, either through the introduction of the plantation system nor through its agrarian tax policies and programmes. After independence, both the SLFP and UNP governments in turn, adopted and improved upon many of the earlier colonial forms of State patronage of the peasantry.

This ensured the ruling party of political support and a social base to carry forward its programmes and provide an effective electoral bloc to retain it in power. Political patronage in the Sri Lankan countryside operated through the given political institutions and structures of the ruling government set up for that very purpose. Periodically, the ruling party introduced necessary changes and reorganised the rural administrative and political structures and institutions, in order to ensure more effective patronage over the peasantry. For example, the UNP government attempted to further centralise the concept and role of *Grama Sevakas*, and create "Special Administrative and Political Officers" in the countryside, to act as its local agents and officials. The decisive impact of this system of state patronage was its success in subjugating the peasantry into submission and passivity, besides silencing political dissent in the countryside.

In a situation where the peasantry has been historically accustomed to "State patronage" and reaped its benefits to fulfill its rising aspirations, radical agrarian programmes and agendas for peasant protest have not found place in the Sri Lankan peasantry's consciousness. Besides, Left parties and radical peasant organisations have been unable to pose an effective political challenge to this "patronage system" as it operates in the countryside. Patronage not only implies domination and incorporation, but also subjugation and loyalty to the State. In Sri Lanka State patronage has adopted very subtle forms, and therefore, quite difficult to view as an antagonistic State-peasantry relation. In the post-independence period this subtility has become even more pronounced, as the State adopted a Sinhala-Buddhist ideology that pervaded the entire social fabric in the city and the countryside. In the circumstances, the peasantry has continued to provide the social base and political loyalty to the State irrespective of the party in power.

It is therefore imperative that we discuss peasant protest in Sri Lanka today in the context outlined above. Clearly, the peasantry in Sri Lanka is not a homogeneous group, but rather a differentiated agrarian population. Within a complex and evolving agrarian social structure, we can identify levels of varied class interests concomitant to the hierarchical economic status rankings of the peasantry. With the lack of sharp class polarisation in the country side, the forms of exploitation and patronage often appear subtle and display potentials of accommodating varied class interests and aspirations. The above-mentioned factors enable the peasantry to easily mobilise itself into a powerful "agrarian bloc", either in support of the state, or, around issues that affect their immediate survival and well-being.

At the surface, this "agrarian bloc" may appear as a "class bloc", and can therefore be misinterpreted as a peasant movement with advanced political potentials. This misconception has witnessed the danger of peasant activism devoid of class interests and a political programme in some recent cases of peasant protest in Sri Lanka. What in fact appears as a "class bloc" in peasant protest is in actual fact, merely a "social alliance" of the peasantry that is based on immediate issues confronting the peasantry without long-term goals of social transformation.

The above fragile alliance can be easily broken when the interplay of contradictory class interests on the goals and means take effect within the peasant struggle. Peasant activism in Sri Lanka has often presumed that such social alliances within the peasantry can be mobilised into a political movement against the State and neo-colonialism. Therein lies the danger of peasant activism and peasant protest in Sri Lanka today. The peasant struggles in Monaragela District against Sugar TNCs, that we have reviewed in Chapter 5, provide a good example of the interplay of the problematic we have outlined above.

The All Lanka Peasant Congress (ALPC) was a genuine peasant organisation that provided effective leadership to the Monaragela peasantry to struggle against the multinational sugar companies. However, the ensuing ideological conflicts and weakening of this struggle has been a consequence of both "internal" and "external" factors. The internal factors include a "loss of sense of direction" on the part of the ALPC activists and peasant leaders who were unable to mobilise the necessary support from the urban sectors (i.e., workers, trade unions, students, Left parties and middle-sectors) as well to spread out the area of struggle in the countryside; the external factors being the violent repression unleashed by the DJVP and other para-military groups on the ALPC activists and the Monaragela peasants, as well as the Sri Lankan state policy in connivance with the transnational companies, to push through with its policy of setting-up "Agricultural Promotion Zones" (APZ) in the Sri Lankan countryside. In this situation, what then are the prospects for radical peasant protest in modern Sri Lanka ?

Our analysis so far seems to point in the direction that peasant protest in Sri Lanka today would be limited to issues that threaten the basic "survival of the peasantry". In other words, the peasantry can be mobilised only on a programme that seeks to "preserve" its independence and economic position vis-a-vis the forces that threaten its continued petty commodity production, especially the transnational corporations and international capital. The problematic of the form of peasant protest discussed above - as we have seen in the case of the Monaragela peasant struggle against sugar TNCs - is that it possesses the danger of strengthening the hands of the small-holding - yet influential - peasantry over the landless labourers and poor peasants in the countryside.

