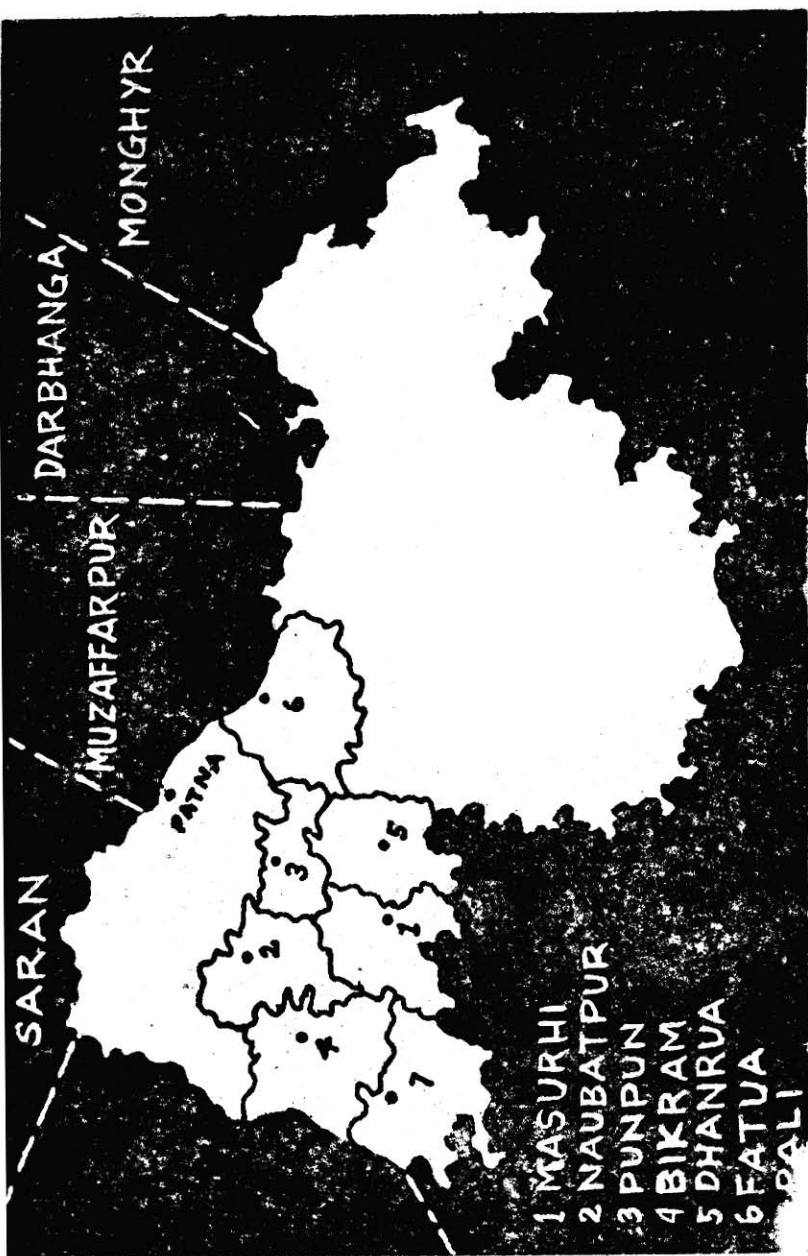


AGRARIAN UNREST IN PATNA

*An Investigation into Recent
Repression*

PEOPLE'S UNION FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS
DECEMBER 1981



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In at least seven blocks of Patna district in Bihar, the State Government and its police, with the active support of landlords, and with the explicit or implicit co-operation of all major political parties, are attempting, systematically, to suppress a mass-based democratic movement of poor peasants and agricultural labourers whose only demands are the guarantee of the rights granted to them by the Constitution and the implementation of various laws promulgated by the Government.

THIS is the conclusion of a team of academicians and journalists appointed by the People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), Delhi. The appointment of the team followed reports in the press about police firings and arrests of people due to alleged extremist violence.

The team consisted of Anand Chakravarti (Reader in Delhi University), Anjali Deshpande (Staff Correspondent, India Press Agency), Nirmal Sen Gupta (A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna), Kanchan Kumar and Sumanta Banerjee (both free lance journalists). The committee visited the affected areas in the first week of December and interviewed a cross-section of society, including agricultural labourers, landlords, politicians of various political parties both at the local and state levels, journalists, academicians, officials of the State Government and its police at different levels, and activists of the Kisan Sabha — the organisation leading the poor.

The affected Blocks are Masaurhi, Bikram, Pali, Naubatpur, Dhanrua, Punpun, and Fatua in Patna district.

The view of the State Government is that the entire unrest is due to the activities of 'extremists' and 'Naxalites'. They are alleged to be conducting armed campaigns and to have set up 'parallel governments'. This view was also shared by the local media. Yet the Minister of State for Home in the Union Cabinet, Yogendra Makwana, told the Lok Sabha on December 9, 1981: "According to the State Government, reports of a parallel government in these areas are totally baseless".

In the course of our investigation we found that the poorest sections of the population in the affected areas are living under extremely oppressive condition. Inequalities in land-holdings, denial of statutory minimum wages, beating up of labourers, and molestation of their womenfolk mark this oppression, and explain the origin of the unrest. The people have organised themselves under the banner of the Kisan Sabha and voiced certain demands, all of which fall within the purview of the Constitution. In the course of asserting their rights, the villagers have resorted to peaceful forms of struggle such as processions, meetings, and strikes. Besides, they have also reactivated the traditional system of panchayat-type group meetings in villages and taken collective decisions.

The landlords of the area, irrespective of their political or caste affiliations, have forged an alliance with the local administration and frustrated the implementation of certain land and labour laws. They have responded to the movement launched by the Kisan Sabha by the show of armed strength. The police have conducted massive raids throughout the affected region, arresting and beating up scores of people. At least seven people have been killed in recent times due to police firing. According to reliable sources in the State administration there are plans to eliminate about 150 activists of the movement in staged encounters.

Two striking features that emerge from our investigation are: the specific socio-economic problems of the region; and the legitimate and mass nature of the movement.

What follows is a detailed report on the various dimensions of the conflict.

II

Socio-Economic Background

THE rural population of Patna district, of which the affected Blocks are a part, comprise 69.8 per cent of the total population in the district. Of the total working population in the district, 67.1 per cent are engaged in agriculture. The majority of the workforce engaged in agriculture (51.6 per cent) are agricultural labourers. As we shall show later, their economic plight is extremely miserable: their wages are a small fraction of the statutory minimum fixed by the Government; and in most cases their dwellings almost telescope into one another since the land available for their settlements is totally inadequate.

The extent of inequality among the cultivating population is another striking feature of the district. As much as 68.4 per cent of the total holdings belong to marginal farmers (that is, those holding up to 2.5 acres of land each). The holdings of small farmers (falling between 2.5 and 5.0 acres) comprise 14.9 per cent, and therefore only a minority of

farmers (16.7 percent) possess holdings which rank well above the lowest level (see also the Appendices). In these circumstances it should not be surprising that the demands of the Kisan Sabha, which is primarily an organisation of landless labourers and marginal farmers, should include, among other things, the payment of statutory minimum wages, the distribution of surplus land to the landless, and the reduction in the prices of essential agricultural inputs.

