



An Outline History

of All India Kisan Sabha

by
Hannan Mollah

**An Outline History
of
All India Kisan Sabha**

Preface

The Kisan movement has taken an important place in the arena of popular struggles during the last few years against the neo-liberal economic policy pursued by successive governments since the early nineties. The impact of this policy on our rural economy has been lethal, intensifying the agrarian crisis in the country. The All India Kisan Sabha took a consistent stand against neo-liberalism. The democratic and particularly the Left movement in the country forced the Manmohan Singh government to take specific steps like enactment of a number of laws such as the MNREGA 2005, the Forest Rights Act 2009 and the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013.

However, these Acts were not implemented properly by the UPA government. In 2014 a new right wing, pro-corporate, anti-peasant, anti-working people and communal government came to power, under the leadership of Narendra Modi. This government was anti-peasant from day one, though they made many high-sounding promises to the farmers of the country before the elections. The All India Kisan Sabha took up a very firm position against those policies and built up a series of struggles against the Modi government. The spread of the struggle in different parts of the country was unprecedented. When the country was almost blind to the severe crisis faced by the farming community, the Kisan movement highlighted their issues before the nation, forced the government to retreat in some cases and compelled the media to take note of these matters, successfully bringing the issues of the peasantry in the national spotlight. Different Kisan organisations including AIKS, independently and jointly came to the forefront of the democratic movement in the country.

The AIKS has played an important role during the last 4-5 years to intensify the Kisan movement along with other organisations. A new wave of united Kisan movements have emerged in the course of time. With the growth of such struggles, the AIKS has also gathered strength during this period. The organisational activities of the AIKS have increased manifold and the task before it has been to build the movement and ensure unity to strengthen the democratic movement in the country. Under the circumstances, the AIKS has had to strengthen its activities ideologically, politically and organisationally. For that purpose, the AIKS has started education camps for its cadres and activists. The AIKS has decided to organise study and research on agrarian issues. The P. Sundarayya Trust was set up to take up this job and publish relevant books and documents. The AIKS has also discussed the need to have a book on the history of the Kisan Sabha. Two important books that were written on this subject were, A History of Kisan Sabha by Com. M.A. Rasul and The History of the Kisan Sabha by H.K.S Surjeet, which were published three decades ago and are not available now. Besides, those books were large. Therefore, a short outline history of the AIKS was required for the education of our present day comrades. The AIKS has set up a commission to write an exhaustive history of the Kisan movement and Com. S.R. Pillai has been entrusted with the job. In the meantime, a short, handy and updated book was required. To meet that demand, I took up the responsibility to write it and "An Outline History of All India Kisan Sabha", is the product of this endeavour.

This book is based mainly on the two books already mentioned above. Almost all the information, facts and incidents have been taken from the books of Com. Rasul and Com. Surjeet. Many sections are summarised versions of Com Rasul's book. I have also followed the format of the book though updated sections are written on the basis of the conference reports and some other documents. I hope this short book would be handy for our comrades to learn and teach the history of Kisan Sabha within and outside the organisation.

The entire book was typed by my daughter Uzma and edited by my son Nazeef and Arnab Banerjee. Comrade Maimoona

provided support throughout. Ashok Kumari of SAHMAT volunteered to undertake printing of the book. Com. S.R. Pillai reviewed the book to check the facts and authenticity of the events and made some suggestions for improvement. I greatly appreciate their contribution in completing the book in time.

I am happy that P.Sundarayya Trust has taken the responsibility to publish the book. Thanks to the comrades of the Kisan Sabha centre - Com. Ashok Dhawale, Com. Vijoo Krishnan, Com. P. Krishna Prasad, Com. N.K. Shukla, Com. Manoj Kumar, Com RC Yadaw, Com Sumit Roy, Com Babu Mohanan, Com. Nidhin VS and Com Niloo Shrivastava for assisting and encouraging me to write this book.

Hannan Mollah

Table of Contents

Preface	3
I. Background	9
Agriculture in the Era of Imperialism	9
The Spontaneous Resistance by Farmers	9
Post-First World War Crisis and Peasantry	10
II. Conferences	13
Perspective of Formation of an All India Kisan Organisation	13
Conferences of the All India Kisan Sabha	14
All India Kisan Congress Formed	14
Advancement of the Organisation	19
Second Faizpur Conference	19
Third Comilla Conference	21
Fourth Gaya Conference - Growing Class Struggle in Agrarian India	23
Fifth Palasa Conference - Decides to Fight Back	
Intensification of Attacks on AIKS	26
Sixth Bihta Conference - Towards Resurgence of AIKS	28
Seventh Conference - Resist Japanese Imperialism	30
Eighth Vijaywada Conference - AIKS Emerges	
Stronger at Vijayawada	32
Ninth Netrokona Conference - AIKS as Mass Organisation	
Explained	34
Tenth Aligarh Conference - A Series of Historical Struggles	36
Post-Conference Developments	41
Eleventh Cannore Conference - Not Bhoodan but	
Bhoomi Distribution to the Landless is the Solution	42
Twelfth Moga Conference	47
Thirteenth Dahano Conference	49
Fourteenth Amritsar Conference	51-52
Fifteenth Bongaon Conference - Conflict Between	
Struggle and Compromise	53
Sixteenth Mayavaram Conference - Confusion	
Continues in the Organisation	55
Seventeenth Ghazipur Conference	58
Eighteenth Trichur Conference - Silver Jubilee Session of	
Kisan Sabha	60

Nineteenth Madurai Conference - Disruption, Disturbances and Attacks Delayed the Conference: Finally, a Successful Session	63
Twentieth Barsul Conference - Towards Revival of Kisan Sabha	67
Twenty-first Rurka Kalan Conference - Struggle and Expansion Continues	70
Twenty-second Sikar Conference - A Conference Followed by Emergency	72
Twenty-third Varanasi Conference - Turning Point for AIKS– Guidelines for the Future	76
Twenty-fourth Midnapore Conference - All India Agricultural Workers Union Formed	82
Twenty-fifth Silver Jubilee Conference at Patna - The Golden Jubilee Year of AIKS' Foundation	85
Twenty-sixth Khammam Conference - A Session in the Land of the Telangana Struggle	87
Twenty-seventh Hissar Conference - The Session at the Dawn of Neo-liberalism	88
Twenty-eighth Cuttack Conference - Striving for Consolidation of AIKS	92
Twenty-ninth Kozhikode Conference - The Last Conference of the 20th Century	94
Thirtieth Jalandhar Conference - Kisan Movement in the Era of Globalisation	98
Thirty-first Nashik Conference - Kisan Movement during the UPA Regime	101
Thirty-second Guntur Conference - Intensification of Agrarian Crisis	106
Thirty-third Cuddalore Conference - Impact of Neoliberal Policy on Agriculture Assessed	109
Thirty-fourth Hissar Conference - Further Intensification of Agrarian Crisis under a Right-wing Reactionary Government	114
III. The Successes of the AIKS	119
IV. Post-Hissar-Conference Developments	131
V. Evolution of Policies of AIKS	134
Formulation of Alternative Agricultural Policies	134
1st Alternative Agricultural Policy	135
2nd Alternative Agricultural Policy	136
The 3rd Alternative Agricultural Policy of AIKS-2009	138
VI. List of AIKS Conferences	142-143

I. Background

Agriculture in the Era of Imperialism

India is an overwhelmingly agricultural country. In the medieval period, India had its own feudal agrarian system – the self-sufficient rural village. The main characteristic was an agriculture-based economy. With the arrival of the British in India, the imperialist colonial system was established, which was semi-feudal in nature. There were certain fundamental changes to the agricultural system that were introduced under British rule. Colonial rule brought with it several new methods of exploitation of the peasantry, initially by the East India Company and later directly by the Crown; and a semi-feudal system emerged. Through a series of laws and regulations, several different types of landlordism were created and feudal exploitation intensified manifold. New land revenue mechanisms came to be established, like the *zamindari*, *ryotwari*, and *mahalwari* systems in different parts of India. While the *zamindari* system prevailed in Bengal, Madras, Assam and Orissa, *talukdari* was to be found in UP and Gujarat, *malguzari* in Central India, *istemardari* in Ajmer, *khote* in South India, *jensi* in Alwar, and *inamdari* in some other areas. All these systems were basically discriminatory, unjust, highly exploitative and oppressive for the peasantry. The *ryotwari* system imposed several new taxes and became an instrument of collecting fines to squeeze the farmers. The unbearable burden of rent, interest on loans by the private moneylender, threat of eviction, and uncertainty regarding the price of crops gradually pushed the farmers to the brink of absolute poverty by the First World War.

The Spontaneous Resistance by Farmers

As a result, the peasantry was driven to struggle and revolt against this feudal-colonial exploitation again and again. The colonial government and their feudal landlord agents responded with

unprecedented and barbaric repression and attacks against these movements.

Innumerable incidents of popular peasant resistance occurred in different parts of the country in the 18th and 19th century. The Bhil and Kol tribes revolted in the Bombay Presidency, the Meos revolted in the Rajputana, Kachis in Chotanagpur, the Khonds in Orissa, etc. A series of such tribal revolts were seen against colonial exploitation. The Mopla uprising of Malabar and the Deccan riots in the south, the Santhal rebellion and the indigo rebellion in eastern India were other well-known historic struggles of the peasantry. All these revolts were spontaneous reactions of the peasantry against the inhuman exploitation of the colonial rulers, which shook the foundations of British Raj. We also had the 'sanyasi' and 'fakir' rebellions and the Chauri Chaura revolt in which thousands of peasants participated. This proved that the Indian peasantry never tolerated the feudal-colonial exploitation. This historical background always remained a source of inspiration for future struggles by our peasantry.

Post-First World War Crisis and Peasantry

The First World War brought a severe crisis in the economy of the country. Poverty took an unprecedented form in the lives of rural people. The lives of common folk were marred by unemployment, starvation and price-rise. The crisis hit a big section of the population of the country especially the peasantry. The good news of the socialist revolution in Russia had just entered India. The message of freedom from exploitation began influencing the toiling masses of the country. The second generation was greatly enthused by the united struggles of the workers and peasantry for their emancipation. Moreover, the organised workingclass movement was gaining strength in India. This too influenced the rural peasantry and attracted them to the movement. The struggle for independence was already an increasingly encouraging factor. This led to their participation in the Non-Cooperation Movement. The kisans were developing the consciousness that the anti-imperialist struggle would weaken feudalism, which was essential for the freedom of the peasantry from exploitation. At this juncture, during the Non-Cooperation Movement, an incident happened at Chauri Chaura in Uttar Pradesh. The barbaric oppression of British imperialism had become unendurable. This caused immense hatred against them and

provoked the people to become violent. They raided the police station at Chauri Chaura. This incident enraged Gandhi, who feared the movement may go out of control and he abruptly withdrew it. The peasantry, however, could not accept this decision easily; just when they expected more militant struggles by the Indian National Congress, they suddenly found them in retreat. Encouraged by the idea of freedom from exploitation, the peasantry was quickly developing an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal consciousness leading them to join such struggles in growing numbers. They were participating in the freedom struggle more and more spontaneously in different states and were building the necessary organisations for furthering the struggle at local and state levels. The movement was fast spreading in Punjab, Malabar, Andhra, Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, though better coordination and greater contact among those in different places had not yet developed.

A good number of movements were organised in Uttar Pradesh against many new steps taken by the British government since their rule had only strengthened and intensified *zamindari* exploitation. The peasantry did not want a system that empowered intermediaries to exploit them. They had no objection to paying their taxes to the government directly but the oppression of the employees of the *talukdars* and *zamindars* made them angry.

During that period, in 1925, the Labour Swaraj Party – itself a part of the Indian National Congress – raised the problems of the peasantry regarding taxes/rent, eviction of tenants, digging of wells, fishing rights, excessive rates of interest by moneylenders etc. at their conference. They discussed ways to solve those problems and decided to organise struggles on these issues. In 1926, the All Bengal Krishak Congress decided on a joint worker-peasant movement in the state.

Growing peasant unrest and the formation of Kisan organisations at the local level now came to influence the Indian National Congress as well. Many of these local leaders of the peasantry emerged as leaders within the Congress and started raising the issues of the peasantry within the party. Many of those issues now found a place in various resolutions of the Congress. However, these developments were contested from the beginning. The bourgeois and right wing leaders of the Congress did not like the emergence of peasants as a separate power centre within the party. While they did not object to a few resolutions

addressing the problems of the peasants, they were against a separate organisation of the peasantry. The left-wing sections inside the Congress, and especially the communists, forcefully raised the issues of the farmers in AICC meetings and consistently demanded a separate peasant organisation. The Karachi session of the AICC, for example, mentioned the issue of waiving taxes and rent for the peasantry but vehemently objected to the proposal of abolition of landlordism since right wing Congress leaders were closely related to landlords and were not ready to speak out against the feudal exploitation of the peasantry.

II. Conferences

Perspective of Formation of an All India Kisan Organisation

The world economic depression of 1929 engulfed the whole capitalist world and the lives of the people were plunged into crisis. The colonial Indian economy was badly hit and those engaged in agriculture, especially poor peasants and agricultural workers, were the main victims. The exploitation by imperialist, capitalist and feudal forces intensified as they shifted their burden on to the common people. Given the situation, left-oriented leaders, mainly the communists, inside the Congress felt the immediate need for forming a separate peasant organisation to face this challenge. In that process, the socialists and communists inside the Congress came together during the national conference of the Congress Socialist Party at Meerut. A meeting of like minded leaders was held on 16 January 1936 at Meerut under the chairmanship of Comrade Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay and it was decided that a separate peasant organisation should be built based on a wide programme. The meeting elected Comrade N.G. Ranga and Jayaprakash Narayan as joint convenors of a preparatory committee for an All India Kisan Congress, which was to be formed soon. This created great enthusiasm among the peasant activists all over the country. As many of the Kisan leaders were members of the AICC, they decided to hold the Kisan conference along with the Lucknow AICC meeting in 1936. Accordingly, the representatives of Kisan organisations from different states gathered at Lucknow and convened a separate conference of farmers on 11 April 1936. A galaxy of leaders was present in the conference. The names included Comrades E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Dinkar Mehta, Kamal Sarkar, Sohan Singh Josh, Lal Bahadur Shastri, K.D. Malviya, Mohan Lal Gautam, B. Sampurnananda, Jayaprakash Narayan, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Nabakishore Choudhury, Hare Krishna Mahtab, N.G. Ranga, Indulal Yagnik, K.Khadilkar, Bishnuram Medhi, Sarat Sinha, K.M. Ashraf,

Ahmad Din, Sudhin Pramanik, R.M. Lohia and many others. All of them were famous Congress leaders of their respective states.

Conferences of the All India Kisan Sabha

All India Kisan Congress Formed

All India Kisan Congress at a Glance	
When	11 April 1936
Where	Lucknow
Office bearers elected	
President	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati
General Secretary	Prof N.G. Ranga

In this first conference, the All India Kisan Congress was formed. The conference unanimously elected Swami Sahajanand Saraswati as its first President and Prof. N.G. Ranga as its first General Secretary. All India Kisan Congress was formally constituted as the primary representative of the peasantry in India. It was named All India Kisan Congress in the beginning. Some called it the All India Kisan Sangh as well. At a later stage, the name was changed to Kisan Sabha. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as the AICC President attended the founding meeting and congratulated the new organisation of the peasantry. He said that the peasants of India are the worst exploited section of society. The main problem as he saw it was who would be the real owner of the land and what would be the position of the ordinary peasant in that land relation. He declared full solidarity and extended full support of the INC to the growing Kisan movement. Swami Sahajanand made a severe criticism of Indian land relations and opposed the existing land revenue system. He declared that there was no question of compromise with the landlords. According to him, the only way to solve land related problems was the abolition of the rights of the landlord on the land. He exhorted the peasantry of the country to build strong movements for their rights on land and expected full support from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel to the struggles of the peasants. Though

Pandit Nehru had extended support to the movement and expressed his anxiety regarding the problems of the peasantry, later on, he was not wholeheartedly in favour of a separate organisation of the farmers. The attitude of Sardar Patel towards the Kisan movement was negative from the very beginning. The rightist Congress leaders were alarmed at the growing consciousness of the peasantry and their involvement in the struggles. In October 1936, Prof. N.G. Ranga requested Sardar Patel to preside over the Kisan session. Mocking the Kisan Sabha, Sardar Patel said that 'Ranga Madras' did not know anything about the peasantry and wondered how he could give leadership to them. Swami Sahajanand gave a very sharp reply to Patel. Criticising him, he wrote that Patel had betrayed the peasants of the country and that he was totally ignorant about the movement and the real strength of peasantry in the country.

In the founding conference itself, the aims and objectives of the Kisan Sabha were clearly declared in the resolution.

“The objective of the Kisan movement is to secure complete freedom from economic exploitation and achievement of full economic and political power for the peasants and workers and all other exploited classes. The main task of the Kisan Sabha, therefore, would be to fight for the realisation of the immediate demands of the peasantry – political and economic.”

The resolution also declared that the *zamindari* system established and patronised by the British imperialists was 'discriminatory, unjust, burdensome and oppressive' and that all exploitative landlordism should be abolished and the rights on land bestowed upon those who cultivated and tilled it. The conference elected the All India Kisan Committee (AIKC) and working committee, and the Central Kisan Council (CKC), and office bearers of the All India Kisan Sabha.

The gist of the Kisan manifesto is as follows:

The objective of the Kisan movement is to secure complete freedom from economic exploitation and achievement of full economic and political power for the peasants and workers and all other exploited classes.

The main task of AIKS shall be organising and fighting for the immediate political demands of the farmers in order to prepare them for their emancipation from every form of

exploitation.

AIKS stands for achieving the objectives mentioned above through participation in the national struggle for complete independence. 80% of the peasantry lives in extreme poverty and misery. Nobody can ignore their needs in any national programme... Any such programme should include the interests of the bankrupt and much exploited *ryots*, tenants and agricultural labourers... The Indian National Congress must look for solutions to the problems of the peasantry, the chief plank of its political and economic policy...

... The peasants are oppressed by *zamindars*, *talukdars*, *malguzars*, *inamdars* and other landlords. They face harsh systems of land revenue. Agricultural labourers get starvation wages and live in slavery... they are deprived of any legislative benefits – and political movements are unconcerned about their plight...

The AICC Lucknow session resolved that all these problems are ‘fundamentally due to [an] inadequate and repressive land tenure and revenue system’. So it must be abolished... It is not possible under the present government... so the political movement should draw its strength and inspiration from the peasantry.