In other words, the dominant "survival consciousness" of the more-affluent peasantry and rural elites would come into conflict with the class interests of the landless and poor peasants. Moreover, the absence of a polarised class structure in the agrarian society in Sri Lanka today and the "economic weakness" of the small-holding peasantry, brings up the question of a viable and effective leadership for peasant protest and peasant movements.

The predominant "struggle for survival" consciousness of the peasantry coupled with the lack of clear political alternative to State patronage, result in a situation where the issue-oriented struggles are led by the traditional rural elite and peasant organisers from non-peasant backgrounds. The dominant Left movements in the country have shown its inability to confront the overwhelming patronage system or to evolve an alternative agrarian programme for the peasantry.

At the same time, the spill-over of "ethnic violence" in the North and the reemergence of Sinhalese para-military groups in the South, has also severely restricted the activism of the All-Lanka Peasant Congress (ALPC) - perhaps the only nation-wide peasant movement that has developed in the post-independent period of Sri Lankan history. While this fact explains to a large extent the phenomenon of peasant passivity in Sri Lanka, it also highlights the limited prospects of peasant struggles to come in the future. In sum, therefore, the prospects for radical peasant protest in Sri Lanka appear severely limited in the scenario we have outlined above.

Peasant protest seems therefore to be confined to issues that directly affect or threaten the survival of the peasantry. And once this threat is removed or withdrawn, peasant protest will inevitable collapse. On the other hand, the peasantry will make compromises and concessions insofar as it continues to survive with some degree of autonomy and patronage from the State. This consciousness of "survival" and "subjugation" would take precedence over accommodating the aspirations and demands of the poorer sectors of the peasantry and agricultural labourers, or in evolving a radical political programme for agrarian transformation in Sri Lanka today.

6.4 Concluding Observations

To finalise, in attempting to review and analyse the history of peasant protest and rural elite strategies in some Asian countries (India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka) this study has pointed out the complexity of the problematic of this phenomena as prevelant in the Asian region. It would be frivolous to attempt a sociological typology of peasant protest and rural elite strategies in these countries given the specificities and complexities of each context.

In this final section, we shall return to review the remaining questions posed in Chapter 1, viz., (a) "To what extent have power elite strategies and State-sponsored agrarian policies enabled or hampered the articulation of peasant protest and why?", (b) "What has been the role of local/national and international forces in response to radical peasant protest in Asia, especially the role of foreign states, aid agencies and local/international power elites that exercise significant influence in the Asian countryside?", and (c) "What strategies were adopted by the State and rural elites to co-opt the peasant movements? How did the State and rural elites facilitate certain movements on particular issues and what movements were repressed?" Based on our review of peasant protest and rural elite strategies in some Asian countries the following general concluding remarks can be made in response to the above-mentioned questions :

(1) The problematic of peasant protest and rural elite strategies in the Asian region needs to be understood in relation to the centrality of the "land question". Asian societies, which

are predominantly agricultural in nature, are based principally on the control and ownership of land. Consequently, the power of the Asian rural elites - as well as foreign corporate interests - together with the politics of peasant protest, are both located in the fundamental struggle to exercise control over land. Thus, to understand the dynamics of Asian societies we need to comprehend the historical and sociological factors and interplay of the "politics of land ownership and control" in Asia.

(2) It is within this scenario that we have seen how Asian governments have attempted to address the "land question" through specific Agrarian/Land Reform programmes. The need for such drastic reforms are located not just in the requirement of governments to increase agricultural productivity, revenue/taxation and to feed the burgeoning population, but primarily because of the prevalence of radical peasant unrest in the countryside aggravated by genuine peasant grievances. In this process, the strategy of several Asian governments - in connivance with foreign powers and multi-national institutions - has been to woo the disgruntled peasantry through nominal land redistribution ("Land to the Tiller").

(3) The political basis and ideological content of the "Agrarian/Land Reform" programmes of Asian governments - particularly in the case of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea - was evidently inspired by an ideology of "anti-communism" given the threat of Communist China after the Revolution of 1949. US policy in Asia in the aftermath of the Chinese Revolution was thus based on patronising and strengthening the "anti-communist" governments of neighboring Asian countries - to offset the alleged fear of communist expansion in the Asian region. As we have seen in Chapter 2, the US has clearly played a decisive role in the planning and implementation of Land Reforms in these three countries. The ideological content of this role of the US was based on its own strategic interest in aiding these countries to fight communism and winning over the governments through providing economic and technical assistance as a pre-condition to military protection to fight internal and external threats from communism.