During the British period the area falling within the district was governed by the *zamindari* system of land tenure. The *zamindars* here were drawn mainly from the caste of Bhumihars, though a few of them were also Rajputs, Yadavs, and Kurmis. A *zamindar* employed basically two categories of tenants for cultivating his lands: tenants of lands which fell outside the area under his cultivating possession or *bakasht*; and those who cultivated lands in the *bakasht* tracts. The former category were full-fledged tenants, or *raiya*s; the latter were, in effect, like under-*raiya*s since, technically, the *bakasht* area was under the cultivation of the *zamindar*. Most of the tenants of both categories were drawn from the Yadav, Kurmi and Koeri castes. However, several tenants were also Bhumihars. The Bhumihar tenants, unlike the others, did not cultivate the land themselves, and relied primarily on agricultural labourers drawn from low castes such as Kahars, Chamars, Musahars, and Dusadhs. The labourers from these castes also supplemented the labour force of the cultivating tenants.

During the first major survey operations held in this district (1907-12), the *raiya*s who held land outside the area of a *zamindar's* *bakasht* were recorded, and therefore their rights of possession acquired a legitimate form. After the abolition of *zamindari* in Bihar in 1950, they emerged as a new class of landowners, who held land directly under the State. The tenants in the *bakasht* areas were treated differently in the survey operations, and did not enjoy the same stature as their counterparts in the non-*bakasht* tracts. The *zamindars*, apprehending that even such tenants would ultimately get themselves recorded, sought to evict them. A great deal of unrest followed. Apart from agitating to maintain their possession over the land, the tenants also sought a reduction in the produce rents payable by them. Such tenants were able to get some benefits in the course of the Kisan Sabha agitation in the 1930s and '40s against the iniquities of the *zamindari* system.

Our major concern here is with the former tenants in both *bakasht* and non-*bakasht* areas who were able to consolidate their rights in the land and become independent farmers after the abolition of *zamindari* in Bihar. Their distribution according to caste in the affected blocks is not uniform. The pattern of their concentration in particular areas is probably related to their representation in the local population. For

instance, in Punpun, Masaurhi, and Dhanrua Blocks, the principal landowners are Kurmis; in Naubatpur and Bikram they are Bhumihars; and in Pali, the farming population comprises Yadavs, Bhumihars, and Koeris. Most of the landowners drawn from these castes, excluding Bhumihars, participate in various agricultural operations themselves. Even the womenfolk are said to work in the fields. Farmers of the Bhumihar caste do not plough the land themselves and do not also permit their women folk to work in the fields; however, the menfolk may perform other kinds of agricultural work.

All categories of landowners, whether they are marginal farmers owning about two acres of land, or large farmers with holdings above 50 acres, are employers of agricultural labour. The frequency of the need to employ labour, and the number of labourers employed, depend, of course, on the size of the holding. However, our task was to try to identify a particular category of persons among the landowners who, in the eyes of the local population, had acquired an especially bad reputation for ill-treating their labourers, paying them extremely low wages, and at times even molesting their womenfolk. Such landowners were locally known as "*zamidars*" [*zamindars*] or as "*samant*". A *zamidar* or *samant* may be a large landowner owning above 50 acres of land, but not necessarily so. For instance, in village Pirhi (in Bikram Block), none of those viewed as *samant* possessed more than 15 acres of land. In fact, one of them had under 10 acres only, but owned a flour mill in the village. But all such persons, irrespective of their caste background and the amount of land owned, do not perform manual agricultural work themselves, and therefore stand in contrast to both cultivating landowners, who are locally delineated as *kisans*, and the large mass of agricultural labourers or *mazdurs*. A *zamidar* or *samant* owes his notoriety to the callous manner in which he treats his labourers, which includes showing scant respect for the dignity and honour (*izzat*) of their womenfolk. It is towards such persons that the Kisan Sabhas in this district are primarily opposed. (For convenience, the word *landlord* is used throughout this Report to refer to such persons only.)

Among the persons who have been identified as *zamidars* it is inevitable that those controlling large tracts of land are uniquely responsible for creating tensions between themselves and the landless. Such persons are guilty of concealing their surplus land in order to subvert the provisions of the land ceiling laws. For instance, according to a pilot study conducted under the auspices of the A.N. Sinha Institute of Social Studies, Patna, as much as 1,041 acres (or 87.1 per cent) of the 1,195 acres owned by *three households* in one of the affected Blocks happen to be surplus. These households voluntarily surrendered 96 acres, which were

apparently distributed among 85 households of marginal farmers (all owning less than one acre). However, the study points out that two beneficiaries have been evicted, and 32 are resisting eviction. Among the latter, it is ironical that, in the words of the study, "four members ... have been recently killed in anti-Naxalite operations undertaken by the Government of Bihar".

It may be observed that much of the agrarian disturbances in the affected areas is an outcome of the concentration of land in the hands of a few. The demand on the part of the Kisan Sabha for the re-distribution of surplus land among the landless and marginal farmers is therefore a necessary consequence of its illegal possession by a handful of *zamindars* or *samants*.

We now turn to an examination of certain facts regarding the agricultural labourers in the affected Blocks, who, as noted, are the most economically depressed elements in the agrarian population.

The demand for agricultural labourers in the affected Blocks is not uniform, and is conditioned by the availability of water for irrigation and the corresponding cropping pattern. With the building of the Sone canal in 1877, certain tracts, now falling under Naubatpur, Bikram and Pali Blocks, acquired the capacity for multiple cropping. Apart from food crops, such as paddy, wheat, and maize, sugarcane was cultivated as the most important cash crop. In the Blocks where canal irrigation is absent, for example, in Masaurhi, paddy is the main crop. The difference in the two areas is reflected in the price of land: for instance in Bikram the current price of even unirrigated land is approximately Rs 15,000 per acre; but in Masaurhi or Punpun the maximum price of land is approximately Rs 10,000 per acre. Irrigated land in Bikram is valued at Rs 30,000 per acre. In these circumstances, it is clear that the demand for agricultural labour is considerably lower in areas such as Masaurhi than in, for example, Bikram. In Sikandarpur village in Masaurhi we were informed that labourers were fully employed only during the season for transplanting paddy, that is, from about the middle of June till the beginning of September. They also found employment at the time of paddy harvesting from November till about the end of December. During the other months they worked outside the village, for instance, as labourers on sweet-potato farms near Patna, or as coolies employed in road construction in various parts of the district.

While there are variations in the demand for agricultural labourers, the wages paid to them in all the areas tend to be far below the statutory minimum fixed by the Government. The actual wages vary from area to area, and hence the information given here pertains only to the places for which we have data.

In Naubatpur there are mainly two categories of labourers: those who are attached to a particular landowner; and those who work as casual labourers. An attached labourer is bound to work for his employer because he has been leased a small piece of land (between one-third to half an acre) as part of his remuneration; or has been given a loan which he must repay in the course of time. Usually, attachment is through both the small bit of land and the loan. Such labourers are recruited as ploughmen (*halwaha*), but they, along with their able-bodied family members, are required to perform any kind of agricultural operation. The payment for a day's work is in kind, and includes $1\frac{1}{4}$ seer (*kaccha*) rice (802 grams) and $\frac{1}{2}$ seer (*kaccha*) (321 grams) *sattoo* (generally a pulse such as *khesadi* which is roasted and then ground into flour), plus a meal. (All the weights in grams mentioned here are approximations based on the local system of weights: 1 *kaccha* seer = 11/16th of the standard seer; 1 standard seer = 16 *kanwa* or 933 grams).