Kisan Sabha means unity of the peasants. It not only organises them to stand on their feet against extortion and exploitation but also advances them towards the goal of political freedom... Kisan Sabha is the expression of the growing consciousness of the peasantry in the country... Kisan Sabha not only represents *ryot* tenants and landless labourers but, in some places, petty *zamindars* as well. In other words, it represents, speaks and fights for those who live by cultivation of soil. All these different strata among kisans will have to come together and fight for the removal of all the fetters imposed by British imperialism and its allies, the landlords. To this end, we formulated the fundamental and minimum charter of demands. The fundamental demands were:

- a. All types of *zamindari* to be abolished and rights of the land to be vested in the cultivators. Kisans may pay taxes like *rayatary ryots*.
- b. All existing land revenue and resettlements be abolished and replaced by graded land tax upon net incomes above Rs 500.

- c. Peasants to be free of liabilities of their old loans or their interest burden and proper agricultural credits should be given to peasants for their current needs.
- d. The landless to be given land to cultivate on the basis of cooperative farming and all unoccupied and vested land to be granted to the landless kisans.

The minimum demands were:

1. Cancellation of all land rent and revenue.
2. Abolition of revenue on economic holdings.
3. For the tenants, proprietary *ryots*, suitable tenant registration to be passed.
4. Reduction by at least 50% of rent and revenue and water rates.
5. Immediate right of permanent cultivation without the possibility of alienation by landlords to all tenants and actual cultivators of land.
6. Grant right of remission of rent to all tenants of landlords during crop failure.
7. Imposition of income tax, death duty and inheritance tax upon all agricultural incomes of landlords and merchants.
8. Abolition of all customary dues and forced labour, including '*begaar*' and illegal exactions.
9. Five-year moratorium on all agricultural indebtedness.
10. Assessment of assets and liabilities of peasants for repayment of loans and interest.
11. No arrest and jail for inability to pay debt, rent and revenue.
12. No attachment of minimum holdings, houses, household necessities, dairy and cattle in execution of civil decrees.
13. Private moneylenders' rate of interest should not exceed 6%.
14. All moneylenders should be licensed.
15. Credit cooperatives and land mortgage credit should not charge more than 5% interest for advances.
16. Lowering of rates of freight for agricultural commodities by railways, road and water transport.
17. Abolition of indirect taxes on salt, kerosene, sugar, tobacco and molasses.
18. Introduction of one pice post cards.
19. Prohibition on dumping of food products.

20. Stabilisation of prices of agricultural products.
21. Rights on forest products to be protected, growing fees abolished.
22. Community lands to be administered by village panchayats.
23. Peasant Unions Act to be enacted as a fundamental right.
24. Minimum wages to be assured and workman's compensation should be extended to agricultural workers.
25. Imposition of 75% tax on richer sections to reduce tax burden on the common people expenditure of 75% of tax on welfare of workers and peasants.
26. Fixing of a compulsory price for sugarcane; benefit of Sugar Protection Act should extend to peasants; and protection for jute and coconut cultivators.
27. Develop cooperative state market to prevent exploitation of peasants by middlemen.
28. Develop irrigation and drainage facilities for peasants. Insure peasants against famine and calamities.
29. Supply cheap and tested seeds and useful fertilisers; popularise latest methods of cultivation etc. in cooperation with AIKS.
30. Provide cattle, fire and health insurance.
31. Establish village panchayats for rural administration.
32. Empower Kisan organisations to bring to book corrupt officials.
33. Pass Agricultural Insolvency Act.
34. Adult franchise and functional representation in legislature.
35. Repeal all anti-peasant, anti-labour and anti-national laws, ordinances and regulations under British Raj and release all Kisan and political prisoners.
36. Restore land of all the peasants deprived of land due to their joining the movements for rights and freedom.
37. Immediate implementation of free and compulsory education for girls and boys; medical and sanitary aid and provision for drinking water and national housing policy.
38. Grant the right to all peasants to carry arms.

All these 38 immediate demands were adopted by the AIKS in its first conference. This manifesto was very exhaustive and all the issues faced by peasants were meticulously identified and codified in the document. Unfortunately, most of the policy decisions were not implemented and many of those demands are still unfulfilled after seven

decades of freedom. It is the task of the present incumbents to build up a strong movement for the realisation of all those demands.

Advancement of the Organisation

In the month of August 1936, the CKC met and consolidated all the decisions and resolutions adopted by the first conference. Then the declaration of the AIKS conference was published (the gist has been given above). The meeting constituted a sub-committee for drafting the new constitution of the AIKS. The meeting also decided to start a bulletin. This declaration of AIKS influenced the AICC sub-committee on agriculture greatly and that was adopted in Faizpur session of AIKS in December 1936 and included even in the election manifesto. The CKC in its meeting decided to observe the 1st of September as 'Peasants' Day' and appealed to all kisans to observe the day all over the country.

Second Faizpur Conference

2nd AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	December 25-26 1936
Where	Faizpur, Maharashtra
Office bearers elected	
President	Prof N.G. Ranga
General Secretary	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati

Along with the AICC session in Faizpur, Maharashtra, the second conference of AIKS was also convened on December 25-26, 1936 in the *pandal* of the Subjects Committee of the Indian National Congress. Prof. N.G. Ranga was elected the new President. The Reception Committee Chairman V.M. Bhuskute led a 500-strong Kisan march from Mumbai, covering 200 miles, and reached Tilaknagar, Faizpur on December 25. He was received by all the delegates and leaders. In his welcome address he said, 'With the working class fighting in the vanguard and with the innumerable peasants marching shoulder to shoulder with them... the mighty united front will be forged in the course of our uncompromising struggle, carrying forward the banner

of agrarian awakening and complete national independence.’

In his presidential speech Prof. Ranga declared, ‘We are organising ourselves in order to prepare ourselves for the final inauguration of a socialist state and society... and such a society cannot be ushered in until and unless all those institutions and interests which are exploiting the masses today in every possible manner are abolished.’

In this conference, the President expressed solidarity with the working class of Spain and supported their struggle against fascism. The conference rejected the new constitution proposed by the British government (1935) to maintain and strengthen its political domination by allying itself with the most reactionary indigenous forces of feudalism and decaying capitalism with a view to deepening its exploitative grip and oppressive power over the toiling masses of India. In two successive council meetings in 1937, many important decisions were taken. In the AIKS meeting in July in Neyamatpur (Gaya), the name of the organisation was finally officially changed to ‘All India Kisan Sabha’ from ‘All India Kisan Congress’. In the session, a controversy arose over the red flag as, in some states, the AIKS was already using the red flag. However, the meeting could not reach a consensus on the issue of the flag. The next meeting of CKC at Kolkata in October 1937 decided that the red flag with a hammer and sickle would be the official flag of AIKS. The committee adopted a good number of resolutions; one among them was criticising the Congress ministries - in 1937 election, the Congress had formed governments in 7 out of 11 provinces. The resolution also declared that the AIKS ‘deeply deplores and expresses its strong dissatisfaction with the piecemeal, superficial and perfunctory manner in which the Congress ministries have dealt with only some of the problems affecting the kisans.’

In another resolution, the committee condemned ‘the repressive policy of the Punjab, Bihar, Bengal, UP, Bombay and Madras ministries displayed so shamelessly in their arresting a large number of kisans and Kisan comrades, banning Kisan conferences, promulgating Section 144 and confining a large number of kisans within their villages...’

This second conference noted the growth of Kisan Sabha activities in spite of repression in different parts of the country.

The AIKS gave a call to the peasantry to observe May Day. It was a politically significant event as, for the first time, May Day was being

celebrated by the Kisan Sabha (in 1938) on an all-India scale. The resolution said, ‘We therefore appeal to the Kisan Sabha all over India to observe May Day and thus demonstrate our peasants’ allegiance to India’s revolutionary struggle and their determination to achieve Kisan-mazdoor raj.’

Third Comilla Conference

3rd AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	11-14 May 1938
Where	Comilla (now in Bangla Desh)
Office bearers elected	
President	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati
General Secretary	Prof. N.G. Ranga

To continue the expansion and growth of the Kisan movement, the AIKS organised its third conference at Comilla (now in Bangladesh) on May 11-14, 1938. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was again elected as the President of AIKS. Advocate Kamini Kumar Datta, the reception committee Chairman, welcomed all the delegates. The conference noted with satisfaction the expansion of AIKS in new areas. The delegates came from different provinces after being elected in their respective states, representing more than 5 lakh members. The importance of this conference was that it resolved the issue of agricultural workers. The conference also resolved the debate on the red flag and the tri-colour flag. It was decided that the red flag would be the official flag of AIKS, but the tri-colour was the national flag and it would be respected by the AIKS. Besides, the conference discussed the Constitution Sub-Committee report and with necessary amendments, the constitution was adopted by the delegates. The conference noted with satisfaction the growing militant Kisan movement in different provinces of India and condemned the violent attacks by the police and landlords’ goondas against the peasantry at different places. The conference also expressed solidarity and support for the growing movements of the working class in different provinces and called for building worker-peasant unity.

In his General Secretary’s report, Saraswati said that in the Faizpur

AICC resolution the Congress had promised drastic reduction in rent, debt and revenue. However, the Congress ministries had failed to honour these promises to the peasantry. As far as the demands of the kisans were concerned, most of them were not implemented. The conference noted the growing rift between the right-wing Congress leaders and ministries and the AIKS. The conference decided to build up a strong and militant mass organisation in all provinces. It noted the increased ideological tension between the exploited classes and right-wing exploiters. The ministries were more interested in protecting the interests of the exploiting class. The AIKS resolved to intensify the struggle against feudal and semi-feudal exploitation. After he was elected President, Swami Sahajanand made several important comments in his presidential address as well. He said, 'The surging tide or awakening among the peasant movement has been gaining strength. It is no longer easy for anyone to check this surging tide or awakening among the kisans.'

He also said, 'The small peasants are the backbone of the Kisan Sabha. The khet mazdoors are after all landless kisans. Those who had land yesterday have none today. And those who have land today might lose it tomorrow and thus while they possess land they are kisans and when they are deprived of it we call them khet mazdoor'. So he warned against any attempt to divide them. He opined that the Kisan Sabha believes that 'a revolution is accomplished and sustained only by the lowest classes of society'.

He also warned the Congress for their anti-peasant attitude and said, "I deem it my duty to warn the leaders of the Congress that if they continue their present attitude of indifference to what is happening every day in the country (i.e., continuous exploitation of kisans by the upper classes), then the reaction by the kisans will be disastrous for the Congress. I am afraid the kisans are fast losing their confidence in and respect for Congress. That is a danger signal which the Congress leaders should do well to note before it is too late.' He also spoke about the issue of the flag. He said, 'Where as the tri-colour is a symbol of nationalism, the red flag is that of international solidarity and aspiration of the exploited and oppressed. In this age of internationalism when the fight of the kisans and mazdoors has assumed an international character and when they cannot achieve their end without international solidarity, such a symbol is indispensable.'

The conference adopted 32 important resolutions. These included resolutions on the agrarian revolution, on the financial and taxation policy, on mass struggle and repression, on solidarity with the working class, on the demand for a constituent assembly, on working against fascism and war, etc.

The conference elected Prof.N.G. Ranga as the General Secretary along with the new AIKS CKC and office bearers.

The new constitution codified the aims and objectives of the AIKS. It also decided on the structure of the organisation.

Membership was open for all kisans. Any person of 18 years of age and who accepted the objectives of the organisation could, on applying in the prescribed form and on payment of one anna (6 paise) per annum could become a primary member.

Thus, the Comilla conference was important on many counts in the developing history of the Kisan Sabha. The conference was followed by a big Kisan rally, which was attended by 25,000 peasants and common people. Despite attempts by right-wing Congress and Muslim League members to thwart it, it was completed successfully and with great enthusiasm.

Fourth Gaya Conference -

Growing Class Struggle in Agrarian India

4th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	Gaya
Where	9-10 April 1939
Office bearers elected	
President	Acharya Narendra Dev
General Secretary	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati

As we noted, many strong militant Kisan movements took place in the last few years: in Bengal on *khas* land and tax reduction; in Bihar, there was the Bakshat Satyagraha and the struggle against the dilution of the Bihar Tenancy Bill, which drew one lakh people at a rally in Patna; in Punjab, 40,000 tenants struggled in Nilibar for a 50%

share of their crop; in the North West province, against elections; in the Central province, there was a big assembly march for the abolition of the *malguzari* system, and a rally in Surama valley as part of the no-rent campaign; in Orissa, against the *bethi* (*begaar* or forced labour) system, etc. With all their experience, AIKS proceeded for its 4th all-India conference at Gaya in Bihar on April 9-10, 1939. Acharya Narendra Dev was elected President.

Before this conference, the previous AIKS President, Swami Sahajanand, appealed to the peasantry to strengthen the Kisan Sabha so that the AIKS conference could be conducted properly. In this conference, in the political resolution, many important issues were raised. The issues of the establishment of an independent democratic republic in India after defeating the British imperialists, the importance of worker-peasant unity and the need to establish worker-peasant raj, the coming danger of a world war, etc. were discussed by the delegates who shared valuable opinions. They also discussed the need of raising the political consciousness of the peasantry.

The red flag was hoisted by Comrade Bukhari. Messages from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose were read out. Huge public meetings were held on both evenings. One lakh peasants gathered on the first day and the number increased to one-and-a-half lakh on the second day when the session continued up to 2.00 a.m. in the night.

After the adoption of the political resolution, the gist of which has been mentioned above, the conference resolved on some important tasks for the future:

- a. Popularisation of the necessity of the coming nationwide struggles
- b. Intensification and integration of the partial struggles of the peasants
- c. Establishment of a united front of the Congress and AIKS, the AITUC and other anti-imperialist organisations
- d. Insisting on the acceptance and implementation by provincial governments of the immediate demands of the Kisan Sabha and implementation of the election manifesto by Congress ministries
- e. Liquidation of communal disruption through the common struggles of the masses for their economic and political demands

and by fighting for scrupulous observance of minority rights

- f. Organisation of a strong Kisan volunteer corps
- g. Solidarity demonstration for and active help to people's struggles in the states.

This programme showed the maturity of the Indian Kisan movement for taking unequivocal political position in changing the Indian situation. The conference adopted some important resolutions on the abolition of *zamindari*, on indebtedness and moratorium, on the immediate demands, on responsible government in states, and on agricultural labour. Regarding agricultural labour, the AIKS demanded:

- a. Complete cancellation of their debts
- b. Reservation of all unoccupied but cultivable land for cooperative cultivation by agricultural labour
- c. Establishment of agricultural wage boards consisting of representatives of peasants and agricultural workers to fix minimum wages and other conditions of work
- d. Extension of the Workmen's Compensation Act to them
- e. A national policy on housing and protected drinking water supply for them
- f. Penalisation of every kind of illegal exaction, feudal serfdom, and forced labour
- g. Repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act and those provisions of the IPC, which were frequently and arbitrarily invoked against them by the police.

In the end, the conference elected the new AIKC and Acharya Narendra Dev as the new President. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was elected General Secretary. Also elected were the office bearers and the CKC. According to Abdullah Rasul, 'The Gaya session was one of the most successful conferences of AIKS. It gave a clear cut direction to the political thinking of the Sabha and its leadership and indicated a leftist line with an unmistakable slant towards socialist ideas.' (Abdullah Rasul)

Fifth Palasa Conference -

Decides to Fight Back Intensification of Attacks on AIKS

5th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	26-27 March 1940
Where	Palasa, Vishakhapatnam
Office bearers elected	
President	Rahul Sankrityayana
General Secretary	Indulal Yagnik

A large number of AIKS leaders were detained under the Defence of India Act by the colonial government after the breaking out of the Second World War in September 1939, along with many leaders of the democratic movement all over India. Many Kisan leaders went underground to avoid arrest and continued their organisational activities. In this situation, the 5th conference of AIKS was held in Palasa, Vishakhapatnam district, in Andhra Pradesh on March 26-27, 1940. The political situation in the country was tense and difficult for AIKS. Acts of sabotage were attempted by the ruling authority to disturb the conference. Despite all this, the conference was finally held successfully. Rahul Sankrityayana, the famous scholar, was elected President before it started but he was arrested and put in jail on the eve of the conference. In his absence, his presidential speech was read out before the delegates. In place of Sankrityayana, Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna presided over the conference. He was a much respected leader and founder of the Ghadar Party in USA. After coming to India, he was arrested. Later, he joined the Kisan Sabha in Punjab. Shyam Sundar Rao, Chairman of the reception committee welcomed the delegates.

In his illuminating presidential address, he summarised the agrarian problems, types of land ownership, pressure of population on land, over-taxation, the burden of landlordism, rural indebtedness, marketing problems, issues of landless labourers, backward techniques of production and peasant revolt. He spoke about the British government's attempts to increase productivity without changing land relations. The colonial rulers wanted to allow the feudal

landlords' exploitation of the peasantry. He also explained how exploitation by landlords and moneylenders in the country was carried out. 'I submit with all my command that the socialist reorganisation of agriculture will alone solve the agrarian problem of our country... The broad masses of the workers and peasants must play a decisive role in the Indian national movement. The struggle for independence centres primarily on the agrarian problem for a free India... The peasantry with the proletariat as its head can be considered the principal force of the struggle for independence... In the present epoch, the task of the bourgeois-democratic revolution will have to be carried out by the united force of the peasantry and the working class.'

Due to various difficulties, attendance at the Palasa conference was rather poor. The membership of the AIKS was reduced to 2,25,000. Around 100 delegates only could attend the conference from 12 to 13 provinces. This was mainly due to police repression.

The conference elected the new AIKC, CKC and office bearers. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was elected General Secretary. Not long after the conference, the Baba and Swami were also arrested under the DI Act. Comrade Indulal Yagnik succeeded Swami Sahajanand as General Secretary by nomination. Sometime later, he was also detained and he nominated Abdullah Rasul to function as General Secretary. Comrade Rasul managed to call a CKC meeting at Kolkata and took some decisions regarding the functioning of the organisation in those difficult times. He also soon faced a detention order but managed to avoid arrest, functioning in a semi-underground manner, though it must be noted that organisational work did suffer for a while. An AIKC meeting was held at Palasa in Andhra Pradesh but Comrade Rasul could not go there since he was underground. He sent his resignation from General Secretary's post. In October 1941, Comrade Gopal Halder was elected the new General Secretary. After Comrade Bhakna's arrest, Comrade Gautam was elected as the President. He too was arrested following which Comrade Bharati Debi was elected President. (She also happened to be N.G. Ranga's wife.) Meanwhile, Subhas Chandra Bose and Swami Sahajanand were expelled from the Congress. The frequent change of leadership, given so many arrests, had its impact on the organisation. The activities of AIKS became irregular and progress was slow for some time as a large number of central and state leaders were in jail for a long period.