However, the peasantry in many Asian countries were particularly vulnerable to the Maoist ideology of peasant revolution that had been successful in China. US policy, therefore, was geared towards aiding Asian governments to thwart any influence of the Maoist ideology among the radical peasantry, while at the same time, providing the necessary economic, financial and technical means (including dumping of food surpluses) to conservative and dictatorial political elites to sustain them in power. In essence, therefore, the "Agrarian/Land Reform" programmes in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and other South-East countries in the late-1940s and 1950s - while apparently based on economic considerations, was, in essence, a sophisticated political and "counter-insurgency" ideology to fight communist expansion in Asia.

(4) Some Asian governments have undertaken reforms to radically reorganise the land ownership pattern in order to liquidate traditional and unproductive forms of agricultural production and to unleash the forces necessary for rapid capitalist and commercial ("export-oriented") production in the Asian countryside. This agrarian policy of Asian

governments have been greatly facilitated by the Green Revolution strategy of the IRRI and multi-lateral institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank, among others). As we have seen, this strategy was geared towards strengthening the power of the rural elite that would quickly adapt to commercial farming and forge links with foreign agribusiness companies and the urban commercial sector.

Our discussion on the emergence and political clout of this class of rich peasants - especially in the case of India in Chapter 3 - has shown clearly the strong political base of this new rural elite that remains a major threat to radical peasant movements. In this process of "agrarian revolution from above", foreign governments - especially the USA, as we have seen in the case of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea in Chapter 2 - have played a vital role in empowering this class of rural elite to maintain its tentacles of power in the Asian countryside. In sum, therefore, the "agrarian revolution from above" of most Asian governments have been geared towards stifling radical peasant protest and sponsoring the new rural elites.

(5) The peasant movements in the Asian countries we have reviewed above have been largely characterised by periodic shifts in ideological positions culminating - especially in the case of India and Sri Lanka - in serious ideological divisions within the communist parties and personal rivalries in the leadership of peasant movements. A number of factors have influenced this scenario : the conflicts and splits within the international communist movement and its direct/indirect impact on Asian communist parties, personality conflicts within the leadership of peasant movements resulting from regional, ethnic, socio-economic and ideological variations, the desire to "import models of peasant revolution and socialism" from other countries - particularly China, and the excessive "ideologization" by the leadership of peasant protest, especially in India and Sri Lanka.

In this study we have identified the decisive role played by the leadership of Asian peasant movements - on an individual (personality) or collective (party) basis, as well as the strategies used in the course of peasant struggles - ranging from passive resistance (for example, as in the case of the Monaregala struggle in Sri Lanka) to armed insurgency (for example, as in the case of the Naxalite movement in India and the New People's Army in the Philippines).

(6) In our review of the history of peasant protest and rural elite strategies, it appears that in the arena of radical peasant protest there lies - as Nemenzo notes - a serious discrepancy between "party documents and propaganda material on the one hand, and the governing ideology of the mass movement on the other. The former is invariably couched in Marxist language but the latter displays the lingering influence of millenarian populism".[17]

The communist parties in Asian countries - which have largely provided the organisational base for the consolidation and growth of peasant movements - have often sacrificed the genuine peasant aspirations for ideological considerations. As we have noted earlier, especially in the case of India and Sri Lanka and also to a certain extent in

the Philippines, while this fact has provided the necessary organisational strength to guide peasant movements, it has also resulted in serious conflicts and splits within peasant movements.

(7) Deducing from the above, it is also important to distinguish the stage at which "peasant rebellion" is coopted by "ideological insurgency". The Naxalite movement in India and the CPP/NPA struggle in the Philippines have both experienced this phenomenon. As Tom Marks notes following from the analysis of James Scott : "... the peasant grievances that provide the foot soldiers and the ideological visions that guide the leadership. It is when the latter achieves ascendency that grievances are superceded by organisational infrastructure and its prerogatives."[18] In all the cases of peasant movements in Asian countries that we have surveyed in this study, ideology has played a decisive role in determining the form and content of peasant protest. This can be explained largely because of the dominant role of communist parties in peasant movements and the specific Asian cultural tradition of "submission to authority" personified in charismatic political ideologues and peasant leaders. Thus, while ideological considerations have provided the necessary impetus to sustain peasant movements, they have also paradoxically contribute towards the cooptation of genuine peasant grievances into party structures and political considerations of the party leadership. Consequently, genuine peasant protest has often ended up in many Asian countries as mere ideological insurgency. This problematic is central to the contemporary crisis in peasant protest - especially in countries like India, the Philippines and Sri Lanka - and needs to be taken into account by the leadership of peasant movements and its allies.