In Sikandarpur village (in Masaurhi) an attached labourer receives 10 *kanwa* rice (583 grams) and 10 *kanwa* *sattoo* (583 grams) for a day's labour, in addition to one-third to half an acre of land. No meal was mentioned, but according to one source, a meal is part of the daily payment received by a labourer.

In order to compute the equivalent in cash of the daily payment received in kind by an attached labourer, excluding the meal, the rates for rice and *khesadi* must be applied. With respect to rice, we must consider *not* the normal market rate at which the item is sold by the local shopkeeper (between Rs 2.25 and Rs 2.50 per kilogram [kg.] during the current season), but the rate (about Rs 1.75 to Rs 2.00 per kg. currently) at which the shopkeeper exchanges the labourer's rice for cash, which is then used by the latter for purchasing essential items of daily consumption, such as salt, mustard oil, and kerosene. For convenience we shall adopt the figure of Rs 2.00 per kg. for rice. The same exercise may be done for *khesadi*, the rates for which vary widely from about Rs 1.25 per kg. at the time of its harvest in March to Rs 3.00 per kg. during the season for transplanting paddy. However, we shall base our calculations on a constant rate of Rs 2.00 per kg., that is, the same rate as for rice. Accordingly, the cash value, of the daily payment in kind, excluding the meal, received by a labourer varies between Rs 2.25 (in Naubatpur) and Rs 2.33 (in Masaurhi).

The above-mentioned figures need to be contrasted with the statutory wages fixed for the whole of Patna district with respect to *halwahas*: between $2\frac{1}{4}$ and $2\frac{1}{2}$ kgs. rice (the latter in irrigated areas); 600 grams *sattoo*; and a minimum of

approximately half an acre of land. Where the wage is paid in cash, it is subject to a statutory minimum of Rs. 5.00 in irrigated areas and Rs. 4.50 in other areas, excluding the meal. It is evident that the wages paid in the normal course in Naubatpur and Masaurhi are substantially below the statutory minimum.

Labourers are paid on a piece-rate basis during the harvesting season. The rate seems to be uniform in all the affected blocks, the standard being one bundle out of sixteen bundles of the harvested stalks. Since the visit of the team coincided with the current paddy harvesting season, it was a matter of importance to inquire whether the produce earnings of labourers during this season were of the same order as their wages at other times of the year. Unfortunately we have data for only Masaurhi, where the earnings are likely to be lower than those in the canal-irrigated areas, for example Bikram, owing to the low yield per acre. In Sikandarpur village (in Masaurhi), where even tube-well-irrigated land produces a maximum of only seven to eight quintals of paddy per acre, the daily earnings of a labourer during this season are likely to be much lower than in Bikram, where a good yield is approximately 12 quintals per acre. We were informed that in most cases the yield was as low as four quintals per acre in this village.

We present here a concrete example of payment in kind during this season. A Musahar labourer, whom the Committee interviewed in Sikandarpur, together with his wife and a teenaged son, were part of a team of 16 labourers who harvested a $1\frac{1}{2}$ acre stretch of paddy on December 4. Owing to the large number of labourers the operation lasted barely $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours. Between them, he his wife and son harvested six bundles of paddy, or two bundles each. The harvested stalks will be dried in the fields for approximately two days from the time of harvesting. On the third day, that is on December 6, the labourers will carry their respective bundles to the threshing floor, after which they will be given their payment. Each labourer will receive $\frac{1}{16}$ th of what he harvested, or, in local parlance, $2\frac{1}{2}$ *atiyas* (handfuls) per bundle (1 bundle = 40 *atiyas*). Thus, each member of the interviewee's team of three will receive five *atiyas*, which will yield approximately two kgs. of paddy or 1.3 kgs. of rice. Corresponding figures apply to the paddy received by each member of his team on the day before the harvesting operation which took place on December 4. Each had received 10 *atiyas* as payment after two consecutive days of harvesting on another landowner's fields, or five *atiyas* for a day's harvesting. The equivalent cash value of 1.3 kgs. rice (at Rs. 2 per kg.) is Rs. 2.60. It is important to remember that this amount is earned over a period of two working days: one for harvesting and the other for carrying the dried stalks to the threshing floor. In each case the actual working time may not exceed

even half the time allotted for a working day, but given the abundant supply of labour, a labourer cannot find any other work once the assigned task has been completed. The earnings per day for our labourer in this case must therefore be reduced by half of the above-mentioned amount — that is, a meagre Rs. 1.30. This is less than the cash value of the normal wage for this area (Rs. 2.33), as shown earlier. Moreover, the labourer does not even receive a meal during this season, which he does at other times. It therefore seems to us that the exploitation of labourers assumes a much more pronounced form during the paddy harvesting season in this area than at other times.

The information we have presented on the mere pittance paid to labourers in the name of wages in the areas examined by us shows that it is imperative for them to organise themselves to improve their working conditions even on this issue alone. The failure of the Government to implement its own minimum wage rules makes us believe that the poor labourers' attempts to improve their working conditions are born out of a sense of desperation.

The miserable economic conditions of the labourers and marginal farmers give them a legitimate reason to organise themselves against their oppressors. The recent agrarian tensions in this area need to be viewed in this perspective. Unfortunately, both the civil and police administrations are passive spectators, if not collaborators, to the flagrant violation of the land and labour laws by the landlords. The extent of the social and political power of these landlords seems to be all-pervasive for this situation to have continued for so long.

III

Agrarian Unrest and Kisan Sabha

PATNA district, particularly the Masaurhi-Punpun area, was the scene of intense social conflict in the mid-1970s. In fact, weeks before the internal Emergency was clamped in June 1975, the Bihar Military Police (BMP), Border Security Force (BSF) and Central Reserve Police (CRP) were pressed into the area to control the situation which had already resulted in the death of both landlords and Harijan agricultural labourers. But the present unrest began only ten months ago. It mainly took the form of spontaneous attempts by the agricultural labourers and marginal farmers to organise themselves. These attempts at organisation should be viewed in the context of the series of massacres that took place in Bihar during the last four years in Belchi, Pipra (both in Patna district), Bishrampur (Rohtas district), and Parasbigha (Gaya district), where the poorer sections of the population were subjected to unmitigated persecution.

It is against such a background that the Bihar Pradesh Kisan Sabha (BPKS) — the main forum through which the economically depressed sections organised themselves — grew phenomenally. This controversial organisation is now playing a pivotal role in the affected areas.

The BPKS became a phenomenon in Bihar's political scene in February 1981 when it organised a mammoth demonstration in Patna. It became active in at least ten districts of the State, including Patna. Recently, in November 1981, it held its first State-level convention at Patna.

Organisations of the rural poor functioning as Kisan Sabhas now exist in a number of villages in at least seven Blocks of Patna district — Pupun, Bikram, Masaurhi, Dhanrua, Futua, Pali and Naubatpur. Among them, the Sabhas seem to have gained a firm foothold in the first three. We could not ascertain the precise number of villages in which the Sabhas were organised. In fact, the spontaneous manner in which the Sabhas sprang up prevents such an estimate. Almost all the non-officials we met in Patna observed that it was a spontaneous movement. Some, however, suggested that Naxalites had infiltrated into it, and that there could be links with a CPI(ML) group.