In the meantime, the fascist Hitler invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941. The nature of the World War changed from an imperialist war to a people's war to defeat fascism. The USA, the USSR and Great Britain – all joined hands against fascism. Hitler (Germany), Mussolini (Italy), Franco (France) and Tojo (Japan) were called the Axis powers. The AIKS changed its earlier opinion on the war and, in solidarity with the Soviet Union and to mobilise support for it, observed 'Soviet Day'.

In this changed situation, the attacks of the British policies on democratic forces were restrained to some extent. A large number of leaders, including AIKS leaders, were released from jail, and many warrants were withdrawn. The ban on the Communist Party was lifted on 22 July 1942 after 8 years of illegality. The normal functioning of mass organisations was thus restored.

After two years of disarray and dysfunctional leadership, the leadership and committees elected in Palasa conference were gradually rehabilitated.

Sixth Bihta Conference -

Towards Resurgence of AIKS

6th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	29-31 May 1942
Where	Bihta, Bihar
Office bearers elected	
President	Indulal Yagnik
General Secretary	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati

The situation gradually became easy and conducive to normal functioning and the leaders came out of detention. In the AIKC meeting in Nagpur, the decision to hold the next conference was taken. The council in a resolution elaborated its outlook on war. It said that all the progressive forces should unite and fight relentlessly to defeat fascism decisively... People's war that was being successfully waged by the Soviet Union.

The sixth conference was held at Bihta, Bihar from May 29-31, 1942. Indulal Yagnik was elected as the new President. The delegates represented a depleted membership due to irregular work of the Sabha and weakness of organisation. Yagnik hoisted the red flag of the Sabha and the Congress tri-colour was unfurled by Bankim Mukherjee. The Chairman of the reception committee Yadunandan Sharma delivered his welcome address and said that the kisans, who had fought against landlords so long for land, would not now yield an inch of land to the Japanese invaders. Yagnik in his presidential address explained the change in the character of the war and a new road to India's freedom. He laid emphasis on the task of the kisans to grow more food, defend their country and resist the Japanese with their lives. To enable them to do that job, the government should relieve them of their debt, give them land and jobs, remit their dues and give them arms. The delegates discussed the Second World War and adopted the new understanding of the change in the character of the war after Hitler attacked the Soviet Union.

During this period, the political conflict regarding independence between the Congress and the League intensified. The Cripps Mission (led by Stafford Cripps) came to India to mediate between them and resolve the conflict. But, his efforts failed. The communal situation in the country deteriorated seriously. The AIKS called for Hindu-Muslim unity. Also, at that juncture, N.G. Ranga quit Kisan Sabha.

During this period, British imperialism was weaker and the Congress pressed for immediate transfer of power. The Congress gave a call for 'Quit India' to the British government on August 9, 1942. The government resorted to brutal repression to put down the movement by shooting and killing in various parts of the country, besides large-scale arrests and detentions and imposition of collective fines, etc. This conflict definitely weakened war efforts. At this time, demands for the release of Congress leaders and unity among the Congress and the League came to the fore. AIKS also joined these demands. 'However, Kisan Sabha did not subscribe to the August struggle programme of the Congress.' The conference at the end elected the new AIKC, CKC and other office bearers. Swami Sahajanand was re-elected General Secretary.

Seventh Conference -

Resist Japanese Imperialism

7th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	2-4 April 1943
Where	Bhakna Kalan, Amritsar
Office bearers elected	
President	Bankim Mukherjee
General Secretary	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati

The war was continuing in India. The fascist forces of Tojo were advancing fast towards the eastern borders of India. The Japanese imperialists soon captured Burma and were proceeding towards India through Manipur. Japanese bombing shattered the towns of Coconda, Vizagapatnam and Calcutta. It continued for months together and killed a large number of civilians. The Kisan Sabha organised a campaign against the Japanese and raised volunteers for resistance and self-defence. The corrupt bureaucratic colonial government proved to be ineffective in protecting the interests of the masses. The citizens' lives were shattered and panicky; massive price rise and scarcity of commodities caused tremendous difficulty for the urban and rural people, mostly peasantry. Along with that, there was massive destruction of property and agriculture due to cyclones, which left two districts of West Bengal in disarray. In all, 14,500 people and 1,90,000 cattle perished. The Bengal provincial Kisan Sabha organised massive rescue and relief work for the victims. The direct and indirect impact of the war affected people's lives and India's economy. Thus, the main task of the AIKS was anti-war resistance and rehabilitation of the victims. In this context, the 7th All India Conference of AIKS was organised at Bhakna Kalan in Amritsar district of Punjab, the home village of Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna on April 2-4, 1943.

Comrade Bankim Mukherjee was elected President. The conference was attended by 231 delegates from 14 states, representing 2,85,500 members. This showed some improvement in organisation and activities after the earlier organisational collapse. Comrade Indulal

Yagnik, the outgoing President, appeared frustrated in the conference. Later, he tendered his resignation from the Kisan Sabha. He was persuaded but to no effect as he complained of communist domination in the Sabha.

In a resolution, the conference countered that argument saying that communists as well as non-communist liberals had been working with the Kisan Sabha for long with amicable relations and mutual respect. One of the major incidents during this conference was the martyrdom of four Sabha members at Kayyur. On the eve of the session, tragic news was received about the four Kayyur heroes who had been hanged at Cannanore jail in Kerala on March 28, 1943. They were the first martyrs of the Kisan Sabha in the country. The infamous special police of Malabar had misbehaved with a peasant woman in Kayyur and she was killed. A massive protest against the killing became violent and a police constable was killed. The killers of the police could not be identified but they arrested four Kisan Sabha activists – among them being Appoo Nair, Abu Bakr and Chirooka Nandan, The sessions judge in the trial, without any evidence against them, awarded capital punishment. There was massive anger among the kisans and they protested against this governmental killing all over the country. AIKS organised relief for the families of the martyrs. The conference paid profound respect and homage to the heroes.

During that period, there was severe drought and famine in the country and an unprecedented food crisis. Earlier, Bengal had to endure its worst ever famine in which lakhs of people died. Therefore, the AIKS demanded a solution to the food crisis and decided to build massive struggles in this regard. The conference adopted many important resolutions. One was a greeting to the Soviet Red Army for their heroic fight against fascism, seeking the opening of a second front to finish Hitler's forces. A political resolution was discussed and adopted. The highlight of the resolution was the condemnation of the massive arrests of national leaders including Gandhi and indiscriminate repression. It condemned the way the political crisis had created conditions of insecurity and uncertainty amongst common people, caused dislocation of people, disruption of economic activities and livelihoods and created a food crisis, affecting the vast rural population. The resolution reiterated the AIKS demand for Hindu-Muslim unity and national government. It also professed disappoint that while Gandhi

was ready to find a solution and had reopened his correspondence from jail, the British government turned down the offer for an honourable settlement. The resolution noted that the British government was fast losing the support of every section of people and demanded a break in the deadlock. It also demanded the release of Gandhi and others and decided to organise a campaign over it along with a campaign for Hindu-Muslim unity.

The conference also adopted a resolution on tenancy laws and against repression. At the end, the new AIKC and CKC were elected. The new office bearers were also elected. Comrade Bankim Mukherjee was elected President and Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, the General Secretary.

‘The Bhakna Conference of AIKS may be considered, in a way, a revival session for the AIKS after three years of repression and disarray. The long repression steeled the Kisan activists, raised their consciousness and increased their determination to recover from the difficulties and emerge stronger. The result was speedier growth of the Sabha and consolidation of its organisation.’ (Abdullah Rasul)

Eighth Vijaywada Conference -

AIKS Emerges Stronger at Vijayawada

8th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	14-15 March 1944
Where	Vijaywada
Office bearers elected	
President	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati
General Secretary	Bankim Mukherjee

As the AIKC activities were increasing in different parts of the country there was organisational growth, too. The membership increased considerably and even doubled after the last conference reaching 5,53,427. Though this was inadequate to meet the worsening food situation, the ‘grow more food’ campaign, against the backdrop of famine, had spread successfully in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Orissa

and Bihar. On this positive note, the AIKS met for its 8th conference at Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh on March 14-15, 1944. It was attended by 297 delegates from 15 provinces and 100 observers from 11 provinces. Pandit Rahul Sankrityayana attended the conference. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati was elected as President.

This conference was one of the grandest events in the recent past. It witnessed a huge and spectacular Presidential march in the city that was attended by 30,000 people, in which Comrade Bankim Mukherjee, the current President, hoisted the red flag. The Kisan rally was attended by more than 1,00,000 people including peasants. The Andhra provincial committee organised a massive campaign in 2,000 villages informing the people about the conference. A good political atmosphere was created in the whole state. A cattle show was organised to explore the famous cattle breed in the province. The magnificent cultural festival included performances of song and dance and an exhibition of folk arts of the provinces. The conference reviewed the serious situation of the devastating famine and the suffering of the people, and peasants in particular; about 35 lakh had people died. The conference passed a resolution on the demand for the release of all political prisoners and leaders of the Congress.

In another resolution on the loss of land by the kisans, the conference expressed its concern over the massive loss of land due to famine and destitution of the majority of the poor and small peasants and demanded the restoration of land to the landowners and agricultural labourers. The conference at the end elected a new AIKC, which elected its office bearers and 25 members of the CKC. Swami Sahajanand was already elected President. Comrade Bankim Mukherjee was elected General Secretary. After the conference, the AIKS headquarters were shifted from Bihar to Bombay in June 1944 and Comrade Abdullah Rasul took charge of the new office.

Later, the Bombay CKC meeting appealed for relief work and the entire organisation joined in this endeavour of the AIKS to collect food and find volunteers to help the famine affected people.

Ninth Netrokona Conference - AIKS as Mass Organisation Explained

9th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	5-9 April 1945
Where	Netrokona (now in Bangla Desh)
Office bearers elected	
President	Muzaffar Ahmad
General Secretary	Bankim Mukherjee

Maintaining expansion of the movement and organisation towards the strengthening of AIKS, the 9th conference took place in Netrokona of Mymensingh district of Bengal, now in Bangladesh, from 5 April to 9 April 1945, with more delegates and more members. 642 delegates representing 8,29,686 members from 16 provinces attended the conference along with 105 AIKC members and 68 visitors from outside Bengal. The initial decision was to hold the conference in Malabar but as the Madras government did not permit the same, the venue was changed to 'Kisan Nagar'. Very good and elaborate arrangements were made to make this conference successful. The IPTA performed cultural programmes, and attractive exhibitions of pictures and handicrafts were placed.

A huge presidential procession marched through the Netrokona town and more than one lakh people gathered to listen to the national leaders. It was addressed by the reception committee Chairman Comrade Mani Singh and Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad, who had just been elected President of AIKS.

The presidential address by Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad was very important in laying out the guidelines of the Kisan Sabha as a mass organisation. He said, "The Kisan stands for the country's freedom as much as any other class. The rights that the Kisan will secure on the morrow of the achievement of independence, only on the strength of those rights will the kisans be able to free themselves of the oppression that they have to suffer today and thereby will be able to bring about a complete change in the condition of life. The change in the condition of kisans will transform the face of the entire society since the kisans

form a large section of the society. The kisans will therefore not only fight for India's freedom but fight for it with their very blood. Therefore, they too will join hands with all the other fighters for the country's freedom." The Kisan Sabha was born out of the struggle against exploitation by the government, by landlords and by moneylenders. The 'permanent settlement' or the system of landlordism had made India industrially backward, hindered the development of agriculture and subjected the majority of the people to poverty and parasitism. The worker and the peasant alone had been able to fight against it and the strength of the Kisan Sabha had grown in the course of the fight.

There, Muzaffar Ahmad gave his historic speech to the communists on how to work in mass organisations. 'Never for a moment must you forget the difference between the Communist Party and the Kisan Sabha. Always bear in mind, the chances of friction and misunderstanding between the communist and non-communist inside the Kisan Sabha. Whether it is the Kisan Sabha or a trade union, to keep a mass organisation as a mass organisation is a very important task and is the responsibility of every Communist Party worker because mass organisations themselves form the strongest foundation of a Communist Party. The door of the Kisan Sabha has to be kept open for everyone no matter who he is, who accepts the programme of the Kisan Sabha and is prepared to work for it. Even if the commitment happens to be in the majority in a particular Kisan family, that body has to be run as a Kisan family and nothing more or less. Even where there are no non-communists, the communist worker must never make the mistake of identifying the Kisan Sabha with the party. Such a mistake will be harmful to both the Communist Party and the Kisan Sabha.'

He also sternly warned the Kisan Sabha to fight and eliminate black marketers without which society could not be rehabilitated after the famine. In conclusion, he said, "The Kisan is the majority, about 80% of the population. If you did not survive, society will not survive. For that, they need their own organisation – the Kisan Sabha. The Kisan Sabha will have to grow and become mightier than ever before. The Kisan Sabha shall struggle on and go forward in unity and comradeship of all."

The main slogan of the Kisan conference was "save the Kisan, save the country".

In the main resolution, the conference demanded the release of

all political prisoners so that united efforts could be made for the solution to the deadlock and for the formation of a provincial government of national unity at the centre and popular governments in the provinces. The Sabha called upon all its units to make a determined effort to draw more and more Congressmen and Leaguers and other patriots into the Kisan Sabha, and further strengthen the Sabha. As there was communal division growing in the country, the conference appealed against communal riots and for unity among Hindu and Muslim people. The conference at the end elected the new AIKC and CKC and office bearers. Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad was already elected as the President and now Comrade Bankim Mukherjee was elected as General Secretary and M.A.Rasul, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, P. Sundarayya and Bhag Singh were elected joint secretaries and Comrade S.V. Parulekar as the Treasurer.

In spite of several roadblocks such as war, the Japanese invasion, massive imprisonment of Congress leaders, quarrel and deadlock between the Congress and Muslim League, frequent communal riots, famine, starvation, epidemics, the Netrokona conference was one of the most successful conferences. A leading newspaper in Bombay, The Sentinel, wrote an editorial on it, 'The Kisan Sabha has freed to a great extent, the villages of the notorious parochial patriotism. It has also eradicated to a certain degree the communal distrust between the two major communities... There are innumerable instances in which Hindus and Muslims talked together in cordial comradeship on common problems despite provocative acts of the police and communalists... That is why the conference which was greeted by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was also hailed by Abul Hasem, the secretary of the Bengal provincial Muslim League.'

Tenth Aligarh Conference - A Series of Historical Struggles

10th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	22-26 May 1947
Where	Sikandra Rao, Aligarh
Office bearers elected	
President	Karyanand Sharma
General Secretary	Abdullah Rasul

After the Netrokona session, there were many changes in the situation. The Second World War was over and Hitler and fascism had been defeated decisively under the leadership of the USSR and the Red Army. The victory of the socialist Soviet Union created unprecedented enthusiasm among the working-class and strengthened anti-imperialist struggles all over the world. Finally, Japanese fascism was also defeated, thus bringing about the victory of democratic forces in Asia and it in turn, encouraged the Indian people as well. British imperialism was substantially weakened. The demands of the Indian people for freedom took a new turn. The revolt of the Indian Navy in 1946 brought the issue of independence to the forefront. The progressive movement in the country also attracted the reactionary forces. Many unprecedented events took place till Independence was achieved in 1947. The Kisan Sabha became more active and raised the demands of abolition of landlordism, land to the tiller, against eviction of tenants, more jobs and better wages, production of rent and taxes for stabilisation of prices, for improving production, adequate supply of food grains to the people, restoration of full civil liberties and, finally, national emancipation. In course of these activities, some of the most epoch-making struggles were organised by the kisans in different parts of the country. The most important among them was the Telangana struggle. The peasants of Andhra Pradesh, especially in the Telangana region of Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam had been long exploited by the Nizam's oppressive feudal rule. They revolted against the barbaric oppression, killing, and rape by the feudal *zamindars*, moneylenders, their goondas, and the Nizam's *razakar* force. The struggle began in October 1946 and continued till October 21, 1951. This historic armed struggle of the Telangana peasantry rattled the feudal and imperialist rulers. As per Comrade Sundarayya's description of the uprising, 'as many as 4,000 communist and peasant militants were killed; more than 10,000 communist cadres and people's fighters were thrown into detention camps and jails for a period of 3-4 years. No less than 50,000 people got dragged into police and military camps from time to time, beaten, tortured and terrorised for weeks and months together. Several lakhs of people in thousands of villages were subjected to police and military raids and suffered cruel lathi charge... The people lost property worth millions of rupees, which were either looted or destroyed. Thousands of women were molested and had to undergo all

sorts of humiliation and indignity. In a word, the entire region was subjected to brutal police and military terror rule for a full 5 years, initially by the Nizam and his *razakars*, armed lords, and subsequently by the combined armed forces of the Union Government and state government of Hyderabad. After the police action, a huge 50,000-strong armed force of the Union government of different categories was deployed to violently suppress the movement and restore the shattered landlord rule... During the course of the struggle of the peasantry, in about 3,000 villages, covering roughly a population of 30 lakhs in an area of about 1,600 square miles, [they] succeeded in setting up Gram Raj on the basis of fighting village panchayats.' From those areas the hated landlords were driven away, their lands were seized and distributed among the landless and poor. About 10 lakh acres of land was distributed. The evictions were stopped, the exorbitant rate of interest was cut, minimum wage was enforced, and oppression by forest officials of tribals was stopped. For 12-18 months, the administration was run by the peasant committees. A powerful militia was formed and 2,000 regular guerrillas were trained to fight against the *razakars*.

Lakhs of peasants for the first time in their lives could have two meals a day. In other words, this historic peasant rebellion shook the medieval autocratic regime of the Asaf Jahi dynasty to its roots, delivering a deathblow to it.