(8) The strategies of the Asian rural elites ("Counter-forces") has been one of subtle cooptation of the peasant leadership through state patronage, or outright violent repression of the peasant movements. In this field the Asian rural elites have learnt much from the policy and programmes of foreign governments as well as multi-lateral institutions and transnational corporations. In particular, US policy in the Asian countryside has aided the rural elites in developing appropriate, and often effective, strategies of "anti-subversion" through repressive National Security Laws, Rural Development programmes and direct or indirect military aid to Asian governments to fight internal dissent. It is precisely for this reason that in many Asian countries today the "counter-forces" against peasant protest - State machinery, rural elites and their allies - are extremely well-organised and sophisticated in their strategy to curb radical protest. While, on the other hand, peasant radicalism has been confined to sporadic outbursts of armed insurgency and remain divided along ideological and party lines. When confronted with the power of the "counter-forces", peasant protest remains defenseless and vulnerable to outright repression.

Moreover, Asian governments have openly endorsed and financed certain types of peasant organisations - e.g., farmers associations, village clubs, community development and welfare groups, - while, on the other hand, outlawing the more radical peasant organisations. There have also been a number of cases in Asian peasant history where the leadership of progressive peasant movements have also been coopted into the State and

government programmes. It is only when State and elite strategies of cooptation of radical peasant protest fails, that it is deemed as subversive. Simply put, therefore, radical protest is often concomitant with "subversion" - in the viewpoint of many Asian governments and rural elites.

(9) Peasant movements in Asia have been characterised by splits and factionalism in the ranks of the peasant leadership. Besides, Communist parties have often sacrificed peasant aspirations for ideological considerations, leading to further fragmentation of the peasant movements. On the other hand, the strategies of Asian rural elites ("counter-forces") have been one of subtle cooptation of the peasant leadership through State patronage or outright violent repression of radical peasant movements. In this regard, foreign governments - especially the USA, multinational agribusiness and transnational corporations and international financial institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund), among others, have advised and aided Asian governments and rural elites to develop effective counter-insurgency strategies to fight radical peasant rebellion. The end result of this process in Asian societies has been the emergence and consolidation of a class of new rural elites who are politically conservative, closely tied with international corporate interests and national power elites, and who today wield tremendous power in the Asian countryside.

The contemporary scenario of Asian peasant protest and rural elite strategies presents to us a challenge - as we have outlined above - of overcoming the immense power and control exercised in the Asian countryside - not only by the State and local/national rural elites, but also by powerful international agribusiness interests and foreign governments. The "solo songs" of peasant movements we have reviewed in earlier chapters - especially in the three case studies of India , The Philippines and Sri Lanka, as well as in Chapter 2 in relation to Japan, Taiwan and South Korea - although commendable in their determination and endurance, remain just "solo songs" in the Asian region.

We have had too many "solo songs" in Asian peasant history, and it is about time that the "chorus" begins to play and be heard by all !

Lastly, as an old Vietnamese folksong reveals, there will come a time when the 'LAST WILL BE FIRST' :

"The son of the king becomes king,
The son of the temple watchman knows only how to sweep.
When the people rise up,
The son of the king, defeated,
Will go sweep the pagoda."[19]

NOTES

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

(1) As Tanabe notes in the context of South-East Asia : "Peasant social protests in South East Asia under colonial rule are generally characterised by two phases of ideological development; the first phase, ameliorative demands for the alleviation of specific grievances, is transformed, whether spontaneously or under external leadership, into the second phase, a holistic and revolutionary struggle against colonial rule or the domestic ruling classes." TANABE, Shigeharu : "Ideological Practice in Peasant Rebellions : Siam at the Turn of the Twentieth Century" in TURTON A. & TANABE S. : (Eds) : History and Peasant Consciousness in South-East Asia, SENRI Ethnological Studies, No.13, National Museum of Osaka, 1984, p.80.