The State President of BPKS Babban Tiwari defined the objective of the organisation as follows: "To unite the peasants and demolish the economic, political and cultural base of imperialism and feudalism". He explained the growth of the Sabha as an outcome of the people's loss of faith in political parties. He made it clear that the Sabha is "neither an illegal organisation nor a secret one; rather, it is a legal organisation working in the legal framework to let the peasants have those civil rights which are available to them in the Constitution but denied in reality".

On the other hand, the State Government's view, which is also shared by a section of the Patna press, maintains that the Kisan Sabha is an anti-social, extremist organisation, or an armed Naxalite organisation conducting violence and running a parallel government.

Nature of Demands: A careful examination of the 24-point demands of the Kisan Sabha (see the Appendices) suggests that the demands are of four types: those concerning fundamental rights, such as the right to form associations; those concerning the Directive Principles of the Constitution, such as the right to have an adequate livelihood; those concerning crimes punishable under the Criminal Procedure Code, such as rape and dacoity; and those concerning the various laws and regulations of the Government, such as minimum wages and redistribution of surplus land. Our interviews with numerous villagers only confirmed the constitutional nature of these demands.

Forms of Struggle: Though there is no uniform pattern in the forms of struggle adopted by the Sabha, we were able

to identify certain features among them: meetings, processions, *gheraos*, strikes, and efforts to deal with problems of the village through a kind of collective mechanism, in the style of the traditional panchayats, known as *chaupal* meetings.

Though it is difficult to estimate the number of processions and meetings that took place in recent times, or the extent of the participation in them, a tentative list of demonstrations, based on a local report, is attached (see the Appendices). In addition, in about eighteen villages *gheraos* and/or strikes were conducted. The Sabha is also actively involved in organising cultural shows to propagate its message. We witnessed the preparations for one such show in Narihi village.

Occasionally some members of the Sabha have resorted to the use of force. But, as our account below shows, the violence appears to have been a spontaneous response of the mass of the people to a particular situation. We failed to find any evidence of organised or pre-planned violence.

But the most important form of conducting the struggle is through *chaupal* meetings. A *chaupal* meeting is a meeting of the village poor to deal with various problems, ranging from minor thefts to long-standing land disputes. Problems with landlords, such as payment of wages, and problems with corrupt and inefficient public officials are all taken up in these meetings and decisions are arrived at. Significantly, the *chaupals* also deal with social evils affecting the poor, such as alcoholism, gambling, eve-teasing, illicit sexual relations and quarrels. An important problem which is common in these areas is organised crime, covering theft and dacoity. Besides, social crimes, such as rape, inciting communal feelings, and *goondaism* were also taken up. Usually some form of punishment is also awarded to offenders, which ranges from demanding an apology to social boycott. The almost total loss of faith in the police and legal machinery to deal with crime seems to be the immediate origin of the *chaupals*. Thus in Bikram Block alone 15 rapes and seven murders were recorded in 1980, in none of which the offenders were prosecuted according to law. Significantly, after the *chaupal* started functioning the crime rate has come down: no murder charge or rape incident was recorded in 1981 in this Block. Further, as Shivpujan Prasad Jadav, Patna District Secretary of BPKS pointed out, it also saved the villagers from the complex procedures of filing complaints with the police and consequent expenditure, primarily in the form of bribes. Thus with *chaupals*, as the Lok Dal leader Jabir Hussain commented, "police became irrelevant in this area".

It is these *chaupals* which the Government is alluding to as 'parallel governments'. To quote the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Masaurhi Block: "The parallel government has its own Supreme Court, and its Prime Minister is

Shyam Narayan Patel" (who happens to be the Vice-President of the District BPKS). On September 24, 1981 *Indian Nation*, a Patna daily, flashed a headline that the Naxalites had formed "parallel governments" in nine Blocks of Patna district and that they were moving around with sophisticated arms and collecting taxes from the landlords. On October 13, another Patna daily *Pradeep* published photostat copies of letters purported to be Kisan Sabha letters asking its branches to collect taxes from the landlords.

The Kisan Sabha denies that it is running a parallel government. Babban Tiwari pointed out that the photostat copies published in the daily were fake letters with forged signatures. He clarified that the organisation is run only through its subscriptions and donations. Further, he maintained that *chaupals* are part of the traditional culture of the villages.

In the course of its struggle the Kisan Sabha has been able to achieve some gains in wages through organised action. But its overall impact still falls short of the ultimate goal. In Sikandarpur we were informed that a *halwaha* has been receiving 2 kgs. rice and half kg. *sattoo* with effect from the commencement of the *kharif* season this year. This is still short of the statutory wage; moreover, the landowners who employ *halwahas* are resisting the leasing out of the customary one-third to half an acre of land. One landowner who originally employed four *halwahas* recently terminated the services of two of them. Elsewhere, in Bhimni Chak village in Bikram Block, the wages for transplanting paddy during this *kharif* season went up by approximately 325 grams, but the total wage still remains short of the minimum by more than a kilogram. Moreover, the four *zamidars* of this village continue to give the old wages.

IV

Kisan Sabha and Landlords

THE social and economic background of the region, described earlier, makes the political power of the landlords quite evident. But it is their response to the Kisan Sabha which brings out the brazen manner in which they are exercising it. By collaborating with the police they have successfully used physical violence against the poor. The epitome of this reaction was their armed procession in Bikram on October 22, 1981.

The landlords of the region rallied under the banner of the Bhumisena, an organisation which arose specifically to resist the increasing organised strength of the poor in the late 1970s. The Bhumisena is reported to have held a meeting at Bikram on October 6, 1981, in which the decision to organise a rally was taken.

The Bikram area was under Section 144 since October 1,

1981, as a result of the Kisan Sabha demonstration in the last week of September. Yet on October 22, 1981 the Bhumi-sena held a demonstration of about 3,000 people in defiance of the prohibitory orders. From our interviews with eyewitnesses we gathered that the procession was led by "one elephant, two and a half horses [*sic*] and four jeeps". At least a hundred processionists carried rifles, pistols and spears. They raised slogans such as *Fasal kategi kheton men, aag lagegi jhopriyon men* ("the crop will be harvested in the fields, and fire will engulf the hutments" — of the striking agricultural labourers); *Naxaliyon ki ek dawai, chhah inch chhota kar do bhai* ("the only remedy for Naxalites is to cut them short by six inches" — that is, chop off their heads). Some eyewitnesses reported that the police not only escorted this illegal procession but even distributed pamphlets and raised slogans.

This particular defiance of the law by the landlords is reported to have been inspired by a letter of one Laddo Singh. The Committee acquired a copy of the letter which had been cyclostyled and distributed among the landlords of the area on October 6, 1981. The letter, in Hindi, states:

Organise yourselves for defence. The Administration cannot protect you ... In Phulwari and Fatua, a Bhumi-sena has been formed and is ready for combat ... I talked to Upendra Babu, President of Patna district Youth Congress(I). I argued with him that the Administration cannot save us and we have to go to the villages and organise farmers and restore their spirits ... I hope he has met you.