The next historic Kisan movement took place in Kerala, known as the Punnapra-Vayalar struggle in Alleppey district. The landlords attacked peasants, agricultural workers and coir workers. A girl was brutally raped and tortured. There was severe scarcity of food, rice, cloth, sugar, kerosene, massive unemployment and starvation. The people started a resistance movement. The government, landlords and coir industry owners jointly attacked the movement in October 1946. In the people's resistance, 1 police officer and 5 other policemen were killed. Police firing killed a hundred demonstrators at Punnapra. Within 24 hours of the clash, the *taluka* was handed over to the army. Massive beatings, torture and arrests began. The people set up a resistance camp at Vayalar on October 27, 1946. The police and army attacked it and there was continuous firing. Many hundreds of people were killed. This repression created huge indignation against the government and landlords in the whole state as well all over the country. AIKS condemned the barbaric massacre of peasants and agricultural workers

and campaigned against it throughout the country.

The third historic Kisan-tenant movement was organised in parts of Bengal in October 1946. The system of sharecropping was prevalent, in which share croppers (or *bargadars* or *adhiars*) took land from land owners called *jotdars* on lease and cultivated at their own cost and the crop was divided 50:50 between the sharecropper and the *jotdar*. The Bengal provincial Kisan Sabha raised the demand of dividing the crop in three equal shares with 2 shares to go to the sharecropper and one to the *jotdar*, the owner of the land. This movement was known as the Tebhaga movement. This enthused millions of *bargadars* and they joined the struggle within a very short period. They got support from *ryots* and agricultural workers. The massive struggle shook large parts of Bengal and the landlords and police unleashed attacks against the movement, but could not contain how fast it spread. This movement covered the entire period of harvesting from November 1946 to February 1947 in 15 of the 28 districts of Bengal. There was massive police repression, and landlords' goondas attacked the movement. *Jotdars* beat up and killed many sharecroppers. Many Hindu, Muslim, and tribal, men and women laid down their lives in the massive peasant struggle. In Khanpur village of Dinajpur district, people fought gloriously and 22 people were martyred.

The review of the movement identified certain weaknesses such as lack of adequate preparation, in training of volunteers for facing the police, not organising the working class support, not differentiating between big *jotdar* and the smaller ones, which led to all *jotdars* unitedly attacking the *bargadars*, and the neglect of the political aspect of the campaign. The demand and struggle for Bargadar Regulation Bill was not so strong. Thus, the movement was weakened in course of time. *Jotdars* led by Congress and Muslim League, backed by police and goondas, were let loose against the movement in the countryside. However, the kisans did not surrender and continued the struggle. There were setbacks in the movement but it roused the entire peasantry, especially the poorer sections; a large number of women also took part in it.

With these struggles of the peasantry, AIKS was fully occupied and the conference was delayed. With the experience of those historic struggles, AIKS met at its 10th conference at Sikandra Rao in Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh from May 22-26, 1947. The conference was

attended by 367 delegates, 80 AIKC members, 194 observers and 15 fraternal delegates. The delegation from the southern states was very few in the conference due to heavy police repression. Comrade Karyanand Sharma from Bihar was elected as the new President. He and the reception committee Chairman Z.A. Ahmad addressed the session.

The Second World War had just ended and post-war economic crisis was still prevalent and caused several difficulties in the lives of common people. There was deep division in national politics and the danger of partition of the country hung like the proverbial Damocles' sword. The entire peasantry was in deep crisis. Thus, the atmosphere was full of uncertainty.

On the other hand, the defeat of Hitler and fascism and the victory of Soviet Russia had brought a new hope in the minds of the people. The peasantry in different states were active in struggles for their several demands. Abolition of landlordism, regulation of moneylenders, stoppage of eviction of tenants, rights of the peasantry on land, redressal of unemployment and adequate wages, increase in production and food supply, etc. were the main concerns of the peasantry. The long heroic armed struggles of the Telangana peasantry, massive killings and arrests and detention, police repression, etc. created new problems for the Kisan movement in the country. They had to bear the burden of struggle and unprecedented oppression by the state in the Punnapra-Vayalar movement. The Tebhaga movement had created upheavals in Bengal. The conference, with all these successes and limitations of the struggle in mind, deliberated upon them to reach a correct conclusion. The conference was presided over by the President Comrade Karyanand Sharma. Comrade Z.A. Ahmed, the reception committee Chairman, greeted the delegates. The General Secretary's report recorded the organisational growth of the Kisan Sabha all over the country but at the same time, it pointed out its weaknesses. Many important decisions to reorganise and strengthen the organisation were taken in the conference. The issue of a separate agricultural workers union was discussed but no decision was taken. Many important resolutions were adopted such as that on the release of political prisoners including Sheikh Abdullah of Kashmir, on the land settlement problem in Assam, on abolition of landlordism, on food problems, on the political situation, and peasant struggles in the states, etc. Finally, the conference elected

the new AIKC and the CKC, and other office bearers. Comrade Abdullah Rasul was re-elected as the General Secretary.

Post-Conference Developments

After the conference, India was divided and two countries India and Pakistan came into existence. Full political independence was later proclaimed by both. India proclaimed full independence on August 15, 1947, and on January 26, 1950, the country became a republic. It witnessed a horrifying communal holocaust in Punjab and Bengal. Post-partition, the Kisan Sabha suffered badly in these provinces. While in India the problems were resolved to a great extent, in Pakistan, the problems increased.

The problems for the Kisan Sabha had not ended entirely. Post-independence, the new Congress government banned the Communist Party on March 26, 1948 and took several oppressive measures against its leaders and activists. All sorts of attacks came down heavily against anybody who had a relation with the illegal Communist Party. As many leaders and workers of Kisan Sabha were connected with the Communist Party, the Congress harassed Kisan Sabha and attacked their struggles and movement against landlordism. During such a difficult situation in 1948, the President and General Secretary, Comrades Karyanand Sharma and Abdullah Rasul were detained. Some other leading members, including Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad and Bankim Mukherjee, made special efforts to stabilise the functioning of the AIKS. The situation improved only in 1952 when the CKC met at Patna in June and all its leaders and members could attend it. This was a very important meeting after three years of being in turbulence, uncertainty and irregularity due to government attacks. The CKC discussed numerous important issues and took many important decisions to reorganise, to reactivate and to revitalise the organisation and the movement. It decided to call an AIKC meeting to take these decisions for implementation.

Eleventh Cannore Conference -

Not Bhoodan but Bhoomi Distribution to the Landless is the Solution

11th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	2-4 April 1953
Where	Cannore, Kerala
Office bearers elected	
President	Indulal Yagnik
General Secretary	N. Prasad Rao

After Independence, there were a series of disturbing events for the democratic movement, the Partition of the country, a series of communal riots, unprecedented government repression following the Telangana armed struggle, and the banning of the Communist Party. The historic Kisan struggles in Malabar, Bengal, UP, Tripura, etc. also kept the leadership of AIKS busy and engaged. Thus, it was not possible to hold a conference for six years. After such a long time, the 11th conference was held at Cannore in Kerala on April 2-4, 1953. After his long absence from AIKS activities, Comrade Indulal Yagnik returned and was elected President of the AIKS again after a decade and Comrade N. Prasad Rao was elected as the new General Secretary. This was the first conference of AIKS in the Malabar region. It had been planned earlier too, but the Madras government did not allow it. This conference created huge enthusiasm among the peasantry and democratic people of the region.

Meanwhile, the founder-leader of the Kisan Sabha Swami Sahajanand Saraswati passed away and the conference paid respectful homage to him and passed a resolution in his memory. They also passed a resolution in memory of the great leader of the socialist Soviet Union Comrade J.V. Stalin and remembered his contribution in building socialism in the most difficult situation, as well as playing the most important role in defeating fascism.

The conference condemned the death sentences against the Telangana peasant uprising heroes by the Hyderabad court and demanded cancellation of the sentences.

The conference discussed tenancy reforms and appealed to the tenants to build a resistance movement against eviction from land in all the states.

The conference discussed the issue of organisational reform and a constitutional amendment for that but no final decision was taken. The subsequent CKC and AIKC meetings after a few months finalised those issues. The restriction on the strength of CKC was removed and pending formal amendment, the number of AIKC-CKC and office bearers was increased. Later, the CKC started a nationwide campaign for the release of all convicted persons in Telangana who were in the Kisan movement. These included 36 people who got capital punishment and 100 who were awarded life sentence besides, a large number were given long-term jail. The CKC also discussed in detail the nature of the Bhoodan movement. This movement could not deliver goods to the landless people for a long time, but this was a stumbling block on the way to real land reform, which should be the abolition of landlordism without any compensation and distribution of those lands to the landless free of cost. This attempt was made mainly to weaken the class struggle of the peasantry, the landless and agricultural workers for land and to lead to reformist path. The most important contribution of the Cannore conference was the adoption of the 'statement of policy' of the All India Kisan Sabha. This conference was the first conference after Independence. After Independence and Partition, there were a series of issues and complex questions that emerged. There were many confusions and ideological contradictions regarding the social and political life of the people. The role of the Kisan Sabha after Independence also had to be determined with clarity as there were many differences. It was felt that the question of the relation of Kisan Sabha with the Congress and communists should be correctly defined. On all those issues, a comprehensive document was essential. After a lot of discussion, the policy document was finalised. The highlights of the documents are as follows:

The statement referred to the aims and objectives from the Lucknow resolution and mentioned how they attracted all patriots and political parties – Congress Socialist, Communist and others – to participate in the Kisan movement. Since then AIKS played an important role in building anti-landlord and anti-imperialist struggles in the country.

The document mentioned all the major peasant struggles of the last 17 years including the historic Telangana, Tebhaga, Tripura, Manipur, Worli, Pepsu, Malabar, Bakshat movements and many others, which shaped the peasant struggle of the country.

The statement mentioned the danger of the growth of fascism and attacks against democracy, and the need for massive united resistance against fascism, how to link it with the kisans' partial struggle of abolition of landlordism and the achievement of Independence. It elaborated the compromising role of the Congress party in the struggle against landlords – weak anti-*zamindar* laws; though they gave some limited concessions to the peasantry, all subsequent laws imposed burdens on the peasantry.

The statement explained that the capitalist path couldn't benefit the peasants. The capitalist market only aided the exploitation of the peasantry. '[The] only practicable way to avert the danger is the adoption of a policy which will not tie our economy with the crisis-ridden imperialist system but will enable us to enter into trade with Soviet Union, China, and East European countries.'

The statement warned against the harmful foreign policy of keeping India tied to the imperialist British-led Commonwealth. It was felt that we should be with the world camp of democracy and peace. This statement explained how colonial exploitation caused misery and poverty, how the burden on the people was increased during the Second World War, and how our agriculture and economy collapsed. We could not develop our country with their help.

This also described how British domination should continue. British capital remained intact. In addition, there was added burden on the nation for compensation to the princely states and landlords. Imperialist game of division of the country would keep the two countries in conflict.

The document critically examined the five-year plan – the approach of the plan was to build a capitalist system. It also examined the problem of price rise and unemployment not easing out. It gave a picture of growing unemployment and misery of the people, especially the poorer sections and peasantry.

It was decided that the abolition of landlordism without compensation should be the main programme along with distribution of all land to the landless poor and agricultural workers. However, the

direction of government policy was otherwise.

The document called for a threefold struggle:

- a. On basic and immediate demands of the peasantry; abolition of landlordism without compensation and distribution of land free of cost to the landless; cancellation of all usurious debt to private moneylenders; ensuring irrigation water, better seeds and fertilisers; fair price for agricultural products and compulsory procurement from the peasantry; reduction of tax burden on peasants and graded tax on the rich; adequate wages-jobs-housing facilities for agricultural labourers and the poor; no social discrimination, oppression, and untouchability; equality of women in all professions and employment
- b. National independence and sovereignty – severance of ties with British imperialists and the Commonwealth and the liquidation of the French and Portuguese colonies; confiscation of British capital; protection of national industry, trade and agriculture; reorganisation of provinces on a linguistic basis; development of language and culture of people of various nationalities; restoration of full liberty to abolish all repressive laws; full development of all tribals economically culturally in regional autonomous areas.
- c. For peace and against war – a consistent policy of peace and against war; withdrawal of all foreign armies from Asia and Africa; free and equal cultural relation with all countries, especially with socialist countries; close trade and cultural relations with Pakistan.

The document stressed the need for a struggle for agrarian reforms and realisation of immediate demands, and to rally the majority of peasants in all partial and political struggles, and the need for building a mighty Kisan organisation to lead the struggle. 'For it is possible only if every Kisan is brought into the fold of Kisan Sabha organisation; only if Kisan Sabha units are set up in every village.' If Kisan Sabha activities of village units could be coordinated by the higher units of AIKS, then the Sabha would be able to not only lead innumerable struggles of the peasantry but also to rally the entire people behind those struggles and transform them into broader struggles of the people.

The document depicted the historic roles played by Kisan Sabha in organising struggles at various provinces, districts, and local areas.

Still, the large vacant areas were to be covered. The Kisan Sabha appealed to all champions of the kisans' interest to come to the Kisan Sabha to spread the movement all over the country.

It clarified that though many communists were active in the Kisan Sabha, AIKS is essentially an organisation of kisans. All the committees from top to bottom were elected and the criterion for electing the leading members of the Sabha was not whether one is a communist or socialist or a Congressman or a member of any other party, but whether one has earned the confidence of the masses of the peasantry organised in the Sabha through their selfless sacrifices and tireless services.

The AIKS during this period brought all the major problems of peasants to the fore and built innumerable big and small struggles. It also helped democratic movements and independent struggles in the country. It established that the peasant's interest could be protected only by strengthening AIKS everywhere.

The AIKS generated a lot of confidence in the minds of the peasantry and democratic secular people. All the champions of the peasants' cause were part of its leadership, irrespective of their party or political identities.

The Sabha therefore appealed to all the other organisations to forge Kisan unity in action and build a broadest possible unity and resistance movement. It was acknowledged that the lower units were the real foundation of the organisation and should be strengthened and that all peasants should be mobilised – irrespective of religion, caste or political affiliation – and it was decided that rural labour should be organised seriously in the Kisan movement, agricultural workers and their unions should be brought into the movement everywhere in struggles against the landlords, and that attention should be paid to building a broad democratic alliance with the working class and trade unions, middle-class employees' unions and other sections of the urban poor. The Kisan Sabha was confident that its 8 lakh members would mobilise millions of peasants in all the villages to fight for their interest and rally them around the programme of land and bread, peace and democracy.

Twelfth Moga Conference

12th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	13-19 September 1954
Where	Moga, Punjab
Office bearers elected	
President	Indulal Yagnik
General Secretary	N Prasad Rao

After the historic conference at Cannore, which adopted the new policy document of the Kisan movement, the need was felt to discuss how stabilisation of both the movement and the organisation could be achieved soon. To that end, it was planned to hold the 12th AIKS conference at Moga, Ferozepur, Punjab from 13 to 19 September 1954. The conference first elected the President Comrade Indulal Yagnik for the second time. Besides, 258 delegates and 75 AIKC members participated in the conference representing 10,87,247 members – the highest ever membership. The conference greeted and praised the delegates for strengthening and expanding the organisation. In the open rally, about 40,000 peasants participated. The famous leader of the peace movement Pandit Sundarlal addressed the rally. A large number of Kisan organisations from all over the world sent greeting messages to the conference.

The conference was held at Baba Rur Singh Nagar, which was built temporarily with all the facilities for the conference, accommodation, cultural programmes, exhibitions, etc. This was one of the best-organised conferences of the AIKS. The reception committee Chairman Comrade Jagjit Singh Layallpuri delivered his welcome address to the delegates. He raised the major problem of that time – the massive eviction of the peasantry in Punjab and other provinces and appealed for building strong resistance against this eviction of tenants and peasants.

He specially talked about the lakhs of families of tenant-cum-owner cultivators in Punjab and Pepsu. In some districts, the number was more than 50 per cent adding that AIKS should fight for the interests of these large numbers of small owners and the landless. He

also talked about a new independent mass organisation of rural workers in Punjab. AIKS provided all assistance to it and it was a solid ally of the Kisan movement.

In his presidential address, Indulal Yagnik showed the gap between the promises and performance of the Congress leaders and the governments that claimed ‘abolition of *zamindari*’ and ‘land to the tiller’... ‘I have no hesitation in asserting that the Congress leadership sought and is now seeking like the British predecessors deliberately to maintain a clan of landlords and merchants who may serve as pillars of their rule [over] the vast majority of the poor and peasants, labourers and artisans in villages.’ He condemned this double-dealing with the kisans and people of India. He expressed his concern over the persistence of the foreign grip on our sovereignty – being members of the Commonwealth went against the old ideals of complete independence. He also criticised the anti-Kisan rule of the Congress government. The issues of mass evictions and growing unemployment also found mention in his address to the delegates. Finally, he appealed for a strong worker-peasant alliance to fight for complete economic liberation of India from foreign imperialist domination.

In the General Secretary’s report, Comrade N. Prasad Rao raised all the basic problems of the peasantry. In the first years of Independence, the problem of extensive eviction of tenants and sharecroppers and a sharp fall in the prices of agricultural products, particularly of commercial crops, aggravated the economic crisis. He critically analysed the nature and perspective of the first five-year plan of the Congress government and the so-called land reform legislations passed by a number of states. Under the Estate Duty Act, 1953, the state governments of some of the states abolished *zamindari* and *jagirdari* systems but not rent on land. At the same time, they paid Rs. 450 crores to the *zamindars* in the form of compensation. The land laws were designed to promote capitalism in the agrarian sector. He gave descriptions of massive struggles by the peasants in different parts of the country against those anti-peasant policies and eviction of tenants and for the ‘land to the tiller’. It also criticised the real motive of the Bhoodan movement, which would only weaken and divert the peasants from class struggle.

The conference adopted some important resolutions on burning issues. They included those on support to the working-class movement,

the peace movement, struggle against eviction, ceiling on land holdings, struggle for cultivable wastelands, problems of agricultural labourers, on Kisan Sabha organisation, on the growing tax burden, on rehabilitation of refugees, against repression, regarding the flag, etc.

The resolution on organisation noted that new provincial units were formed in Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Vindhya Pradesh and Berar. In Mysore (now Karnataka), district units were formed but no provincial unit. The number of provincial units reached up to 22. Only in two large areas, provincial unit were yet to be set up - in Karnataka and Mahakoshal. The need was felt to build the Kisan Sabha based on poor peasants and agricultural workers and to develop united struggles with other Kisan organisations.

On the flag issue, it was decided that the main all India Kisan flag would be the red flag with hammer and sickle in white inscribed on it. Manipur was given permission to have a red flag with two cross ploughs on it, because it was used from the inception of Kisan Sabha by Comrade Irabat Singh 15 years back.

At the end, the conference elected the new AIKC and CKC along with the new office-bearers. Comrade Indulal Yagnik was elected as President and N. Prasad Rao as General Secretary.