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CHAPTER 6 : SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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GLOSSARY

Barrios	=	villages (The Philippines)
Bharat	=	India
Bhikkus	=	Buddhist monks (Sri Lanka)
Bhil	=	tribals/indigenous peoples (India)
Bhoomisena	=	land army (India)
Brahmin	=	the teachers/priests/intellectuals; first strata in the Indian caste system (India)
Chena	=	slash and burn/shifting cultivation (Sri Lanka)
Chonnongnyom	=	National Alliance of Farmers' Movements (S Korea)
Coolie	=	worker/labourer (India)
Dal	=	Indian lentils
Deccan	=	plateau in central India
Deshmuks	=	landlords (India)
Girijans	=	Tribals in Andhra Pradesh (India)
Gonds	=	tribals/indigenous peoples in Maharastra State (India)
Govi	=	peasant/farmer (Sri Lanka)
Gram Raj	=	village government (India)
Grama Sevakas	=	village leaders/officials (Sri Lanka)
Harijan	=	children of God - name given to "untouchables" by Mahatma Gandhi (India)
Inquilab	=	revolution (India)

Jana Sangam	=	Peoples' Association (India)
Janata	=	people (India)
Kaccheri	=	city hall (India)
Kallar	=	low caste group in South India
Khet Mazdoor Sangh	=	Farm Labourers' Union (India)
Kisan	=	peasant/farmer (India)
Kulak	=	rich peasant
Lal Sena	=	Red Army (India)
Mahatma	=	"the holy one" - popular title bestowed on M.K.Gandhi in India
Masagana	=	bountiful (The Philippines)
Moplah	=	Muslims in Southern India
Munda	=	tribals/indigenous peoples in India
Naxalite	=	term utilised by the Indian government and police for activists of the CPI(ML). The name has its origins from the communist-led peasant movement in the region of Naxalbari in Eastern India.
Nizam	=	Muslim king/ruler of Hyderabad State in Southern India
Paddy	=	rice
Pandit	=	teacher/learned one (India)
Pesos	=	Philippine currency
Peramuna	=	Front (Sri Lanka)
Purdah	=	cloth worn by Muslim women to cover face (India)
Rajakariya	=	free labour/service to the State (Sri Lanka)

Razakars	=	paramilitary forces of the Nizam of Hyderabad in South India
Reddy	=	high caste name in the State of Andhra Pradesh in Southern India
Rupee	=	Indian currency
Sabha	=	Association/Organisation (India)
Sammelanaya	=	organisation/association (Sri Lanka)
Sangamaya	=	union/association (Sri Lanka)
Sangham	=	Association/Union (India)
Santhal	=	tribal/indigenous peoples in Eastern India
Sathyagraha	=	"soul force" - non-violent civil disobedience introduced by Mahatma Gandhi in India
Seamaul Undong	=	New Community Movement (South Korea)
Sepoy	=	Indian soldier
Sharmadana	=	sharing of labour (India/Sri Lanka)
Shetkari Sanghatana	=	Toiling workers/labourers association/movement/front (India)
Swadesh	=	freedom/independence/self-rule (India)
Taluka or Taluq	=	sub-district/district (India)
Tebhaga	=	"two-thirds" of the harvested crop (India)
Vellassa	=	"a hundred thousand paddy fields" - the 3 regions of Kurunegala, Anuradhapura and Monaragela districts in North-Western Sri Lanka.
Vetti System	=	feudal exactions in the State of Hyderabad, Southern India

Vimukti	=	liberation (Sri Lanka)
Won	=	South Korean currency
Yen	=	Japanese currency
Zamindar	=	landlord (India)
Zenno	=	National Peasants' Union (Japan)

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB = Asian Development Bank

AFP = Armed Forces of the Philippines

AGA = Assistant Government Agent (Sri Lanka)

AIKS = All India Kisan Sabha (India)

ALPC = All Lanka Peasant Congress (Sri Lanka)

AMG = Army Military Government (South Korea)

APZ = Agricultural Promotion Zones (Sri Lanka)

BKU = Bharatiya Kisan Union (Indian Farmers' Union)

CARP = Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (The Philippines)

CIA = Central Intelligence Agency

CP = Communist Party

CPI(M)= Communist Party of India-Marxist (India)

CPI(ML)= Communist Party of India-Marxist-Leninist (India)

CPP = Communist Party of the Philippines

CPSL = Communist Party of Sri Lanka

CSP = Congress Socialist Party (India)

CTC = Ceylon Tobacco Company (Sri Lanka)