The sinister manner in which the landlords have been conducting their organised terror campaign can be understood by the fact that the author of this letter, Laddo Singh, wrote it from Patna Central Jail where he has been lodged for the last two years, having been imprisoned for life for playing a leading role in the infamous Pipra carnage. The alliance between politicians, the Congress(I), the police, officials, and landlords needs no further comment.

V

Role of Political Parties

THE role of political parties in the recent agrarian unrest, except that of the Congress(I), appears to be ambiguous. The Congress(I) is directly collaborating with the landlords, aided by those in power at various levels in the Government. However, the Opposition parties appear to be taking contradictory positions.

We gathered that the leading participants of the armed procession of landlords at Bikram included Diwakar Sharma and Jaiprakash Singh of Congress(I); Subhash Chandra Singh, Vice-President of the Patna district Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP); and Siddeshwar Singh, of the Communist Party

of India (CPI). Besides, local Lok Dal activists were also reported to have been present in the procession. In sharp contrast to this, all Opposition parties at the State level condemned the landlord-police repression, and expressed sympathy with the poor.

Among the Opposition politicians we met was the Lok Dal leader Jabir Hussain. He complained that members of his party at the local level, contrary to the policy of the party, participated in the landlords' procession. A local BJP leader whom we happened to meet along with the DSP, Masaurhi Block, corroborated the DSP's allegation of the presence of "armed Naxalite squads" and a "parallel government." But the role of the CPI in the present turmoil is intriguing. When the local newspaper *Pradeep* reported the presence of a district level leader of the party in the landlords' procession, the State party leadership promptly denied it. But our interviews with Jabir Hussain and with the villagers confirmed his presence in it. We learnt that an inquiry of the party's state committee, conducted by Chaturanan Mishra, confirmed the presence of two CPI leaders in the procession and recommended their expulsion. Villagers in Narihi told us that the local CPI MLA Ram Nath Yadav expressed sympathy with them in their villages, but supported the landlords in Sorampur, another village nearby. The statement on October 26, 1981 in *Janashakti*, the official organ of CPI, by Hari Nandan Sinha, Secretary of the Party's Patna District Committee, on the landlord procession sums up the CPI's ambiguity:

It is a fact that Naxalite activities have increased in some places these days. It is also clear that due to their faulty strategy the small and middle peasants have panicked. They don't fight big landlords, but make small and middle peasants their targets...Due to this wrong strategy it is natural that the peasants react. And the big landlords...are trying to take undue advantage of this. A recent example is the demonstration of the kisans on October 22 in the name of the so-called Kisan Sena. (Translated from Hindi; emphasis added).

Thus all Opposition parties appear to be caught in a contradiction where the State leadership issue statements in support of the poor, while the local leaders seem to be in collusion with the landlords. But in the perceptions of the poor villagers who are not aware of the State level party positions, there is no such ambiguity. They are almost unanimous in pointing out the failure of political parties in supporting them. What is unfortunate, if not disconcerting, is that in a constituency won by CPI the party should be involved in such ambiguity.

VI

Media and the Movement

THE local press in Patna has given a one-sided picture of the current agrarian unrest by projecting only the views of the State administration. In effect, it sanctions the armed intervention of the police in the affected areas. Thus, soon after the Kisan Sabha rally in Bikram on September 24, 1981, the *Indian Nation* flashed headlines on the alleged 'parallel government' of the Naxalites in seven Blocks of Patna district. Shortly afterwards, in the first week of October, the police conducted a massive raid in Masaurhi Block. Later, in the second week of October, *Pradeep* published photostat copies of a circular purported to be that of the Kisan Sabha giving orders for the collection of taxes from the landlords. A little later the police prepared and executed a massive armed operation which eventually resulted in the Narihi-Pirihirhi firings. During all these events the local press merely echoed the police version of "armed campaigns by extremists."

Our investigation, as shown in the next section, clearly establishes that there is another side to the picture. But the local press did not care to investigate or publish its own findings which could have pointed out the loopholes in the regular press hand-outs of the police department. Local journalists in Patna told us that the police regularly briefed them and took them around the affected areas in their jeeps.

In this context, it should be noted that the bias in the reportage of the local press may not be purely coincidental. A good number of senior journalists in Patna come from upper-caste landed families. As far as we could ascertain, at least two senior correspondents — one from *Aaj* and the other from *Pradeep* — are closely related to the landlords of Punpun Block, one of the affected areas.

But an exception should be made in relation to some of the correspondents of the national press in Patna. In fact, they are being harassed by the police for their independent reporting. One leading young journalist complained to the Committee that his life was in danger as he had been threatened by a landlord against whom he had written in a Delhi paper.

In its biased coverage, the local press is fast destroying its credibility with the people. This is a problem that requires investigation by the Press Council as well as by the Press Commission.

VII

Main Events

IN the recent past, four significant events may be identified which fuelled the unrest in the affected areas of Patna. They are: the aftermath of the procession in Bikram on

September 24; the aftermath of the incident of rape in Lahsuna village on September 30; the arrests in Lahsuna and the incident at Nadwan railway station on October 3; and the police firing at Narihi-Pirihi. It should also be noted that despite the oft-repeated charge of "violence by armed extremists", these are the only four incidents to which the police referred as concrete examples of 'Naxalite violence.' Hence, it is necessary to examine them in detail. The Committee visited all these spots and interviewed eyewitnesses. The following accounts are based on them.

Bikram: On September 24, 1981, the day of the mammoth Kisan Sabha rally on the grounds of the local Basic Teachers' Training College, the police arrested and took away one Tangor Sao. He was accused of possessing firearms, but the villagers maintain that the arrest was at the instigation of Bhola Singh, a henchman of the local landlords. As the news of the arrest spread, a large number of participants in the rally proceeded to the Bikram Police Station where Tangor Sao was detained, and demanded his release. The police were unable to face the large number of people who *gheraoed* the police station. A section of the crowd, comprising mostly women, went in and damaged some chairs. Eventually Sao was released from police custody. The FIR lodged by the police included the names of Shivpujan Prasad Jadav and T.N. Azad, and those who attacked the thana have been described as 'extremist elements.'

Lahsuna: Lahsuna is a village with a population of about three thousand in Masaurhi Block. Here we met villagers — mainly Yadav small and marginal farmers and landless labourers who worked on the lands of Awadhi Kurmi landowners. The trouble in the village started with the alleged rape on September 26, 1981 of a woman, Phekni Devi (described erroneously as Dukhni Devi in the press), by a landlord Kishori Singh, who owns about 40 acres. On hearing Phekni's cries, the villagers surrounded Kishori Singh's house. But they dispersed peacefully following an assurance by Kurmi landlords that justice would be done. Some months ago the entire village — including Harijan and Yadav poor peasants and agricultural labourers as well as Kurmi landlords — had a series of meetings and drafted a code of conduct, imposing fines on those who molested women. Since then, the villagers had collected a large sum by way of fines, said to be deposited at the local Post Office; but the landlords accused of such crimes had refused to pay the fines. One such landlord, Tun Tun Singh, had left the village after having raped a Harijan woman. In retaliation, the labourers refused to till his land.

Soon after the rape of Phekni, a police party led by an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) visited the village and took into custody both Phekni Devi and Kishori Singh on the plea

that a case would be registered against the latter at the Police Station. The villagers surrounded the police party and demanded the release of Phekni Devi since they felt that the police could record her statement in the village itself. On the instance of the villagers, the ASI finally released her and took away Kishori Singh in a jeep.