Thirteenth Dahano Conference

13th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	17-22 May 1955
Where	Dahano, Maharashtra
Office bearers elected	
President	Nana Patil
General Secretary	N Prasad Rao

The 13th conference was held at Dahano, in Thane District during May 17-22, 1955, the second one to be held in Maharashtra albeit after a long time. 184 delegates took part in the conference. Comrade Nana Patil was elected as the President and Comrade S.V. Parulekar was the Chairman of the reception committee. He welcomed the

delegates.

The main thrust of the conference was the discussion on the weaknesses of the organisation. After the successful Moga conference, there was not much development of the movement and the organisation. Many important decisions were taken in the last conference, but most of these were not implemented. The CKC had only one meeting after that and the weakness of the leadership was the main hurdle for the growth of the struggle and expansion of the organisation. The activities of the organisation were very irregular and unplanned due to repression and attacks against the kisans and acute problems faced by them. Many states organised many struggles in spite of the weakness of the centre and leadership. While the kisans at the lower level jumped into many actions, the attitude of the leaders had been lukewarm and passive which damaged the Kisan Sabha organisation largely.

The General Secretary critically mentioned these weaknesses, as they were not seriously discussed in the committee. But, the main reason of the weakness was the major differences among the leadership regarding class struggle. A section of the leadership was gradually drifting towards a reformist understanding and making compromises. The class collaborationist attitude led them to such lethargy, on the plea of fighting sectarianism. To divert from struggle to compromise caused havoc to the revolutionary character of the Kisan movement. A section of the leadership avoided any militant struggle of the peasantry and started to blame the struggles as sectarian movements. Though there were increasing attacks by the government on the agrarian sector through higher taxation, massive evictions, rural indebtedness, land acquisition and police and landlord oppression against peasant movement, the leadership failed to build resistance against those attacks. Gradually, these conflicts in ideological understanding led to the split in the organisation after a decade.

The conference critically discussed the harmful government policies of taxation, price policy, mass evictions, attack on democratic rights, etc. The organisational weakness, the weakness in some states, especially in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana were noted by the delegates and negligence in organisational activities was criticised. Even membership enrolment had not been done in those two states that were

once the main centres of Kisan struggles.

The conference adopted some important resolutions. The US imperialist attempt to extend its influence in Asian countries by building SEATO was condemned and the destruction of all nuclear weapons to ensure world peace was demanded. In another resolution, the conference criticised the anti-people taxation policy of the central and state governments. The increase of indirect taxation was a huge burden on the common people. The conference demanded a graded tax on agricultural income with exemption for poor peasants. The price policy troubled the peasantry, as agricultural products were not getting the proper price. Along with a steep fall in prices of agricultural commodities, prices of all essential commodities were increasing. In another resolution, the conference condemned the mass eviction of tenants and poor peasants in different parts of the country. AIKS called for resistance to such evictions. Another resolution condemned the growing atrocities by the police on the peasant movement and attacks on democratic rights and civil liberties. The colonial anti-people repressive Acts were want only used by the Congress government to suppress any agitation.

The conference appointed a commission for reviewing the functioning of the AIKS constitution and to suggest amendments to make it more realistic, dynamic and practical. Besides, the conference also appointed a history commission to write the history of the Kisan movement. But the history commission never met. A proposal to send a big AIKS delegation to the USSR was discussed and a delegation was nominated with Nana Patil as the leader along with eight others. They visited many places along with agricultural institutions and submitted a report after returning to India.

The conference also discussed the States Reorganisation Commission, which was not satisfactory, as it rejected Samyukta Maharashtra and Punjabi speaking states and Vishalandhra project.

Finally, the conference elected the new AIKC, CKC and office bearers with Nana Patil as President and N. Prasad Rao as General Secretary.

Fourteenth Amritsar Conference

14th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	25-29 September 1956
Where	Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar
Office bearers elected	
President	AK Gopalan
General Secretary	N Prasad Rao

Jallianwala Bagh, in the city of Amritsar was the venue for the next – the 14th – AIKS conference on September 25-29, 1956. A large number of leaders were in jail. The AIKS President Nana Patil and others were under detention due to the Samyukta Maharashtra movement. Indulal Yagnik, also involved in Maha-Gujarat could not attend the conference. Comrade Karyanand Sharma, ex-President, presided over the meeting. The meeting elected A.K. Gopalan as the new President. Comrade N. Prasad Rao was re-elected as General Secretary. The conference was inaugurated by octogenarian ex-President Comrade Baba Sohan Singh Bhakna. Only 141 delegates from 13 states attended the conference along with 128 observers. As a special invitee, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, President of All India Peace Council addressed the 15,000 strong public rally.

There was a long debate and delegates were divided on two issues. One was the Constitutional Commission Report regarding the existing design of the flag of AIKS. The other was regarding AIKS sessions, whether the yearly session should continue or turned into a two-yearly affair. Another controversy arose over whether the Kisan Sabha should participate in Lok Sabha or Assembly elections as it happened in some districts of Rajasthan. The conference decided that AIKS should not participate in elections but that any of its leaders could contest as candidates of a political party of their choice.

There was no unanimity on the flag issue so it was deferred until the next conference.

A large number of foreign delegates desired to participate in the conference but the government refused them visa, so they could not

attend. The conference condemned the government's attitude. There were a number of resolutions adopted by the conference. The AIKS in 1945 had demanded that a ceiling should be imposed on land holdings and it should be on family holdings. The government dilly-dallied on the issue to protect the interests of the landlords and to sabotage real land reforms. In a resolution on five-year plans, the nature of the bourgeois plan was exposed. Though the declared objectives were apparently good, the detailed study of the project would show the virtual denial of real land reforms and that the loopholes in the land laws would help the landlords and to deceive the peasantry: 'The experience shows that it is the government policy to compromise with landlords and monopolists which is the biggest obstacle to the development of our economy. It is this policy, which does not allow the land to pass into the hands of real tillers... The result of this policy has been the ejection of lakhs of tenant families and setting up of capitalist landlord farms with the help of government loans...'

The conference elected the new AIKC, which met on October 1, 1956, and elected office bearers and other CKC members. Comrade A.K. Gopalan had already been elected as the President and Comrade N. Prasad Rao was elected as General Secretary. On the last day, a massive rally was organised in which about 40,000 peasants, agricultural workers, and others participated.

Fifteenth Bongaon Conference -

Conflict Between Struggle and Compromise

15th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	1-3 November 1957
Where	Bongaon, 24 Paraganas
Office bearers elected	
President	AK Gopalan
General Secretary	N Prasad Rao

The All India Kisan Sabha discussed its persistent weakness in the last few conferences. To carry the battle forward, the AIKS held its

15th conference at Bongaon (now in South 24 Parganas district) of West Bengal on November 1-3, 1957. Comrade A.K. Gopalan was re-elected as the President of the Kisan Sabha on the eve of the conference. A total of 165 delegates and 22 observers participated in the conference, representing 6,09,301 members.

As we noted above, the conflict between two trends of understanding was brewing within the organisation. The Kisan Sabha emerged in the context of a series of militant Kisan struggles against landlord exploitation and British imperialist oppression. The leadership always upheld the revolutionary spirit of the struggles, though there were a number of Congress leaders who did not like militant struggles. However, they could not influence the Kisan movement in any way. After Independence, the trend of taking the path of only constitutional struggle was developing among a section of the leadership. This trend was noted in some earlier conferences, but it became evident in the Bongaon session. A non-class approach to the Kisan movement was the basic nature of that trend. Many of them were thinking differently instead of militant class struggles of the Kisan and agricultural workers. This was reflected in the discussion of the delegates also. They wanted to bring more Congress members into the Kisan Sabha. The class outlook was considerably eroded. There was reluctance in building struggles of the poor peasants and landless people. This was the main reason of the weakness of the Kisan movement in the country. Due to their confused thinking and non-class approach to the Kisan problem, they were not able to find the correct way to strengthen and expand the movement.

Besides that, the issue of the flag was again raised in the conference. After discussion, three suggestions emerged. One was a plough on the red flag, another was a plough and sickle on the red flag, and the last one was simply a sickle on the red flag. There was an election and 8 delegates voted for the first suggestion, 40 for the second suggestion and 99 for the third. Finally, it was accepted that there would be only a sickle on the red flag. AIKS carried this amended flag for many years. (After almost one decade, in the 19th conference at Madurai, the proposal for a hammer and sickle on the flag was again

raised and was accepted. That was approved later in the 20th conference and the glory of the old red flag with hammer and sickle was restored in 1969.)

The reception committee Chairman Comrade Bhabani Sen welcomed the delegates and spoke about the historic struggle of indigo farmers against the indigo growers, the venue of the conference being one of the hotspots of that struggle. Most of the growers were British and they committed inhuman and barbaric oppression against the indigo cultivating peasantry. Many glorious revolts were organised by those oppressed peasants in Bengal.

The conference discussed different problems of the peasantry in the General Secretary's report and important resolutions, besides the three commission papers. The main issues were tenancy reforms, distribution of land to the tiller, growing tax burden, the food situation, world peace, East Pakistani refugees, the fishermen's problem, rural indebtedness, tribal peasants' issues, flood and water logging, etc. The conference welcomed the tenancy reforms in Kerala by the E.M.S. Namboodiripad government. On tribal issues, it was noted that the important issues were 'safeguarding their land and forest from alienation, development of agriculture and shifting cultivation in particular and reservation of some land for landless tribals in territories inhabited by them'.

Regarding tenancy reforms, it was said that 'all tenants of big landlords should be given permanent and inheritable rights on the land they cultivate' and all types of eviction should be made illegal. The main slogans were 'abolish landlordism', and 'land to the tiller'. In the resolution regarding jute, the conference demanded statutory minimum price and purchasing centres. The price of sugarcane was also discussed and the resolution was adopted. The betterment levy of Punjab and massive peasant struggle against it was also discussed and the conference extended full support to the struggle. Finally, the conference elected the new AIKC, CKC and office bearers. Comrade A.K. Gopalan was elected President and Comrade N. Prasad Rao was elected General Secretary.

Sixteenth Mayavaram Conference -

Confusion Continues in the Organisation

16th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	29 April – 3 May 1959
Where	Mayavaram, Tanjore
Office bearers elected	
President	AK Gopalan
General Secretary	Bhabani Sen

With lethargy in the organisation still a major concern, the 16th conference was held at Mayavaram, then in Tanjore district (now in Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu) from April 29 to May 3, 1959. Here too Comrade A.K. Gopalan was elected President. The conference discussed three commission reports: on the resolution of land reforms, waste land and food and state trading, another on taxes and price, and a third one on panchayats and cooperatives. These commission reports and discussion on them clarified and strengthened the General Secretary's report. In one resolution, the conference greeted the working class on May Day. It concluded, 'Since for this great task of the Indian people as well as for the task of building a real democratic India, the alliance of the kisans with the working class is most essential, the All India Kisan Sabha assures the working class in India all help and cooperation in building and firmly establishing the worker-peasant alliance.' The conference greeted the EMS government of Kerala and extended full support to his government's Agrarian Relations Bill. Comrade EMS attended the conference and addressed the session.

In this conference, the 'Betterment Levy' and Kisan struggle against it was discussed. The Kisan Sabha organised a massive militant struggle against this anti-peasant levy. The Communist Party, Akali Dal and other parties supported this movement. The movement was withdrawn when the government declared the acceptance of the kisans' demands. But, the government betrayed them and, instead of implementing the demands, resorted to barbaric attacks on the movement in which 19,000 kisans joined the *satyagraha* and 10,000 were put in jail. There were brutal lathi charges and loot of houses and

property of the peasants and several persons were killed. Finally, the resolution demanded the release of all *satyagrahis* and compensation for the loot and damage of property. Subsequently, the rate of levy was reduced considerably due to the movement.

The conference discussed severe food problems in the country and related it to the failure of land reforms. It was decided to build a strong movement against the food crisis and starvation, the government policies that encouraged black marketers and hoarders who were responsible for the food crisis, and demand stern action against them.

The conference discussed the Panchayat Raj system and cooperatives and exposed the illusion about the panchayats created by the government. The conference criticised the loopholes in the Panchayat Raj Acts of different state governments and demanded the establishment of real democratic panchayats in which rural peasants and people would have a proper role for real democratic administration of rural India.

The conference took up the issue of price of crops in detail. It was discussed that the price was lower than the cost of production. Many committees recommended fair price for crops but the government failed to implement that. The conference condemned the government policies that helped the black marketers and monopoly traders to amass huge profits. The conference demanded a proper floor price for major crops, state trading for all wholesale crops, building of godowns and cold storages, expansion of internal marketing and increase in purchasing power of the people.

Besides, a one-day session was dedicated to rural women agriculturalists in which 5,000 women peasants participated. The conference demanded 'equal pay for equal work' for women. Prominent peasant leaders Comrade Godavari Parulekar and Susheela Gopalan addressed the special session.

It must be mentioned here that, as we had noted earlier, since Independence many weaknesses were seen in the movements and Kisan Sabha organisation. The expansion of the movements and militancy in the struggle had faded. The weakness in the recruitment of membership was mentioned and organisational difficulties were made visible. The main reasons for these weaknesses were the growth of a reformist trend among the leadership, weakness in class consciousness, and inactivity in the organisation and movements during the previous two

years. After Independence, a lot of enthusiasm and illusions had been generated in the minds of the people. The peasants expected that there would be land reforms, the poor peasants and landless agricultural workers would get land, landlordism would be abolished and feudal exploitation and moneylending would cease to exist. Many leaders started to believe that the peasantry would be benefitted, listening to the talks of the Congress leaders and passing of some land related laws. Within a few years, all these illusions among the peasants started eroding. The land reform Acts in states only strengthened rural vested interests by paying landlords huge compensation for their rehabilitation with the peasantry not gaining much. Price rise, food crisis, unemployment, stagnation in rural wages – all these made the life of the common people miserable. The situation was fertile for building massive militant struggles of the peasantry in the whole country. Unfortunately, the leadership of the Kisan Sabha failed to organise such mass movements, owing to their illusion for the ruling classes, weakness in class consciousness and a reluctance to build mass struggles. For that reason, the situation did not take a turn for revolutionary change in the country and stagnation continued for some more years. ‘The weakness of the Kisan Sabha policy and lack of its militant mass action was finally overcome only after a split in the leadership of the Sabha.’

Finally, the conference elected the new AIKC and CKC and office bearers. Comrade A.K. Gopalan had already been elected President and Comrade Bhabani Sen was elected as the new General Secretary. A public meeting was held on the final day, which was addressed by Comrade A.K. Gopalan, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and other leaders.

Seventeenth Ghazipur Conference

17th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	17-19 May 1960
Where	Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh
Office bearers elected	
President	AKGopalan
General Secretary	Bhabani Sen

In the year 1960, the 17th conference of AIKS was held at Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh on May 17-19. 106 delegates attended, representing 5,68,53 members. The continuous decrease in the membership and delegates showed lack of enthusiasm in the organisation. Comrade A.K. Gopalan was re-elected as President. He explained in his presidential address the several loopholes in the land legislations of various states and called on the delegates to fight against these anti-peasant laws.

The major issue before the conference was the serious food crisis. In West Bengal, a very powerful food movement was organised in 1959 and massive rallies of the peasants were attacked by the Congress government, barbaric lathi charge was resorted to and a total of 82 people were killed in Kolkata by the police. The issue of eviction was also very important and the Kisan Sabha organised a very strong movement against mass evictions.

Besides, other issues such as failure in implementing proper land reforms, weakness in applying land laws against landlords, reluctance in abolishing landlordism by the Congress governments due to pressure from the landlords were bitterly criticised by the delegates and the conference appealed to all its units to strengthen the struggle for land acquisition by the peasantry.

The most important issue of that time was the dissolution of the EMS government in Kerala by the central government and imposition of President's Rule under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution. This was a blatant and naked attack on democracy, federalism and the Constitution itself. The communist government in its few years' rule prohibited eviction of tenants from their land, and land reform legislation with a ceiling on holdings was enacted. The ceiling was on family holdings, which had been a demand of the AIKS for long, and it helped free a large area of land; no exemptions were given to the landlords to steal land by *benami*. The government got 5 lakh acres of land for distribution among the landless. Education reform in the states had hurt the education mafia from looting people through their private run institutions. As a result, all the landlords, the education mafia and other reactionary forces came together against the government and organised disturbances in the state as a conspiracy to dislodge the government. The central government took this opportunity to raise the bogey of law and order failure in the state and dismissed the state

government – imposing President’s Rule under Article 356. The conference strongly condemned this attack on democracy by the Congress government and called for struggles in the whole country against this conspiracy.

The conference also analysed the third five-year plan document and criticised its failure to ensure land reforms and improvements in the interest of the majority of small, poor and marginal peasants.

In spite of discussion on burning issues and the fight against those problems, the conference could not find proper solutions for strengthening the organisation due to lack of a proper class outlook. Anyway, the AIKC, CKC and office bearers were elected. Comrade A.K. Gopalan was elected President. Comrade Bhabani Sen was re-elected as General Secretary. A mass rally was indeed held but the gathering was not very large.

Eighteenth Trichur Conference -

Silver Jubilee Session of Kisan Sabha

18th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	30 March – 2 April 1961
Where	Trichur, Kerala
Office bearers elected	
President	AK Gopalan
General Secretary	JS Layallpuri

The All India Kisan Sabha organised its 18th conference as its silver jubilee session at Trichur, Kerala from March 30 to April 2, 1961. That year was the 25th anniversary of All India Kisan Sabha’s foundation. The conference began by paying homage to the memory of the Kayyur martyrs (1943) and the martyrs of the Punnapra-Vayalar struggle (1946). That year, Kerala Karshak Sangham became the strongest state committee in the country and for that, the conference honoured the state committee with a silver cup. On the occasion, memorable souvenirs were published by the organisation. The venue was named after the famous African leader Patrice Lumumba. The re-

elected President Comrade A.K. Gopalan made a very remarkable speech. Comrade Bhabani Sen presented the General Secretary's report and Comrade J.S. Layallpuri introduced the report on the progress of the land reforms. Besides, a special session was dedicated to the World Peace Council.