DJV = Deshpremi Janatha Vyaapaaraya - Patriotic People's Movement (Sri Lanka)

EOI = Export-oriented Industrialisation

FFF = Federation of Free Farmers (The Philippines)

FTZ = Free Trade Zone

GA = Government Agent (Sri Lanka)

GCEC = Greater Colombo Economic Commission (Sri Lanka)

GDP = Gross Domestic Product

IAS = Indian Administrative Service

IFAD = International Fund for Agricultural Development

IMF = International Monetory Fund

IRRI = International Rice Research Institute

JCCR = Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (Taiwan)

JCPF = Joint Committee of Peasant Federations (Sri Lanka)

JVP = Janata Vimukti Perumana - People's Liberation Front (Sri Lanka)

KMP = Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas - National Peasant Movement in the Philippines

KMT = Koumingtang (Taiwan)

KPMP = National Peasant' Union of the Philippines

LRC = Land Reform Commission (Sri Lanka)

LSSP = Lanka Samasamaja Party (Sri Lanka)

MDP = Mahaweli Development Project (Sri Lanka)

MLA = Member of the Legislative Assembly (India/Sri Lanka)

MNC = Multinational Corporations

MP = Member of Parliament (India/Sri Lanka)

NDF = National Democratic Front (The Philippines)

NEP = New Economic Policy (Sri Lanka)

NGO = Non-Governmental Organisation

NPA = New People's Army (The Philippines)

NSSP = Nawa Samasamaja Party (Sri Lanka)

OPC = Office for Policy Coordination

PAR = Participatory Action Research

PARCODE = People's Agrarian Reform Code (The Philippines)

PD = Presidential Decree (The Philippines)

PKM = National Peasants' Union (The Philippines)

PL = Public Law (USA)

PWF = Progressive Women's Front (Sri Lanka)

RLU = Rural Labourers' Union (Sri Lanka)

SLFP = Sri Lanka Freedom Party

SLMP = Sri Lanka Mahajana Party

SS = Shetkari Sanghatana - Farm labourers' Association (India)

TAA = Tamilnadu Agriculturists' Association (India)

TNC = Transnational Corporations

UF = United Front (Sri Lanka)

UN = United Nations

UNP = United National Party (Sri Lanka)

US = United States of America

USAID = United States Agency for International Development

USAFFE = United States Armed Forces in the Far East

WB = World Bank

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Deze studie behandelt boerenbewegingen en daarop reagerende tegenkrachten in verschillende landen van het Aziatische continent, in het bijzonder India, de Filippijnen en Sri Lanka.

Ondanks een lange geschiedenis van boerenprotest in deze landen tijdens de koloniale periode en na de onafhankelijkheid, lijden hedendaagse boerenbewegingen vaak aan een ideologische verdeeldheid die hun effectiviteit belemmert. Deze studie tracht de groei van en verschuivingen binnen de vooraanstaande boerenbewegingen in India, de Filippijnen en vooral Sri Lanka te analyseren.

Dit gebeurt in een perspectief dat omschreven kan worden als de "view from within and from below", de visie van binnenuit en van onderop, om de meningen van de boeren zelf, hun specifieke ervaringen van strijd en hun ideologische opvattingen weer te geven. Deze benadering wordt gebruikt om de ideologische wortels van het boerenprotest en ook de invloed van het staatsbeleid daarop te onderzoeken. Voorts de strategieën van de elite ten opzichte van het boerenprotest en de rol van nationale en internationale krachten die de politiek van de locale elite tegenover die van radicale boerenbewegingen ondersteunen.

Deze studie veronderstelt dat het "boerenbewustzijn" als een concrete sociale kracht bestaat en functioneert. Het boerenbewustzijn wordt hier beschouwd als zou het niet alleen beïnvloed worden door "interne krachten" d.w.z. de culturele normen, waarden en gewoonten van de plattelandsgemeenschap en de levenswijze van de boeren, maar ook door "externe krachten" (bv. de elite, de staat, politieke partijen).
In de meeste gevallen waar boerenbewegingen in Aziatische landen geïnspireerd en geleid werden door communistische partijen, blijkt de Marxistische ideologische oriëntatie van deze partijen sterk beïnvloed te zijn door de Chinese revolutie en het Maoïstisch denken.