There are two versions of this incident. While the villagers gave us the above version, the DSP of Masaurhi said that the mob, which outnumbered the police, snatched away Kishori Singh from the police, and since then he had disappeared, implying that he had either been killed by the 'extremists' or had been held by them.

Mystery still shrouds the fate of Kishori Singh. In Patna several journalists told us that after his rumoured disappearance, he had been closeted for at least a week with Naval Kishore Singh, a Congress(I) leader and Chairman, District Board, Patna, at the latter's house at Kadam Kuan. The Chief Minister himself is reported to have visited him. The exact age of Kishori Singh is also a matter of controversy, the police and the press stating it as 65, thus attempting to exonerate him of the rape charge; and the villagers reporting it as around 40 or 45.

The alleged abduction of Kishori Singh was used by the police as a pretext for conducting massive raids in Masaurhi Block. On October 3, 1981, a large force of Bihar Military Police (BMP) and Central Reserve Police (CRP) *jawans* raided Lahsuna and Sikandarpur villages. The police, according to eyewitnesses, were accompanied by the leading landlords of the area, such as Hiralal Singh, Bandu Singh, Chhotay Singh, Sudama Singh and the *mukhia* of the village, Ramprit Singh. Phekni Devi's husband, Sukhu Sao, told us how she was forcibly taken away by the police. She is now in the Patna jail. Sukhu Sao showed us a letter sent by her from jail which said that a number of children of Lahsuna village had also been arrested and kept in jail. She pleaded with the villagers to try to get her and the others released. But the villagers of Lahsuna are not being allowed to come out of their homes by the landlords who are threatening them with dire consequences if they dare to seek legal assistance.

The raiding police party also arrested a large number of people from Sikandarpur village. The arrested persons were taken away to the nearby Nadwan Railway Station to be transported to Masaurhi Police Station. The infuriated villagers followed the police to Nadwan. By the time they reached the Station, the train carrying the police and the arrested persons had already left. It was then that a section of the angry crowd allegedly ransacked the Station Master's room.

Narihi-Pirihi: Narihi and Pirihi are adjoining villages situated in Bikram Block, with a combined population of

about 3,000. The Bihar Government's military-style operations (see the next section for details) began in these villages in the early hours of October 30, 1981. Over a hundred armed policemen led by Baliram Tiwari, Sub-Inspector(SI) of Dulhinbazaar Police Station, conducted the raid. It is not clear to us why the police singled out these two villages as the starting point of their operation.

On their way to Narihi, the police arrested Ashok Kumar, a student of Homeopathy, and then went to Bhundu Paswan's house, broke open the door and looted the house. Later, they raided Shyam Singh's house where two torches, a blanket, and a pair of shoes were taken away. One seven-year old girl, Anju, and a ten-year-old boy Jaynandan were shot and wounded. The raid continued in this fashion for an hour. Eyewitness accounts revealed that scores of people were beaten up and houses looted. The police then proceeded to Pirihi village.

At Pirihi, they knocked at the door of Surender Mahato (22) and shot him dead as soon as he opened it. Later they forced his father to carry the dead body to Sorampur, about two miles away, where their vehicles had been parked. After that, they raided a number of houses and discovered a battery-eliminator in one of them. Subsequently, they announced that they had seized a transmitter from the extremists. After the end of their operations they eventually arrested six people and forced them to walk to Sorampur. Chandravati, a young 15-year-old newly-married girl, followed them, pleading with them to release her cousin Bharat. She was accompanied by some villagers.

The route to Sorampur followed a *karha* (an irrigation channel) which was dry at the time. The police party, which included the *chowkidar* of the village, walked on the western bank of the channel while the villagers followed them along the eastern bank. What happened on the way, which left young Chandravati dead, is a matter of controversy. The police maintain that Chandravati hurled two bombs at them, one of which exploded and injured the *chowkidar*. But the villagers said that the S.I. Baliram Tiwari, irritated by the persistent pleading of Chandravati to release her cousin, ordered the *chowkidar* to jump across the channel and catch hold of her. The *chowkidar* complied, and was about to catch the girl when his cap fell off and he bent down to pick it up. At that moment Tiwari shot at Chandravati. The bullet hit the *chowkidar* in his hip. Then Tiwari fired again at Chandravati causing her death on the spot. According to the villagers, the ornaments which the newly-married girl was wearing were taken away by the police along with her dead body. In the end, the raid on these two villages left two people dead: Surender Mahato and Chandravati Devi.

What emerges from these four incidents gives a fair idea of the nature of police action and propaganda. It is these

incidents which the police hold out as examples of armed Naxalite violence. Yet, even according to their own version, not a single policeman was killed or even injured by these roving 'Naxalite squads'. Broken chairs in a *thana*, a ransacked room in a railway station, an 'abducted' landlord, and a *chowkidar* alleged to have been hurt by a bomb thrown by a 15-year-old girl — these are all the evidence that the police show in support of their charges.

In the considered opinion of the fact-finding team, the violence that the people are being accused of occurred as a result of their spontaneous reaction to the unwarranted provocation by the police. There is no evidence of any organised and pre-planned violence on the part of the people.

VIII

Police Repression

ON December 3, 1981, the day our team reached Patna, newspapers published a statement by Fazal Ahmed, Inspector-General of Police (IGP), in which he said that the "problems in this area [the affected areas of Patna district] have arisen out of socio-economic problems over which the police have no control." And yet our evidence does not suggest that the police administration is conscious of these 'problems'. In fact, at times it appears to be itself a party to the conflicts arising out of these 'socio-economic problems.' We have reasons to believe that the police operations are part of an overall policy for suppressing the legitimate organisation of the rural poor, in the name of tackling the law and order situation.

Specifically, the police arrested one person at the Bikram rally; attempted to arrest some at Lahsuna village after the rape; raided Lahsuna and Sikandarpur villages in the first week of October, beat up a large number of people and arrested some of them; and conducted a series of raids throughout the month of October, especially in Masaurhi and Bikram Blocks, and beat up and arrested a large number of people. On October 30, 1981 a massive crack-down began, the immediate result of which was the raid on Narihi and Pirihi villages and the death of two persons in the latter. In all seven people have been killed and property worth over Rs 1.5 lakhs has been destroyed and looted in the raids. Many cases were registered under Sections 147, 148, 149, 307, 324, 341 and 353 of the Cr. P.C. In almost all the FIRs lodged by the police the accused have been described as 'extremists.' In many of them, prominent leaders of the Kisan Sabha have been named. Among those who were implicated in these cases were persons who could not have possibly participated in the alleged crimes, such as Rama-krishna Tiwari, a Demonstrator in the Bihar National College at Dhanrua. He was arrested in the case related to

the September 24 Bikram rally of the Kisan Sabha, while at that hour on that day he was actually taking his class in Dhanrua. For about 13 days he was kept in illegal solitary confinement. Warrants are pending against a number of Kisan Sabha activists. It also seems that a fairly large number of illegal arrests took place. While 135 persons were eventually sent to jail, from various accounts we learnt that more were initially taken into police custody and unduly harassed.