Comrade AKG described the glorious history of the AIKS and said that the Kisan Sabha had mobilised the Indian peasantry behind the freedom struggle of the country and inspired them to join the independence movement. The AIKS took the leading role in deciding and formulating the basic demands of the anti-imperialist struggle. It successfully brought the demands of abolition of feudal and colonial exploitation, closer relation between land and labour, and 'land to the tiller' – fundamental and practical demands of the peasantry – and imparted the economic content to our freedom movement. Almost all states enacted Land Reform Acts in the country and it was in favour of Kisan Sabha's demand, in spite of many an infirmity, weakness and loopholes in those Acts. The failure of the Congress government to implement the genuine land reforms was the main reason of the failure of our economy to lead our country towards genuine development.

The conference took stock of the ground reality of the Kisan movement and organisation in different states of the country. The General Secretary's report described in detail many successful Kisan struggles in different states and exhorted the entire organisation to take the struggle further. Because the old feudal exploitation was gradually being replaced by capitalist landlordism and growing capitalist exploitation, there was a continuous deterioration of the financial condition of the peasantry.

One of the important decisions of the conference was its attempt at assessment of Kabi Guru Rabindranath Tagore on his birth centenary. The conference appealed to its units to join the celebration of his centenary everywhere. In the special resolution, the great poet was described thus, 'Tagore was one of the greatest sons of India and was noted as a great freedom fighter, social reformer, educationist, and humanist, besides being the greatest poet and man of letters of modern India. A great protagonist of human rights and equality, he always expressed sympathy for improvement in the conditions of the peasantry. Moreover, in the later days of his life, he was brought into the limelight of world opinion for his passionate condemnation of imperialist

oppression and fascist barbarism as well as his firm belief in world peace, democracy and even the socialism of the Soviet Union.’

The conference report analysed the strengthening of capitalist exploitation in the country since Independence and the development of monopoly capital in the country and appealed to the entire organisation and the peasantry as a whole to join the struggle against feudalism and capitalism in the country.

The conference discussed, with all seriousness, the problems of agricultural workers. It was noted that their condition did not improve even after Independence and adoption of the so-called land reforms. On the contrary, their economic condition deteriorated further; while on the one hand there was no hike in wages, on the other hand, unemployment had increased. As a result, they were exploited by continuous rise in prices of essential commodities. While their income depleted, the debt burden increased. Their pauperisation and poverty intensified manifold. The government failed to provide jobs to them and because there was no land distributed among them, they further became helpless victims of exploitation.

The problem could be solved only by genuine land reforms. It was felt that the Kisan movement must bring the agricultural workers to the fold of the struggles and build a united agrarian movement.

The differences among the leaders had a negative impact on the organisation. There were two streams of opinion – revolutionary and reformist. This issue had been piling up for a long time. This time, it was reflected in the election of the General Secretary and the committees and became a matter of conflict. Such things had not happened earlier, though these problems always existed. In this conference, when the name of Comrade J.S. Layallpuri was proposed for General Secretary, the other group proposed the name of Comrade Bhabani Sen for re-election. In the history of the Kisan Sabha, there was never a contest for any post. This was the first time that there was a contest and Comrade Layallpuri was elected General Secretary by a huge margin. The open conflict that arose in the Trichur conference only intensified further in the future until finally there was a division in the Kisan Sabha itself. In 1967, the organisation was divided and the Comrade Z.A. Ahmed group established a separate Kisan Sabha.

After the Trichur conference, the activities of the AIKS had increased and many important struggles were organised in different

states. In Kerala, Karshak Sangham started strong militant movements for the implementation of the Agrarian Relation Act (which was enacted during the EMS government but the Presidential assent was delayed). Besides, a massive peasant movement started in Amravati against the eviction of thousands of peasants from the forest land. In Karnataka, the land grabbing movement was organised on the land of the Maharaja. Many struggles were unleashed in West Bengal during this period. In Tripura, the militant Kisan movement spread against the eviction of peasants and sharecroppers. In Madhya Pradesh, 30 lakh tribals were on the warpath for the distribution of forestland to the tribals. In Punjab, a peasant struggle was organised against 50 per cent increase in land rent. In Maharashtra, the long-drawn-out struggles of the tribal people expanded for their right on wasteland and forestland. In Andhra Pradesh, agricultural workers led militant struggles for their jobs and better minimum wages. In Tamil Nadu, peasants were in the struggle demanding amendments in the cattle-ceiling bill. In Bihar too, the movement expanded on the same demands.

In the Trichur conference, Comrade AKG was elected President and J.S. Layallpuri was elected General Secretary along with seven office bearers. The AIKC and CKC were also elected.

Nineteenth Madurai Conference -

Disruption, Disturbances and Attacks Delayed the Conference:
Finally, a Successful Session

19th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	26-28 January 1968
Where	Madurai
Office bearers elected	
President	AK Gopalan
General Secretary	Harekrishna Konar

After the last AIKS conference, there was a serious change in the political situation of the country. During this period, the Sino-Indian border conflict unfortunately escalated into a war between two of the

largest countries of the world. This created strong emotions in the country, which was used by the ruling-class parties to build up chauvinism in the minds of the people through massive propaganda. The government used this opportunity to curb and impose control on all democratic rights of the people and a large number of opposition leaders and activists were arrested under the Defence of India Rules in 1962. Anyone who criticised the government for any of its failures or misdeeds was branded as anti-national and was put behind bars. A vast majority of the leaders and important cadres of the Communist Party of India were the victims of this onslaught. Many leaders of Kisan Sabha also went to jail for a long time. At that time, two giant communist parties – those of Russia and China – were involved in a long, intensive ideological battle. This had wide influence on the Communist Party of India. As a result, a good section of the leaders and members of the Communist Party were branded as pro-Chinese and they faced severe ideological, political and physical attacks. Those from the CPI who worked in the Kisan Sabha also had the same fate. Many of them were arrested and Kisan Sabha activities were seriously affected and even crumbled in many places. Thus, the control of the Kisan Sabha was shifted entirely in the hands of pro-government communist leaders. Kisan movements, for some time, almost collapsed in the country.

Later, after some relaxation of state repression against the democratic movements, with many of the comrades coming out of jails, on January 18, 1964, the CKC met at Delhi. During this time, the worst communal riots since Independence took place in West Bengal. The Kisan Council condemned the communal riots. In the meantime, Comrade Rahul Sankrityayana passed away; AIKC paid tributes to him.

The council also demanded release of all political prisoners. The Kerala Congress government enacted the Land Reforms Bill, 1963, which curtailed many important rights of the peasants. The Council condemned this anti-peasant bill. In spite of the best efforts of some leaders to maintain unity in the organisation, ideological differences continued and increased. On the one hand, attacks and repression by the Congress governments, on the other, an ideological offensive from right-wing thinking created a lot of confusion among the ranks of the organisation. Due to the disruptive activities of those leaders, finally, there was a split in the Kisan Sabha and another Kisan Sabha was

constituted in October 1967, after a section of the leadership left the AIKS and formed a separate Sabha. Due to all these disturbances, there was an inordinate delay of almost 6 years in holding the AIKS conference. At that time, there was a United Front government in West Bengal and the decision was taken to hold the AIKS conference in West Bengal, at Sonarpur of 24 Parganas district. Suddenly, the United Front government of West Bengal was toppled by the central Congress government by imposing President's Rule under Article 356 of the Constitution. Massive protest movements all over West Bengal broke out against that undemocratic action of the central government. The people came out on the streets in lakhs for the restoration of democracy in the state. The Kisan Sabha was also involved in the struggle in a big way. There was unprecedented police repression against the movement and a large number of leaders were arrested and put behind bars. It was not possible to hold the AIKS conference at Sonarpur. The decision was changed and the 19th conference was held at Madurai in Tamil Nadu on January 26-28, 1968.

As already mentioned, the activities of the organisation increased after the last conference in many states, and expanded in new areas in spite of the internal conflict. Membership reached 10 lakhs for the first time they were represented by 213 delegates, elected from 18 states, in the Madurai conference. A large number of delegates from West Bengal could not participate in the conference due to government repression and detention. Comrade A.K. Gopalan was re-elected as the President. Comrade J.S. Layallpuri presented the General Secretary's report in the conference. After almost seven years since the Trichur conference, the Madurai conference was held with a lot of enthusiasm. The long GS report was discussed in detail.

A.K. Gopalan in his inaugural speech gave a vivid picture of the landlord-capitalist rule in the country and exposed the anti-peasant agricultural policy of the government. He exhorted the peasantry to fight for establishing a people's democratic government in the country, by intensive and massive struggle through a worker-peasant alliance, changing the anti-peasant policy and its proponent, the bourgeois-landlord government in the country.

The conference condemned the aggressive policy of US imperialism in Vietnam, expressed full support to the people of Vietnam and raised the slogan 'US Imperialism Quit Vietnam'. Besides, the

conference bitterly criticised the anti-democratic character of the Congress government and appealed to its members to build a massive militant struggle against curbing of democratic rights by imposing President's Rule. The Congress government was misusing Article 356 again and again to dislodge governments formed by opposition parties. The conference condemned this conspiracy and attack on the state governments.

The conference discussed the language policy of the country too, for the first time. There was growing unrest among people of different linguistic groups against imposition of Hindi. It was felt that, to solve it amicably, a correct language policy should be formulated and applied in the interest of the unity of our people. It was recognised that all Indian languages should have equal rights and they should be included in the 8th Schedule of the Constitution and recognised as official languages; all states should be given the right to run administrative activities in their respective languages and interaction through their mother tongue was to be ensured. Only by such a democratic language policy could the language problem be solved and only in that atmosphere could Hindi develop as a link language in the country.

On organisation, the conference amended its constitution and abolished AIKC as it rarely met. As there was no AIKC, the conference directly elected the CKC and office bearers for the first time. The conference elected Comrade A.K. Gopalan as its President and Comrade Harekrishna Konar was elected the General Secretary. As he was in jail, he was elected in absentia. The conference also elected a 33-member CKC, including office bearers.

On the last evening, a public rally was held at Madurai. A large number of peasants, agricultural workers and working-class people attended the huge gathering. It was addressed by Comrade J.S. Layalpuri, Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Comrade P. Ramamurti and others. Comrade A.K. Gopalan presided over the meeting.

In the next CKC meeting after the conference, the decision was taken to shift the central office. The Central Office of the Kisan Sabha was shifted from Delhi, 4 Ashoka Road, in April 1968, to Calcutta, first at 49 Lake Place and then to 36A Beniapukur Road, Calcutta – 14.

Twentieth Barsul Conference -

Towards Revival of Kisan Sabha

20th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	30 October – 3 November 1969
Where	Barsul, Bardhaman
Office bearers elected	
President	AK Gopalan
General Secretary	Harekrishna Konar

Already, it was noted that the Kisan movement was reviving and ideological cohesion strengthening the organisation after the split. In this context, the 20th conference of AIKS was held at Barsul in Bardhaman district of West Bengal from October 30 to November 3, 1969. The United Front government was again formed in West Bengal and Comrade Harekrishna Konar was Land and Land Revenue Minister in that government. He was the General Secretary of All India Kisan Sabha so it was natural that the conference would be a magnificent and well-organised event. Comrade A.K. Gopalan was elected as the President again. A total of 669 delegates, observers and fraternal delegates, the highest number ever, representing about 10 lakh members from 15 states attended the conference.

The red flag of the AIKS was hoisted by the octogenarian ex-President and one of the founders of the Communist Party in the country, Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad. The conference resumed with the burst of 20 crackers, marking the 20th conference of the organisation. A very educative exhibition depicting different aspects of peasants' lives was displayed. On the last day, the largest public meeting in the state's history was held on a huge ground. The green paddy fields around the flowing Damodar river on one side and the unending human streams from different sides was a memorable scene. The peasants, agricultural labourers, workers, women, students, youth, employees and others converged in a sea of humanity. More than 3 lakh people gathered in the open rally. At that time, there were a series of militant

Kisan movements in all the districts of West Bengal for occupying illegal *benami* land, cultivating those lands keeping them under the occupation of peasants – the state was vibrating with Kisan struggles. ‘And those struggles reached the higher form due to the patronage of the United Front government. The rally was a reflection of those struggles.’ This magnificent gathering was unique in the history of AIKS. ‘The great rally of the toiling masses and the moving column of liquid humanity left an inspiring and indelible impression on the mind of everybody present there.’

In his presidential speech, Comrade A.K. Gopalan told the conference that the agrarian crisis in India was the crisis of land relations in our country that was deepening the economic crisis. The crisis of agrarian relations was the basis of the economic crisis. The land reform of the Congress government expedited the concentration of land in the hands of the landlords and it was possible because of massive eviction of the peasantry in the country. The clauses of the land laws regarding the ceiling and abolition of landlordism became redundant.

The conference termed the division of the organisation as unfortunate and stressed on the unity of the Kisan movement. The conference also emphasised worker-peasant unity and alliance.

In the General Secretary’s report, Comrade Harekrishna Konar said that the peasantry of our country was gradually becoming politically conscious. In West Bengal, the peasant movement strengthened Left thinking and played an important role in establishing the United Front government in the state. The policies pursued by the Kerala and West Bengal governments also helped in raising the political consciousness of the peasants and agricultural workers. The Congress governments at the centre and the states were in serious crisis due to their anti-people policies. The UF governments in Kerala and West Bengal took energetic measures within their limited power to implement land reforms. They helped to unleash powerful peasant struggles.

During this period, a series of peasant struggles took place. The General Secretary’s report mentioned some of them. The struggles of West Bengal were mentioned. Struggles by the kisans and khet mazdoors were taking place in Kerala as well as in Andhra Pradesh,

Tamil Nadu, Assam, Bihar, UP, Tripura, etc. The Kisan Sabha was strengthened through those struggles.

The conference decided to follow the revolutionary teachings of Comrade Lenin on peasant movements on his birth centenary.

Another important decision of the conference was the restoration of the hammer and sickle on the red flag again as the AIKS flag.

In the report, concerns were expressed about the growing communalisation of society and the ruling-class conspiracy to divide the people, the peasantry and democratic movement on communal lines. In this atmosphere, communal organisations like Jana Sangh, RSS, etc. were getting strengthened. The conference gave a clarion call to the peasantry to build a strong and united peasant-worker-agricultural worker movement against those divisive conspiracies. The conference expressed support and solidarity with the progressive land reform policies of the United Front and Left Democratic Front governments of West Bengal and Kerala. The conference also stressed the importance of a united struggle in defence of democracy and against attacks on the democratic rights of the people exhorting AIKS to take a leading role in such movements.

The Barsul conference was historic and remarkable for various reasons. The conference clearly explained the nature of the agrarian crisis. On many important issues, Kisan Sabha's outlook and understanding were clarified and the plan for expanding Kisan struggles as part of the class struggle of the toiling masses was chalked out. The necessity of ideological clarity and struggle to build a correct ideological understanding was discussed and accepted as the guiding principle of the organisation and movements. It exhorted the members to build worker-peasant alliance for the completion of the democratic revolution in the country.

The conference finally unanimously elected the new CKC and office bearers. Comrade A.K. Gopalan was elected President for the 7th term and Comrade Harekrishna Konar was re-elected as General Secretary.

Twenty-first Rurka Kalan Conference -

Struggle and Expansion Continues

21st AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	23-26 September 1971
Where	Rurka Kalan, Jalandhar
Office bearers elected	
President	AK Gopalan
General Secretary	Harekrishna Konar

The tempo of the Kisan movement and expansion of the AIKS continued and to carry those successes forward, the 21st session was held at Rurka Kalan in Jalandhar district of Punjab on September 23-26, 1971. The venue was named after Bhai Rattan Singh. 577 delegates and 151 observers attended the conference representing 12,78,869 members from 18 states.

The session was presided over by re-elected President Comrade A.K. Gopalan, who again stressed on the unity of the Kisan movement and said that in the present situation in India only struggle for economic demands would not help. Political consciousness of the peasantry must be developed. The ruling class was conspiring to shift the burden of the crisis on the common people and peasantry and trying to create illusions in their minds by providing some benefits to the upper strata of the peasantry. Such a conspiracy had to be fought.

Comrade Harekrishna Konar in his General Secretary's report spoke of how the abolition of the privy purse to the royal feudal families, bank nationalisation and lip service to land reform had painted a good, pro-people image of the Congress government. The reformist Kisan leaders were propagating those actions as an attempt to solve the problems of the peasantry; these illusory campaigns were carried out to misguide the Kisan movement to the path of class collaboration. He spoke of the need to counter them and build class struggles of the peasants and agricultural workers in the whole country.

During that period, the United Front government of West Bengal was again dislodged by the central government with the imposition of

President's Rule. On the one hand, state repression was let loose against the left forces, especially against CPI (M) and its followers. Barbaric attacks were organised by the Youth Congress criminals with the help of the police and the administration. A misguided group of Naxalites were used against the Left by the government. The democratic rights of the people were taken away. That barbaric rule became infamous as the 'semi-fascist terror'. The peasantry of West Bengal were fighting against those attacks. During these attacks, hundreds of their activists were killed or evicted from their houses or implicated in thousands of false cases. The AIKS conference condemned the semi-fascist terror and called for a massive united resistance against the attacks and organisation of a solidarity campaign in other parts of the country. Comrade Konar said that the peasant struggle was closely linked with the struggle for defending democracy. In the meantime, about 450 comrades were killed in West Bengal and more that 500 were in jails, detained without trial under different black laws. AIKS demanded an end to those terror attacks immediately and the release of all political prisoners.

On the economic situation, the resolution said that the rich were becoming richer and poor were poorer. The entry of capital into agriculture was creating and strengthening the capitalist landlords, especially in the 'Green Revolution' areas. The poor people were facing inhuman exploitation and had become economically squeezed and pauperised due to feudal-capitalist exploitation. The peasants were losing land very fast and tenants were evicted and the agricultural workers were not getting jobs – there was a steep decline in their incomes. As a result, in agrarian India, class discrimination and social contradictions were intensifying. All these were the reflection of the agrarian crisis.

Land reform was gradually distanced from government programmes. The recommendations of the central land reform committee – though not of much help to the peasants – were not implemented by the governments. Therefore, organising intensive militant struggles of the peasants and agricultural workers was the only way out. The conference noted that the more the peasant struggles against government policies intensified, the more were efforts by reformists to create an illusion in favour of the government. This was a betrayal of the Kisan movement. The conference drew the attention

of the delegates to this aspect.

The conference elected Comrade A.K. Gopalan as President for the eighth consecutive time. The conference also elected Comrade Harekrishna Konar as General Secretary for the third time. Their effective leadership raised the organisation to a higher level of ideological consciousness as well as making the class struggle of the peasantry more widespread.