Een andere belangrijke invloed vooral op de Indiase boerenbevolking, ging uit van Mahatma Gandhi, wiens anti-westerse en pro-boeren ideologie een belangrijke drijfkracht was voor boerenbewegingen tijdens de koloniale periode in de Indiase geschiedenis. Het werd echter duidelijk dat Gandhi later in feite nauwelijks meer van belang was voor wat betreft de Indiase context, terwijl de ideëen van Mao Tse Tung en de Chinese boerenrevolutie de aard van het boerenprotest blijven beïnvloeden.

Er wordt gesteld dat het beleid betreffende het landbezit centraal staat voor het begrijpen van de aard en vorm van boerenprotest in Aziatische landen. Azië is voornamelijk een agrarisch gebied waarin de meerderheid van de bevolking op het land werkt of voor haar

levensonderhoud daarvan afhankelijk is. Land is zodoende een belangrijk element van de macht van de plattelands-elite en dus ook een bepalende factor bij de uit zeer ongelijke verdeling voortvloeiende conflicten en het boerenprotest.

Verschillende Aziatische regeringen hebben getracht het probleem van landbezit op te lossen en onder controle te krijgen door middel van landhervormingsprogramma's. De socio-economische en politieke contekst waarin de landhervormingen geïntroduceerd werden in Japan, Taiwan en Zuid-Korea worden behandeld en ook de ideologische implicaties ervan. De hervormingen zijn door de Verenigde Staten van Amerika nadrukkelijk aanbevolen en gesteund, met oog op het inperken van radicaal boerenprotest en het verspreiden van de communistische invloed vooral die van het voorbeeld van de Chinese boerenrevolutie.

Vervolgens worden belangrijke case-studies behandeld van boerenbewegingen en de strategieën van de plattelands-elite van India, de Filippijnen en speciaal van Sri Lanka.

India kent een lange geschiedenis van boerenprotestbewegingen tijdens de koloniale periode en na de onafhankelijkheid. In dit kader wordt de boerenstrijd die geleid werd door de All India Kisan Sabha tijdens het hoogtepunt van het Indiase nationalisme tegen het Britse gezag besproken. In de periode na de onafhankelijkheid laait de boerenstrijd weer op onder leiding van de Communistische Partij: de Tebhaga strijd (1946-1947) en de Telangana opstanden (1946-1951), daarna het Maoïstische agrarische verzet: de Naxalite Movement (1967-1971) en de huidige Maoïstisch georïenteerde boerenopstanden.

Een nieuw verschijnsel in de agrarische sector van India dat zich de afgelopen jaren heeft voorgedaan, is de opkomst van boerenacties die geleid worden door rijkere boeren. Het onderzoek gaat in op de achtergrond en aard van dit boerenverzet en geeft aan dat de groeiende kracht van deze rijkere boeren op het Indiase platteland een gevolg is van de "Groene Revolutie". Het is nu deze boerenstand die het hoofdobstakel vormt ten aanzien van de groei van radicale boerenbewegingen van arme boeren op het platteland van India.

Op de Filippijnen begon het radicaliseren van de boerenbeweging met de boerenopstanden tegen de Japanse bezetting tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog. De Huk Rebellion (1942-1945) wordt behandeld en ook het Amerikaanse en Filippijnse regeringsbeleid na de oorlog om de groei van deze radicale boerenbeweging te beperken en haar de wind uit de zeilen te nemen. Tijdens de latere periode van de Staat van Beleg onder President Marcos in de zeventiger jaren werden een aantal agrarische hervormings-programma's (zoals Masagana 99, Samahang Nayon, Corporate Farming Program) ondernomen waardoor het Filippijnse platteland verder opengesteld werd voor exploitatie door transnationale ondernemingen. Tegelijkertijd resulteerde de Staat van Beleg in een gewelddadige onderdrukking van radicaal protest wat

echter weer aanleiding gaf tot de opleving van de gewapende boerenstrijd die geleid werd door de Communistische Partij van de Filippijnen en de New People's Army (CPP-NPA).

De Aquino regering begon eveneens een ambitieus "Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program" dat er echter ook niet in slaagde de fundamentele problemen betreffende ongelijkheid en armoede op het Filippijnse platteland op te lossen. Zo groeiden er politieke controversen tussen de regering van Aquino en de nationale boerenorganisatie - de Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP) - die zich dusdanig wist uit te breiden dat zij een niet onbelangrijke kracht vormde.