Most of those arrested are lodged in Bankipur jail in Patna. Phekni Devi's letter from the prison, mentioned earlier, speaks of child prisoners. Kishori Das, a social worker, who met the prisoners on behalf of a People's Union for Civil Liberties team reported that the prisoners were not being given proper food and medical facilities and that six persons were lodged in a cell meant for two. They were also reported to have been beaten up in police stations before being sent to prison, as a result of which some of them, including a 10-year-old boy Jayanandan, were admitted to the prison hospital. On November 3, 1981, the prisoners went on a hunger strike demanding better food and other facilities.

But what clearly establishes the organised and pre-planned nature of the police operations was the reported high-level meeting in the last week of October. According to the Lok Dal leader Jabir Hussain, the meeting took place at the police control room in Patna. As many as 40 Magistrates and 150 police officials took part in the meeting in which a detailed plan to stifle the Kisan Sabha throughout the affected areas was drawn up. As the news of the meeting leaked out to the press (among others, the Delhi edition of the *Indian Express* carried a detailed report of the meeting and the plan scheduled for October 30), the police advanced their plan of action. Thus 19 companies of CRP, assisted by the BMP and the local police, went into action on the night of October 29. The operation was led by K.A.H. Subramanyam, District Magistrate (DM), and A.K. Pandey, Superintendent of Police (SP) of Patna district. Both Subramanyam and Pande are described as a 'deadly combination' in political circles in Patna. Known for their explicit pro-landlord sentiments, they worked together in Gaya during 1975-76, where the police unleashed a reign of terror in villages to flush out so-called extremists.

In Patna today, the police are reported to be on the lookout for about 500 activists of the Kisan Sabha. The list, we were told, was supplied by the landlords. One immediate result of this massive operation was the incident at Narihi-Pirih village described earlier. The police force continues to remain in the area.

The manner in which the operations were planned and executed makes it clear that the police were not merely

reacting to a law and order problem but were moving in a calculated attempt to suppress the Kisan Sabha. In this context it should be noted that a large number of senior police officials themselves belong to the Bhumihar caste. For instance, for the next 15 years, it is speculated that the incumbents of the post of IGP will be from that community. Since the Administration is itself under the control of persons drawn from the upper castes, who in their turn appoint their own men, this pattern is likely to perpetuate itself. A senior government official, who wished to remain anonymous, disclosed to the Committee that among the 1,500 *jawans* recruited to the BMP recently, only a fraction were from the Scheduled Castes, which is in clear violation of the Government's reservation policy.

Given this background, it is not difficult to understand why the men in uniform in Patna are behaving in the manner described above. They have high stakes in the countryside, which actually makes them a party to the conflicts. That the police operations fall within a policy framework of suppressing the attempts of the rural poor to organise themselves, will become clear from the current plans of the Bihar Government.

IX

Role of Bihar Government

THE present Administration in Bihar appears to have taken a stand in favour of the landlords long before the agrarian conflicts became acute. We have already noted the failure of the Administration in implementing its own land laws. In the present conflict, the State Cabinet has merely accepted the police version and has allowed the police to intervene in favour of the landed gentry. Thus, the Chief Minister Jagannath Mishra gave a statement on November 1, 1981 saying that the tensions in the affected areas were entirely a law and order problem created by 'armed extremists' and dismissed the view that it had arisen out of the miserable working and living conditions of the rural poor as false.

Yet, the State Government felt it necessary to announce crash development projects and *ad hoc* relief programmes to these very areas in the first week of November. Thus, it sanctioned Rs 5 crores for communications and Rs 3.75 crores for the installation of tube-wells. It was also in the first week of November that the pension scheme applicable to old people and widows (Rs 60 per month for the former and Rs 35 per month for the latter) was for the first time implemented after all these years. That the Government required a conflict of such magnitude to announce these meagre measures is in itself an indirect denial of its own stated position that the rural tensions in Patna have nothing to do with the basic socio-economic ills.

Such contradictions between the Bihar Government's statements and actions are not confined to Patna. The State Administration seems to be misleading the local people with one version, and feeding the Centre with another. This is evident from the Union Minister Yogendra Makwana's statement in the Lok Sabha on December 9, 1981 stating that the Bihar Government had informed the Centre that there was no 'parallel government' in the State — at a time when the Bihar Government spokesmen in Patna were constantly raising the bogey of a parallel government there.

A small section of the bureaucracy appears to be against the Government's policy of suppressing the organisation of the rural poor. It is reported that the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) of Danapur was opposed to the police operations in Masaurhi and Bikram, but he was kept out of the picture when the decision was taken to launch the operations by the DM and the SP. Some other officials were believed to have leaked out information to the press about the impending police action, as is evident from the publication of the report of the high-level meeting of police officials in the last week of October. We have learnt that the Administration is transferring such officials to other areas and jobs. The Committee has met some of these recalcitrant officials.

On the other hand, senior officials, who mainly come from upper-caste families, are, by and large, in favour of a ruthless repression of the Kisan Sabha. One such official in the Department of Agriculture, a landowner from Bikram, said to us: "Come here after two years, and you will find everything has become peaceful". What is meant by "peaceful" will be evident from an analysis of the Government's plans. The Rs 5 crores allocated for communications, for instance, are meant for the development of 16 roads in Patna, Gaya and Aurangabad Districts. A senior police official complained to us that it had been difficult for the police to move into villages in jeeps because of the lack of *pucca* roads in the area. It is thus obvious that the new roads are meant for the swift movement of the police, rather than for the benefit of the rural poor.

But the most alarming of the Government's future programmes is the plan, disclosed to us by a senior officer, which involves the extension of the present police operations to Gaya and Aurangabad Districts with a view to suppressing the nascent Kisan Sabhas there. We learnt that the Administration had prepared a list of 150 persons who are to be eliminated in staged encounters — on the lines of similar 'encounters' framed during the 1975-76 period in Bhojpur and other districts of Bihar.

Thus, the Bihar Government, while continuing the old policy of ignoring the socio-economic roots of the present agrarian tensions and resorting to repression of popular

grievances, is planning to engulf wider areas in its sinister programme of establishing the 'peace of the graveyard' in the countryside.

X

Conclusions and Recommendations

FROM the above account a picture emerges of the development of agrarian conflict in Masaurhi, Bikram, Pali, Naubatpur, Dhanrua, Punpun and Fatua Blocks of Patna district which may be summed up as follows:

The affected region is marked by the oppressive conditions of its poor, and the failure of the State administration in bettering their living conditions — which are the sources of the current tension. Under these conditions, the rural poor have organised themselves through the Kisan Sabha, which is a democratic organisation voicing the legitimate demands of the poor and enjoys their confidence.

The Government denies the source of the tension and instead advances the argument that it is due to "extremist violence". This view is systematically projected through a pliant local press which has been instrumental in helping create a facade of public sanction for the repressive measures of the police.

The police, who have more than professional interest in the conflict, have conducted an organised terror campaign in the villages. In this, they have been aided by the landlords. Even the major Opposition parties have helped them in varying degrees. It is the Administration which has indulged in violence, and not the Kisan Sabha.

The State Government and its police, as certain developments indicate, are likely to aggravate the tensions by indulging in further violence, which includes the plan to eliminate Kisan Sabha activists in staged encounters. The affected areas of Patna in particular and nearby areas in general are likely to face severe repression in the coming months.