Twenty-second Sikar Conference -

A Conference Followed by Emergency

22nd AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	11-14 April 1974
Where	Sikar, Rajasthan
Office bearers elected	
President	AK Gopalan
General Secretary	Harekrishna Konar

The Kisan movement was continuously growing in the desert province of Rajasthan and the expansion of the organisation was consistent. AIKS, therefore, decided to hold its 22nd conference at Sikar, Rajasthan on April 11-14, 1974. This conference also elected Comrade A.K. Gopalan as its President. He became the longest serving President of AIKS. Comrade Trilok Singh was the Chairman of the reception committee. The conference was successfully organised by the sincere efforts and hard work of workers unions, state units of Kisan Sabha and student organisations collectively. 542 delegates from the whole country attended the conference.

Comrade Harkishan Singh Surjeet, the senior-most leader of the Kisan Sabha hoisted the red flag at the venue in Sikar, named Muzaffar Ahmed Nagar. He explained the agrarian crisis of the country in his address to the conference. The conference was inaugurated by Comrade Jyoti Basu, the Vice President of CITU. Comrade A.K. Gopalan presided over the session. Comrade Jyoti Basu said that even after the

completion of four five year plans, the country could not achieve self-sufficiency in food grain production because there was no radical land reform and the central and state governments failed to provide agricultural inputs to the peasantry – such as land, finance, irrigation, fertilisers, etc. – in adequate quantities and at cheaper rates. The whole country was engulfed by corruption and black marketing. He also bitterly criticised the failure of Congress governments to abolish the feudal land system and land relations and opined that the blind following of the capitalist path of development was the main reason for people's poverty.

Comrade A.K. Gopalan in his presidential address described socialism under which fundamental problems of the peasantry could be solved. Capitalism was the reason for the economic crisis, unemployment and pauperisation of the peasantry and people. Only socialism could free the country from all these crises. Socialism had proved how people's problems could be solved in the shortest possible time in the Soviet Union.

Comrade H.K.S. Surjeet depicted the grim picture of West Bengal under semi-fascist terror. More than one thousand leaders and cadres of CPI (M) and the Left had been killed; he appealed to the peasantry to resist this barbarism.

In his General Secretary's report, Comrade Konar explained the widespread crisis in the capitalist world and how it had impacted on our economy. The worldwide attacks and conspiracies of US imperialism had to be defeated by broad, united anti-imperialist struggles. Along with this, he gave a vivid picture of the land system and land relations in India and how it was related to the agrarian crisis. This was the last conference of Comrade Harekrishna Konar. Though he was re-elected as the General Secretary in the Sikar conference, after going back to Kolkata, he succumbed to cancer at the end of the year. At the end, a huge public meeting was held and Comrade Jyoti Basu addressed the rally with Comrade A.K. Gopalan in the Chair. The Sikar conference adopted many important resolutions and took many discussions to strengthen the movement and organisation. After the Sikar conference there was no conference for the next five years. However, many CKC meetings were held which took the organisational

work to further advancement. The Sikar conference discussed many weaknesses of the organisation and the movement and suggested remedial measures. The subsequent CKC meetings implemented those decisions. The most important event during this period was the declaration of Emergency by Indira Gandhi in June 1975 under which all democratic and civil rights were suspended in the country and a draconian authoritarian rule was established. Democratic rights of the people had already been curbed by the Defence of India Act, MISA, etc., but the Emergency completed that process. The freedom of the press was fully taken away. Unprecedented censorship was imposed. The acute economic crisis brought serious misery in the lives of common people, but the right of workers and peasants to organise a struggle against those attacks was taken away. A large number of leaders of the democratic movement were detained without trial. There was a suffocating atmosphere in the country. To add to the total press censorship, organising any meeting was prohibited. The rights of Parliament were curbed – a totalitarian, authoritarian rule was established in India. That was the darkest period for democracy. In those difficult situations, in a semi-illegal manner, the opposition political parties and mass organisations continued their work and maintained contact with people, propagating against the autocratic, authoritarian rule. A prolonged anti-authoritarian movement was built up under the leadership of J.P. Narayan in the country. The struggle for restoration of democracy was the main struggle of the people in India and abroad. As a result of this struggle, the general election was held in March 1977. In that election, Indira Gandhi was decisively beaten and for the first time, the long Congress rule was ended in India and a non-Congress party, the Janata Party emerged victorious. Immediately after that, Indira Gandhi, just before relinquishing power, lifted the Emergency. Morarji Desai was sworn in as the Prime Minister and a non-Congress government under him took the seat of power in Delhi restoring the democratic rights of the people. All political parties and mass organisations started their activities openly once again. After that, assembly elections were held in the states, in most of them, the Congress governments were defeated, and non-Congress governments

formed. In West Bengal, with a massive majority, the Left Front government was established and in Kerala too, the Left and Democratic Front government took oath. In both the governments, CPI (M) was in the leadership.

On October 3, 1977, the CKC meeting was held in Delhi. In this year in March Comrade AKG passed away. For two long decades, he had led the Kisan organisation and the movement as its President and had played a historic role in the Kisan Sabha towards building a democratic struggle in the country. His great contribution to the peasant and democratic movement would be written in golden letters. After a long, difficult and disturbing period, the Delhi CKC meeting was held in a relaxed atmosphere, many issues were discussed in a proper manner, and any important decisions were taken. The meeting congratulated the Janata Dal government at the centre and decided to resume normal activities of the organisation after the defeat of the authoritarian Congress government and work for strengthening the Kisan as well as democratic movement in the country. The AIKS demanded that trade in food should be wholly taken over by the government for a lasting solution to the food problem. It also demanded a strong and effective public distribution system for ensuring supplies of all essential commodities. It demanded nationalisation of the jute industry. It also demanded the fixing of remunerative price for sugarcane with assured procurement by the government. It demanded another resolution to fix the price of rubber at Rs 1000/- per quintal. At the same time, in a resolution, a regular job for agricultural workers and increase in their wages was demanded. It also demanded an end to the oppression of Dalits and scheduled tribes, and that untouchability should be strictly prohibited. The AIKS also demanded completion of land reforms expeditiously in the country. It extended full support to the land policies of the left governments of West Bengal and Kerala and decided to build public opinion in favour of them. On all these issues and demands, a strong and militant peasants' and agricultural workers' movement in the whole country had to be built. At the same time, the preparations for AIKS' 23rd conference were discussed.

Twenty-third Varanasi Conference -

Turning Point for AIKS– Guidelines for the Future

23rd AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	30 March – 1 April 1979
Where	Varanasi
Office bearers elected	
President	Binoy krishna Chowdhury
General Secretary	Chetuni Master

After five long years, the 23rd conference of the AIKS was held at Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh at A.K. Gopalan Nagar, from March 30 to April 1, 1979. Due to the death of Comrade A.K. Gopalan, Comrade Godavari Parulekar hoisted the flag and Comrade Abdullah Rasul presided over the conference. During the intervening period, there had been a remarkable growth of the organisation and the movement.

The Varanasi Conference was the turning point in the history of Kisan Sabha. During the last five years, AIKS could break new ground and make significant advances in our important bastions, like West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, though peasant movement was weak in most other parts of the country. This situation prevailed at a time when the peasantry was greatly discontented and coming out in spontaneous outbursts on many immediate issues. What was it that was preventing this discontent from being mobilised and directed into organised channels? This could be answered only by assessing the changes that had taken place in the agrarian structure in the last three decades and examining whether our slogans and activities had responded to those changes. Only then we would know whether we had been adopting a sectarian attitude of repeating basic slogans, which not only could not be translated into action immediately but were not even fully understood and accepted by vast sections of the peasantry; whether we were making a concrete study of the situation in a particular area before formulating immediate slogans in keeping with our basic aims to advance the movement in that situation; whether the slogans were such as to rally

the vast mass of the peasantry and isolate the small landlord sections etc.

Land to the tiller and abolition of landlordism had been our basic slogan since inception. That was possible only after the completion of the agrarian revolution. Although, this definitely would remain a central propaganda slogan during the entire period of peoples' democratic revolution, it could not be the slogan for action then.

However, the correlation of class forces, which existed at the time when Kisan Sabha inscribed these basic aims in its programme, were not the same that existed then. We had to understand the change and formulate our immediate slogans and actions, which would inspire the people in struggles.

During the last three decades the Congress land reform had been an eyewash – they did not want to abolish landlordism; instead wanted to reform the old feudal landlordism by converting the absentee feudal landlords into capitalist landlords, personally supervising cultivation in large farms with hired agricultural workers. This new type of landlord combined both feudalism and capitalism. Secondly, the objective was to create a stratum of rich peasants who would create a base for the ruling party in rural areas. They would also produce surplus food grains for the Government to feed the urban population. The government pumped funds to those rural landlords and the rich. This change was to be noted.

Earlier we had ignored penetration of capitalism in agriculture but later a section of the leadership thought that landlordism had been abolished as this development varied from state to state. This wrong tendency also was a hindrance in arriving at a correct conclusion. Besides, we had to look at the phenomenon of monetisation of the entire agrarian economy. By then, not only the rich, but also the poorer sections had also started to take their small produce to market immediately after harvest and then purchase other goods. This needed struggle against big traders.

Even after statutory abolition of landlordism, concentration of land in a few hands was increasing. 31% of land was in the hands of 4% landlords. Besides, Congress' land reform resulted in eviction of millions of tenants who were joining the ranks of landless agricultural workers or tenants-at-will without any right on land. So struggle against

this new attack for protection of tenant rights became important. This necessitated broader rural unity of the peasantry – middle and small peasants, poor peasants, landless peasants, tenants and agricultural workers that might intensify rural class struggle.

Besides 4% landlords another 10% of rich peasants who owned 5 to 10% of land, employed agricultural workers. This made struggle necessary against their exploitation.

Another 15% middle peasants owning 2 to 5 crores of land used agricultural workers along with their family labour. Their demands also needed attention. Another 20% rural households were poor peasants. They were also facing new problems. Remaining 50% of the rural population was agricultural workers or small artisans - they were the worst sufferers in rural India. They also had to be mobilised. So this 25% of rural rich and middle peasants were not interested in land-seizure of landlords as they were before independence. The 70% of the poor and landless peasants and agricultural workers were not conscious about the need for occupation of the landlords' land and ceiling of surplus land for distribution amongst them. Thus, the Congress rule successfully disrupted the pre-independence peasant unity.

Taking note of these structural changes and their multifarious consequences, we had to come to the conclusion that the slogan of complete abolition of landlordism and distribution of land to the landless and land-poor still continued to be the central slogan of agrarian revolution, which we had to continue to propagate. But, we could not base our actions on this slogan in most parts of the country.

While we continued to propagate this central slogan, while we continued struggles for surplus land, *benami* lands, waste lands etc., Kisan Sabha had to take up for immediate action, such issues as the question of wages of agricultural work, house-sites for the homeless, rent reduction, 75% produce to the share croppers, abolition of eviction, scaling down of rural indebtedness, remunerative price for agricultural produce, cheap credit, reduction of tax burdens and heavy levies like water charges, electricity rates etc, landlord goonda attacks with the connivance or direct help of the police, social oppression of dalits, corruption in administration etc. These were issues which affected large sections of the peasantry – poor, middle and rich and they could all be

drawn into the movement for their protection. All these experiences had to be brought into the struggle together to build the maximum unity of the peasantry, centring around agricultural workers and poor peasants, to isolate the small stratum of landlords. All this was dependent on how successfully the agricultural workers and poor peasants were organised and brought into action, not only for their own specific demands, but also on the general demands of the peasantry as a whole and how we were able to draw other sections of the peasantry in the movement on issues affecting them and on the general demands of the peasantry. There is no doubt that the middle and rich peasants could be drawn into the movement on such issues. It was our task to see that while other sections of the peasantry supported the agricultural workers in their struggle and in turn extended support to movement on the demands of the peasantry - paving the way for building peasant unity.

Comrade Rajkishore, Chairman of the reception committee delivered his welcome address. The total number of delegates that participated was 1097, the highest ever, representing 23,96,989 members including peasants and agricultural workers from 16 states. After the death of Comrade Harekrishna Konar, Comrade Harkishan Singh Surjeet took the responsibility of the organisation. He presented the General Secretary's report in the conference. The conference elected Comrade Binoykrishna Chowdhury as the new President.

Comrade Indradeep Sinha, General Secretary of the CPI-led Kisan Sabha then personally conveyed the greetings of his Kisan Sabha to the conference and stressed on three issues on which united action was urgently needed, namely land reforms, remunerative price for agricultural produce and central legislation to protect agricultural workers.

Comrade Harkishan Singh Surjeet in his General Secretary's report presented a grim picture of the economic condition and that of the rural people. The new Morarji Desai government also, like the previous government, was protecting the interests of the ruling classes. The poor could not expect much benefit. Hence, the Kisan movement had to be intensified. He also stressed on the need for a united Kisan movement and noted that many different Kisan organisations were joining hands to build a united Kisan movement. It was a positive

development, which needed to be reinforced. But, only by strengthening our own organisation, could we help the united movement and carry on that responsibility. Our membership had to be increased manifold and the organisational activities at all levels had to be improved. The formation of primary unit, developing new activists in large numbers, mobilising more funds, building struggles for the betterment of tribals and Dalits and their social and economic conditions, strengthening the movement for the defence and expansion of democracy and building a massive movement for radical land reform – these had to be our prime tasks and responsibilities.

Comrade Abdullah Rasul traced the history of the Kisan Sabha since 1936, the experience it gathered during this long journey, and how it finally re-oriented itself during this long journey and laid stress on organising the rural poor. He also noted certain weaknesses, which needed to be rectified. The main weakness was the stark uneven development of the organisation, very strong in some states and very weak in many others. This had to change.

The conference adopted many important amendments to its constitution. It was decided that the delegates in future conferences should not exceed 1,000. The delegates would be decided by the CKC before the AIKS conference. No state should send less than five delegates. The number of AIKC should be within 125 and at least one Council meeting a year should be held. Finally, the conference elected a new AIKC and CKC including office bearers. Comrade Chetuni Master was elected the new General Secretary. There was a huge public meeting, which was presided over by Comrade Binoykrishna Chowdhury. It was addressed by Comrade Rajkishore and Comrade Surjeet. The main speakers were three chief ministers from the three left-led states, Comrade Jyoti Basu, Comrade Nripen Chakraborty and Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad.

This was the most important conference because it decided many controversial issues before the Kisan movement and gave clear guidance on all those matters for the future. It took up the tactical approach of the Kisan Sabha regarding the Kisan movement and gave the correct direction. It evaluated the post-Independence agricultural policies. It gave clear interpretations on the slogans of Kisan movements and their tasks.

It discussed the main weaknesses of Kisan movements – its ideological confusions, organisational loopholes and weaknesses in building militant struggles – and provided a clear direction for the future. It discussed the importance of the expansion of the organisation and, to that end, the role of the basic committee that was the primary unit committee, which was the most important for the expansion and consolidation of the organisation. The conference also gave a clear direction on united movement, its importance and the correct approach to united struggles. The conference opined seriously on the selection of cadres, their proper training and steps to be taken at all levels in this regard.

The conference opined that the agrarian crisis intensified due to excessive centralisation of land, fast increase in poverty and unemployment, continuous increase of indebtedness, a sharp decline in remunerative prices for agricultural produce. The speedy deterioration of the economic condition of the poor peasants and agricultural workers was proof of the accentuation of the agrarian crisis. The main problems of the sharecroppers were the lack of security of their land and its regular availability, not getting the proper and just share of their produce and non-availability of institutional credit. The actual requirements of the agricultural labourer were ensuring of correct minimum wages, regular availability of a job, availability of land for housing, freedom from debt and distribution of wastelands and distribution of surplus land to them immediately.

Identifying the correct demands mentioned above and building continuous struggles for their realisation helped the speedy growth of Kisan movement in the country. The largest Kisan mobilisation in the history of Kisan Sabha was organised on March 26, 1981, at Delhi, which brought Kisan issues to the capital and before the nation forcefully. The peasantry came out on the streets, disregarding the massive police repression in different parts of the country. The Kisan movement took the correct approach of organising the first Bharat Bandh on January 19, 1982. Sadly, however, ten people from among the kisans, agricultural workers and workers who participated were killed in police firing.

Twenty-fourth Midnapore Conference -

All India Agricultural Workers Union Formed

24th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	8-11 November 1982
Where	Midnapore, West Bengal
Office bearers elected	
President	Udaraju Raman
General Secretary	Santimoy Ghosh

Following the thread from the last conference, for further strengthening the Kisan movement and to organise the rural working class, the 24th AIKS conference was held at Midnapore, West Bengal on November 8-11, 1982. The total number of delegates was 992, representing about 63 lakh Kisan Sabha members and 8 lakh agricultural workers' union members; 45 observers also participated in it. The reception committee Chairman, Comrade Jyoti Basu welcomed the delegates. He appealed to the peasants and agricultural workers to build a strong movement for radical land reforms. During that period in Assam, Punjab and insome other states, divisive sectarian disturbances were going on. He appealed to the conference to discuss the religious, linguistic and ethnic divisions among people and unify the peasantry against such regressive movements. He also appealed to the AIKS to lead from the front, the struggle against the problems of tribals and Scheduled Castes in the country. The President Comrade Binoy Chowdhury also exhorted the conference to resist the disruptive forces of darkness, such as the RSS, VHP, Jamaat-e-Islami, foreign Christian missionaries, Dal Khalsa, Amra Bangali, TUJS, AASU, Assam Gana Parishad, etc. in different parts of the country by building a united peasant-agricultural worker movement on class issues. He said that the class struggle of the workers and peasants and a worker-peasant alliance alone could change the balance of class forces and help in building a wide united and strong peasant movement in rural India.

The conference expressed concern about the deep economic crisis,

especially the intensifying agrarian crisis, and stressed on guarding the growing unrest of the people to the massive mass movements. Indira Gandhi had already come back to power after the fall of the Janata Dal government, the democratic rights of the people were increasingly facing attacks, and authoritarianism was raising its ugly head again. The sixth five-year plan virtually abandoned the question of land reforms. So it was essential to move against those anti-people policies and struggle for alternative policies.

On the other hand, many pro-people welfare programmes of the Left and Left Democratic front governments of West Bengal, Tripura and Kerala had had a positive impact on the life of peasants and agricultural workers and poorer sections. The *Barga* operation in West Bengal ensured the right of cultivation of the sharecroppers on their lands; the Tripura government also took steps in that direction. Panchayat Raj was established by the sincere efforts of the Left Front government in West Bengal that expanded grassroots democracy and ensured poor people's rights in the villages. On the other hand, centre-state relations were deteriorating due to the central government's interference with the rights of the states.