Na het onderzoek naar boerenbewegingen in India en op de Filippijnen, is er speciale aandacht besteed aan het boerenprotest in Sri Lanka. Tot op heden zijn de studies over het boerenprotest in Sri Lanka nogal beperkt gebleven hetgeen het nodig maakte om de evolutie van het boerenprotest en de strategieën van de plattelands-elite van dit land uitgebreider te documenteren. In Sri Lanka legde het Britse koloniale beleid het fundament voor een afhankelijke export-economie die gebaseerd is op het plantagesysteem. Deze studie behandelt bepaalde Britse beleidsvormen in het traditionele Ceylon en de talrijke gevallen van boerenopstanden tijdens de koloniale periode. Deze boerenopstanden bevatten een sterk element van het traditionele nationalisme. Dit onderzoek gaat op kritische wijze in op het agrarische beleid van de opeenvolgende regeringen van Sri Lanka na de onafhankelijkheid - met name de Groene Revolutie en Peasant Colonisation programma's (1948-1971), Land Hervorming en Nationalisatie (1972-1977), de Open Economy Policy (1977-1985), het Mahaweli Development Scheme, de Ceylon Tobacco Company en de Sugar Transnational Corporations in Agricultural Promotion Zones in Sri Lanka.

De discussie over de boerenstrijd in het moderne Sri Lanka richt zich voornamelijk op de hoofdrol van het All Lanka Peasant Congress en gaat in op twee belangrijke protestbewegingen die in de afgelopen jaren veroorzaakt werden door deze nationale boerenorganisatie, namelijk de Water Tax Struggle en de Monaragela Struggle tegen de Suiker TNCs. In de periode van 1985 tot 1987 zijn deze twee gevallen door de auteur bestudeerd en gedocumenteerd mede dankzij een mate van directe betrokkenheid bij de ALPC en haar leiders en basis. Tenslotte wordt ingegaan op de problematiek van het boerenprotest in relatie tot de regeringsbeleidsvormen en de politiek van de progressieve bewegingen en partijen in het Sri Lanka van vandaag.

Dankzij bovengenoemde case-studies kan geconcludeerd worden dat de problematiek van het boerenprotest en de strategieën van de plattelands-elite in de betreffende Aziatische landen begrepen moet worden binnen het kader van de politiek ten aanzien van het landbezitsvraagstuk. De inspanningen van de betreffende Aziatische regeringen ten aanzien

van landhervorming zijn niet slechts een poging geweest tot het vergroten van de agrarische productiviteit, maar ook een direkte reactie op de opkomst en groei van radicaal boerenprotest dat dikwijls geleid werd door een communistische partij. Bij dit beleid zijn de betreffende regeringen geadviseerd en bijgestaan door internationale belanghebbenden en vooral de regering van de VS, zodat er een sterk element van "counter-insurgency" zichtbaar was in de agrarische hervormingsprogramma's.

Boerenbewegingen in Azië (vooral in India, de Filippijnen en Sri Lanka) zijn vaak gekenmerkt door verschuivingen in ideologische posities vooral ten gevolge van veelvuldige verplintering in de gelederen van de betreffende communistische partijen. Belangrijke factoren die hiertoe hebben bijgedragen zijn onder andere persoonlijke conflicten binnen het leiderschap van het boerenverzet die gebaseerd zijn op ideologische, regionale, etnische en socio-culturele verschillen, het overdreven ideologiseren van het boerenprotest, vaak resulterend in ontgoocheling ten aanzien van de communistische ideologie en strategie en in een brede kloof tussen het leiderschap en de brede basis van de boerenbewegingen. Geconcludeerd wordt dat de communistische partijen de boerenaspiraties vaak opgeofferd hebben aan ideologische overwegingen.

Daarnaast zijn de strategieën van de Aziatische plattelands-elite erop gericht geweest het leiderschap van de boerenbewegingen op subtiele wijze over te nemen of te neutraliseren door middel van patronage invloed of door gewelddadige onderdrukking. Op dit terrein hebben eigen en buitenlandse regeringen (in het bijzonder de VS) en ook multinationale agribusiness ondernemingen een bijdrage geleverd.

Een van de resultaten van bovengenoemde processen in sommige Aziatische landen is de opkomst en consolidatie van een klasse (stand) van nieuwe plattelands-elites die in politiek opzicht conservatief zijn en die nauw verbonden zijn met de internationale ondernemingen en de bestaande nationale machtselites. De invloed die door deze nieuwe boerenstand op het Aziatische platteland uitgeoefend wordt, vormt het belangrijkste obstakel voor de groei en consolidatie van radicale bewegingen van arme en (semi-)landloze boeren.

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