In view of the above substantive findings, the fact-finding team would like to make the following recommendations to the democratic sections of Indian society:

1. Efforts should be made to persuade the Government of Bihar to implement its own laws meant to benefit the rural poor.

2. Efforts should be made, especially in Bihar, to help the poor peasants and agricultural labourers who are under arrest and secure their release.

3. Parliament and the law courts should be approached to define the terms 'extremist' and 'Naxalite', so that these emotive terms cannot be used arbitrarily by the State Government to brand every democratic movement and suppress it.

4. The Press Council of India and journalists' organisations should investigate the manner in which the local press is indulging in irresponsible reporting.

5. The Press, Parliament, and the public in general should prevent the reported move to eliminate 150 Kisan Sabha activists and save their lives.

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December 16, 1981

APPENDICES

I. POPULATION PROFILE

	<i>Population (Lakhs)</i>	<i>Rural (%)</i>	<i>SC (%)</i>	<i>ST (%)</i>	<i>Literacy (%)</i>
Patna	22.5	69.8	15.2	NA	32.7
Bihar	563.5	90.0	14.6	8.8	19.9

(Source: Here and throughout the text, 1971 Census).

II. WORKFORCE

	<i>Total workers '000</i>	<i>Culti- vators</i>	<i>Ag. labour</i>	<i>Total ag. workers</i>	<i>Total non. ag. workers</i>
<i>(As percentage of total workers)</i>					
Patna	668.4	32.6	34.6	67.1	32.9
Bihar	17,438.9	43.3	38.9	82.3	17.7

(Source: *Selected Plan Statistics of Bihar*, Planning Board, 1976)

III. AFFECTED BLOCKS: A PROFILE

	<i>Number of villages</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Scheduled Caste (%)</i>
1. Punpun	85	66,022	29
2. Dhanrua	122	94,446	19
3. Masaurhi	103	88,075	21
4. Naubatpur	109	99,660	19
5. Bikram	128	137,383	18
6. Pali	118	119,997	NA

(Source: *Statistical Hand Book of Bihar*, 1976).

IV. PATNA DISTRICT: OPERATIONAL HOLDINGS

Serial No.	Size Class (Hectares)	No. of Holdings	Area (Hectares)
1.	Less than 0.5	114,795	28,251
2.	0.5-1.0	43,986	32,750
3.	1.0-2.0	34,644	48,324
4.	2.0-3.0	16,439	39,394
5.	3.0-4.0	9,042	30,938
6.	4.0-5.0	5,547	24,562
7.	5.0-10	6,130	41,410
8.	20-30	125	3,109
9.	30-40	42	1,454
10.	40-50	10	437
11.	50 and above	14	1,373
Total		232,046	266,751

(Source: *Agricultural Census, Bihar State, 1970-71*)

V. KISAN SABHA'S CHARTER OF DEMANDS

1. Implementation of land reform measures, particularly redistribution of surplus and unowned land to the landless poor.
2. Implementation of share-cropping laws.
3. Writing off debts of farmers owning up to 15 acres of irrigated land or 25 acres of unirrigated land.
4. Implementation of the Minimum Wages Act.
5. Conferment of the right to determine crop prices to Kisan organisations.
6. Reduction of land revenue rates in famine and flood wrought areas.
7. Exemption of land revenue in areas where free government irrigation is not available.
8. Provide drainage to flood-affected lands.
9. Re-establishment of traditional rights to tribals dependent on forests for livelihood.
10. Adequate supply of agricultural inputs and a reduction in their prices.
11. Stop killings of activists in the name of encounters.
12. Guarantee protection of women's dignity.
13. Freedom from exploitation from imperialist capital.
14. Control of inflation and provision of necessities at proper prices.
15. Provision of housing for *jhuggi* dwellers and conferment of settlement rights.
16. Jobs for the jobless or an unemployment dole.
17. Revocation of NSA and the release of Sabha members held under it.

18. Adequate punishment to those who fired on the peasants and blinded them.
19. Control of police crimes.
20. Protection of civil liberties and democratic rights.
21. Improvement and increase in educational facilities.
22. End corruption and provision of cheap and quick justice.
23. Break down imperialist hindrances and make India truly independent.
24. End war hysteria and have friendly relations with all.

VI. DEMONSTRATIONS: ESTIMATES

<i>Date/Month</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Estimated participation</i>
August 1981	Bas Singh Kerai	4,000
	Lahsuna	5,000
	Gurupatiyak	2,000
September 1981	Madura	6,000
	Bariyari	24,000
	Lakhna	3,500
	Kewura	3,000
	Punpun	25,000
	Dulhinbazaar	25,000
September 24, 1981	Bikram	40—50,000
October 1981	Adhya	8,000
	Gurupatiyak	2,000
	Nishiyawan	8,000
	Masaurhi	7,000

(Source: *Janamat*, December 1981)

VII. POLICE FIRINGS

(All between October 30 and November 5, 1981)

<i>Village & Block</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Names of victims</i>
Pirihi (Bikram)	2	Surender Mahato Chandravati Devi
Karja (Naubatpur)	1	Devinder Ram
Bahuara (Naubatpur)	2	Devki Majhi Janaki Majhi
Beshwarpur (Masaurhi)	1	Devendra Ravi Das
Parh Bigha (Dhanrua)	1	Lakshman Chowdhary
Total	7	

VIII. ARRESTS

<i>Block</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>Number</i>
Bikram	Pirihi	15
	Sorampur	26
Punpun	NA	11
Masaurhi	Lahsuna	13
	Sikandarpur	
Dhanrua	NA	28
Naubatpur	Karja	11
	Bahuara	20
Others		11
(Details not available)		
Total		135

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**OTHER REPORTS
AND
PUBLICATIONS
OF
PEOPLE'S UNION FOR
DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS**

1. *Disturbed Areas of Telengana.*
2. *Repression in Singbhum.*
3. *Communal riots in Aligarh.*
4. *Repression on Artists in Kerala.*
5. *Six Parliaments and Democratic Rights.*
6. *Rape, State and Society.*
7. *Repression on Miners in Chattisgarh.*
8. *Torture of BJP women activists in Delhi.*
9. *Contract labour in ASIAD '82.*
10. *Adivasis of Adilabad.*
11. *Jhuggi dwellers of Seemapuri.*

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The People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR), till recently known as the People's Union for Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights (Delhi), came into existence during the Emergency (1975-77). A small organisation with limited resources, it is one of the few civil rights organisations in the country that has pursued its tasks despite fluctuations in the political environment and changes of government.

Though a Delhi-based organisation, PUDR has helped to strengthen the civil rights movement outside Delhi. It has investigated and highlighted assaults on democratic rights in several parts of the country, involving various sections of the population. Its reports have covered, among other problems: communal riots in Aligarh; repression of tribals and peasants in Karimnagar and Adilabad (Andhra Pradesh), Singhbhum and Patna (Bihar); and attacks on workers in Faridabad and Modinagar, and on miners in Chhatisgarh.

In addition to defending the rights of workers, tribals, peasants, *jhuggi*-dwellers, inmates of beggars' homes, and migrant labour, PUDR has drawn attention to the question of democratic rights in the fields of science and culture.

PUDR has also provided legal assistance to political prisoners, and filed petitions concerning the Disturbed Areas Act, amendments to the Rape Bill, contract labour employed in Asiad 1982, land other issues of public interest.