Besides, communal forces had been growing during the last three years. There were increasing communal riots in Bihar, UP, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka— there were 1,050 communal incidents during this period. The AIKS expressed serious concern against this growing menace and declared the need to mobilise the peasantry against this conspiracy of the ruling class. At the same time, attacks against Dalits and tribals increased manifold and it was most urgent and essential for all democratic and secular forces to stand by them united.

One of the most important decisions of this conference was to form a separate national level organisation of agricultural workers – the All India Agricultural Workers' Union (AIAWU). In 4 or 5 states, state level unions had started functioning; they too were demanding an all India organisation. The Midnapore conference was the last joint conference of the peasants and agricultural workers (at the all India level). In this conference, along with the AIKS session, a separate session of the agricultural workers' representatives was held. In that session, a separate report of activities was placed and a new separate

constitution and programme of the All India Agricultural Workers' Union was adopted. In this conference, for the first time, the all-India leadership of AIAWU was elected unanimously. The first conference of AIAWU elected Comrade Dasarath Deb as the new President and Comrade PK Kunjachan as the new General Secretary along with the All India Council and Central Working Committee and office bearers. The rural working class now had their own all-India organisation for building an independent movement of agricultural workers.

The AIAWU reports stated that the Congress government's policies had failed to register any improvement in the living conditions of the agricultural workers, Dalits and tribals. It also lauded the welfare schemes of left-led governments for these sections such as partial land reforms, increase in wages, peasants' old age pensions, easy credit for agricultural poor, etc. The report also said that the capitalist path of development of the Congress (I)-led government was driving millions of peasants to pauperisation. They became disillusioned and came forward to fight for their demands. The conference identified the demands of agri-workers such as a central legislation for agricultural workers to ensure minimum wages, security of service and better service conditions, distribution of surplus and wastelands to them, house sites to be provided within one year to construct houses, restoration of alienated tribal land, and a monthly pension after sixty years of age. AIAWU gave a call to fight for the realisation of those demands independently as well jointly with AIKS.

The Kerala Left and Democratic government enacted a law for agricultural workers for the first time. The Tripura Left Front government fulfilled one of the major tribal demands by setting up the Tripura Tribal Autonomous Council. AIKS demanded a central legislation for agricultural workers.

The discussion on the report of the General Secretary of AIKS was very lively and analytical. Twenty-five delegates took part in the discussion and it was adopted unanimously.

Finally, the conference elected a 120-member AIKC and a 37-member CKC, besides nine office bearers. Comrade Udaraju Raman was elected President and Comrade Santimoy Ghosh, the General Secretary.

Twenty-fifth Silver Jubilee Conference at Patna -

The Golden Jubilee Year of AIKS' Foundation

25th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	17-19 May 1986
Where	Patna
Office bearers elected	
President	Godavari Parulekar
General Secretary	N Sankaraiya

1986 was the golden jubilee of the foundation of the Kisan Sabha. AIKS, therefore, decided to observe its fiftieth anniversary. The decision to hold its 25th conference – the silver jubilee conference – in the same year gave the opportunity of observing both the historic events together. It was decided that the conference would be held on May 17-19, 1986, at Patna, Bihar.

Accordingly, the conference was held at SriKrishna Memorial Hall at Patna in Sahajanand Saraswati Nagar with much enthusiasm and fanfare. Comrade Abdullah Rasul hoisted the red flag and the presidential procession led by Comrade U.Raman entered the conference hall. The reception committee Chairman Comrade Krishnakant Singh in his welcome address gave details of the Kisan movement in different parts of Bihar. He explained that in the struggles for capturing land and resisting eviction of sharecroppers, about 200 poor peasants, agricultural workers, Dalits and tribal men and women and children were massacred.

Comrade Udaraju Raman was relieved from the responsibility of the President due to health issues. Comrade Godavari Parulekar was elected the new President unanimously by the conference. She was the first woman President of AIKS – it was a historic event. The tribal peasants of Worli in Maharashtra fought for long under her leadership, which was one of the major historic Kisan struggles of the country.

Since the last conference, there were a series of peasant struggles in different parts of the country and there were major changes in the political situation. The agrarian crisis deepened and for the rural people

life became more difficult which led to an increase in mass unrest. Communal forces had grown stronger and divisive movements had spread in many states. The attacks against democratic rights intensified. US imperialism hatched conspiracies against socialist countries by spreading nuclear terror thereby endangering world peace. So it became imperative to strengthen the struggle in defence of democracy as well against imperialist conspiracies. In this context, the 25th AIKS conference became very important. All these issues were discussed threadbare and important resolutions were adopted on issues such as the possibility of another world war, on centre-state relations, on May Day centenary, and against divisive forces, against growing attacks on weaker sections, on the pro-people programmes of the Left governments, on the problems of agricultural labour, etc. It was decided to use these resolutions to strengthen the political consciousness of the peasantry. The charter of demands of Kisan Sabha was reviewed and updated and a 12-point charter of demands was adopted.

In the meantime, AIKS became the largest Kisan organisation in the country. Its membership reached about 80 lakh. However, the uneven development of the organisation remained one of the main weaknesses and the conference decided to change this situation. Along with independent movements, the importance of a united struggle of different peasant and mass organisations was discussed in depth and it was decided that increased initiative was required in this regard. The conference called upon its members to build worker-peasant unity for the completion of the democratic revolution.

The conference ended with the election of the new 122-member AIKC and 41-member CKC along with new office bearers. Comrade Godavari Parulekar had already been elected President and now Comrade N. Sankaraiya was elected the new General Secretary, 'The Golden jubilee year of the AIKS should become the starting point of the biggest activity to extend the Sabha to all areas and to spread the message of agrarian revolution to all parts of the country. Without organising the bulk of the peasantry, their genuine interests could not be defended, nor could there be any successful agrarian revolution. The guarantee of success was a powerful Kisan Sabha as the mass organisation of the peasantry, championing also the cause of agricultural workers and forging unity with them and building the unity of the peasantry with the working class.'

Twenty-sixth Khammam Conference -

A Session in the Land of the Telangana Struggle

26th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	27-30 April 1989
Where	Khamman, Andhra Pradesh
Office bearers elected	
President	Harkishan Singh Surjeet
General Secretary	Ram Narayan Goswami

After the jubilee conference at Patna, the Kisan movement expanded in different parts of the country. The peasantry joined many struggles against the Rajiv Gandhi government's anti-peasant economic policies even as the agrarian crisis aggravated in the country. AIKS took up the issues of food crisis and severe drought in half of India and built massive peasant movements. In this context, the decision was taken to organise the 26th AIKS conference at Khammam in Andhra Pradesh, the main centre of the Telangana struggle. Membership also crossed the one Crore mark after the Patna conference.

The conference was held at Swami Sahajanand Saraswati Nagar, Khammam on April 27 -30, 1989. Comrade Binoykrishna Chowdhury hoisted the flag as the President Comrade Godavari Parulekar was delayed. The reception committee Chairman Comrade B.N. Reddy welcomed the delegates. The conference elected Comrade Harkishan Singh Surjeet as the new President. Comrade Nripen Chakraborty inaugurated the conference. 906 delegates and 10 observers attended the conference. Comrade Surjeet in his presidential address explained the glorious history of the Telangana struggle to those who were present in the conference. He also remembered two great leaders of the Kisan movement – Comrade Sahajanand Saraswati and Comrade Muzaffar Ahmed on their birth centenary. He described the state of our peasantry, which hadn't improved much even after four decades of independence due to the anti-peasant policies of the successive Congress governments and exploitation by semi-feudal and feudal landlords, and the growing monopoly capitalism. In the end he said, 'I

want to emphasise only on one point that there are tremendous possibilities of developing the peasant movement in the country. Let every unit of AIKS take the initiative in unleashing the struggle for land whether it is occupation of *benami* land, surplus land or by stoppage of evictions.’

Due to the absence of Comrade N. Sankaraiya, the General Secretary, due to illness, Joint Secretary Comrade Ram Narayan Goswami presented the General Secretary’s report. He explained the serious industrial and agrarian crisis in the country with elaborate instances and statistics. He also gave vivid descriptions of the innumerable and unprecedented successes of struggles by the farmers during this period. He also expressed his concern on the growing divisive communal and reactionary forces disrupting the unity of the toiling masses.

Thirty delegates took part in the discussion of the report and it was unanimously adopted. Many important resolutions were adopted on major current issues. The session was concluded with a very enthusiastic and illuminating speech by Comrade Surjeet. Comrade Ram Narayan Goswami was elected the new secretary by this conference.

A massive open rally was held on May 1, 1989, in which about 5 lakh farmers and peasants participated and it was addressed by Comrade Surjeet, Com. Godavari Parulekar, Com. E.K. Nayanar, L.B. Gangadhar Rao, B.N. Reddy, M. Basavapunnaiiah and B. Venkateshwara Rao.

Twenty-seventh Hissar Conference -

The Session at the Dawn of Neo-liberalism

27th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	27-30 September 1992
Where	Hissar, Haryana
Office bearers elected	
President	N Sankaraiya
General Secretary	Ram Narayan Goswami

The 27th conference of AIKS was held at Hissar in Haryana on September 27-30, 1992, in Comrade Sohan Singh Cheema Hall and Comrade Abdullah Rasul Nagar. In the conference, 841 delegates and 29 observers took part representing 1,26,84,228 members from 19 states. The conference elected a 123-member AIKC and 42-member CKC and 10 office bearers. Comrade N. Sankaraiya was elected President and Comrade Ram Narayan Goswami the General Secretary.

The Hissar conference of AIKS was significant for various reasons. The last Khammam conference had given a call for land struggle all over the country. This led to tremendous growth of land struggles in different states such as Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, etc. in the context of the Narasimha Rao government's acceptance of the 'Fund-Bank guided neoliberal economic policies, which had a disastrous impact on the life of common people, especially the small, marginal and poor peasants and agricultural labourers. The AIKS identified the real nature of these policies whereas all other Kisan organisations had openly welcomed them. The conference also correctly noted the growing communalism and its divisive impact on the unity of the people. These communal forces, on the one hand, supported the neoliberal economic policies, while on the other hand, nakedly supported imperialist conspiracies, which endangered the national unity and integrity of India.

Comrade Surjeet hoisted the red flag to begin the conference. The conference elected Comrade N. Sankaraiya as President who took over charge from Comrade Surjeet. The reception committee Chairman, the veteran freedom fighter Comrade Chowdhury Lajpat Ray greeted the delegates and on his behalf, Comrade Raghuvveer Singh Hooda spoke about the role of Haryana in the freedom struggle, especially the role of the peasantry, who had joined the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857.

Comrade Surjeet inaugurated the conference. He spoke about the collapse of the Soviet Union and the setback to the struggle for socialism. He also noted that for the time being capitalism and imperialism had the upper hand, which posed a serious challenge to the independence and sovereignty of the third world countries. However, it should not be taken for granted that US imperialism would easily establish its hegemony in the world. This incident had a negative impact on the Indian situation. Our government was surrendering to the US imperialist pressure and accepted neoliberal policy. This would have serious impact on our economy and polity.

He explained the condition of the peasantry in different states. Therefore, the level of consciousness and struggle were also bound to vary.

- The first group of states were those where the left movement was strong, i.e., West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, where land reformshad been conducted to a great extent, though some other problems did exist. The Kisan movement was also of a higher level in those states.
- The second group of states were Bihar, East UP, MP, Odisha, Karnataka, etc. where massive militant land struggles were possible. Social oppression in those states was also another area against which struggles could be launched. Many militant struggles did take place in which the landlord-police-goonda alliance killed many peasants. AIKS should try harder in these areas to build a bigger and stronger movement and organisation.
- The third group of states were Punjab, Haryana, West UP, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra, which were more developed in terms of production and income. Here capitalism had entered agriculture in a big way. We needed to study the power and nature of landlordism and build struggles accordingly.

The General Secretary R.N. Goswami's report was very analytical and exhaustive. It dealt with all the major problems of the peasantry and suggested many steps to build the movement. He reviewed the Khammam conference decisions and appealed for their implementation.

He explained the role of landlord-led Kisan organisations and their disruptive movement and to counter their propoganda, we needed an alternative agrarian policy. He stressed that ideologically we should not deviate and build the Kisan movement based on poor peasants, marginal peasants and agricultural workers as stressed in the Varanasi conference without ignoring the demands of other sections of farmers, such as remunerative price for all crops and loan waivers, since that would only isolate us from broader sections of the peasantry. Therefore, we had to organise a broader united Kisan movement in the country.

In the Hissar conference, we adopted condolence resolutions remembering many great leaders of our working-class and Kisan movements who had passed away during this period – Comrade B.T. Ranadive, Comrade M. Basavapunniah, Comrade Saroj Mukherjee,

Comrade Abdullah Rasul, Comrade P.K. Kunjachan and Sohan Singh Cheema.

The conference discussed five commission reports. The most important commission was on the possible impact of neo-liberal policy on the peasantry. It analysed the different aspects of international finance capital directed and Fund-Bank led neoliberal policies, which would demolish the public sector and lead to massive privatisation in all aspects of life; the self-reliance policy would be given up and the country would surrender before foreign capital and pressure. The AIKS correctly understood these issues, a fact that has been proved true today.

The neo-liberal policy prescribed structural reforms. This was invented by Fund-Bank think tank to help the multinational corporate to travel from the regime of finance capital to international finance capital, from earning profit to maximisation of profit. It forced the government to withdraw from all financial activities and swiftly shift to liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation (LPG) policies. It paved the way for free movement of international finance capital to all countries, breaking the barriers of state sovereignty. These policies were bound to destroy self-reliance of the third world countries and integrate them with highly competitive world market through blatant use of WTO sticks. This would break the backbone of agriculture in developing and backward countries. This would lead to deindustrialisation of those countries making them fully dependent on developed countries and a few MNCs. The AIKS realised this imminent danger and warned the peasantry and people of our country, when most of the Kisan organisations were beating the drum of LPG policies and expecting massive benefits.

The other commissions were on inputs and production, on land reform, on rural development and employment generation and on tribal affairs. All these commissions were seriously discussed and made fruitful suggestions for the Kisan movement based.

Comrade N. Sankaraiya made his concluding speech and called upon the delegates to broaden and deepen the campaign against the disastrous new economic policies of the central government. It also called for unity of various Kisan organisations, unity of kisans and agricultural workers and for unity of the working class and peasantry. In the massive public meeting, thousands of peasants took part. Comrade H.S. Surjeet, Comrade Jyoti Basu, Comrade N. Sankaraiya,

Comrade R.N. Goswami, Comrade R.S. Hooda, Sheopat Singh, Comrade Inderjeet Singh and Comrade Prithvi Singh addressed the rally.

Twenty-eighth Cuttack Conference -

Striving for Consolidation of AIKS

28th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	19-20 November 1995
Where	Cuttack, Odisha
Office bearers elected	
President	Binoy Konar
General Secretary	S Ramachandran Pillai

After the successful implementation of the important decisions of the Hissar conference, the AIKS held its 28th conference at KVK Auditorium Hall of Cuttack in Odisha on November 19-22, 1995. The flag was hoisted by senior comrade N. Sankaraiya, President of AIKS who made a short presidential speech. Comrade H.K.S. Surjeet, Vice President of AIKS, formally inaugurated the conference. The General Secretary Comrade Ram Narayan Goswami presented the conference report. 25 comrades took part in the discussion and after Comrade Goswami replied to the comments raised, the report was unanimously adopted. Four commissions were constituted by the conference:

1. Land reforms and land related issues
2. Agricultural development
3. Role of Panchayat institutions and co-operatives and
4. Democratic functioning of Kisan Sabha.

The commission reports were discussed in detail and adopted by the conference for implementation.

The conference elected Comrade Binoy Konar as the new President and Comrade S. Ramachandran Pillai was elected the new General Secretary of the Kisan Sabha. The reception committee secretary Comrade Jagannath Mishra welcomed the delegates and gave a vivid picture of Odisha's Kisan movement including the burning

problems of the peasantry in the state.

Comrade H.K.S. Surjeet in his inaugural address gave a perspective of anti-feudal-anti-imperialist peasant movement in the country leading to socialism under the leadership of the working class. Through the protracted class and mass struggle against oppression and eviction in West Bengal, there was now a situation where not only were land reforms effected, but where one third of adult peasants were Kisan Sabha members – something that was a lesson to the peasant movement the world over. However, Comrade Surjeet noted that in many states those lessons had not been applied with equal success. A concrete study of the situation was essential if we wished to change the correlation of class forces in favour of the peasantry and the democratic movement as a whole.

He also noted the upswing in the struggle for anti-imperialist resistance, when 104 countries supported Cuba against the US blockade. Comrade Surjeet also opined that both Congress and BJP's hope to come to power might be shattered in the coming Lok Sabha election. In that situation, the left and democratic forces would be in a better position to change things much more effectively in favour of the toiling masses.

He also stressed on a strategy of unity of the poor peasants and agricultural workers as the only answer in such a situation. He noted the emerging contradictions between the peasantry and agricultural workers in West Bengal and Kerala and said that they must be resolved democratically with the understanding that worker-peasant unity has been the core of the development of the peasant movement wherever it had succeeded. He gave a call to involve broader sections of the peasantry in the decision-making process of the organisation.

Comrade Ram Narayan Goswami in the General Secretary's report underlined, after giving experiences of struggles, the lessons AIKS drew from them. The AIKS during the last three years had worked for the evolution of an alternative agricultural policy, as directed by the last Hissar conference. A national seminar was organised in 1993 in Delhi with experts in different fields along with the All India Agricultural Workers Union. On the basis of the direction of the seminar, AIKC adopted an alternative agricultural policy document. This document explained the adverse impact of the new agricultural policy of export oriented agriculture and higher prices, which ignored

the interests of the majority of the peasants and served the interests of capitalist landlords. The document stood for completion of land reform measures, distribution of land to agricultural workers and poor peasants, expansion in irrigation facilities, more public investment in agriculture, improvement of infrastructural facilities, use of improved seeds, pesticides, modern technology, giving subsidies to peasantry to protect the interests of small and middle peasants, assuring remunerative prices for all crops, cheap institutional loans, comprehensive crop insurance, tackling all problems of agricultural workers, making central legislation for the expansion of PDS, prohibiting big and monopoly business control of agriculture, rural employment generation, public health facilities, public education, cooperative system in production, distribution and marketing, etc.

As the neoliberal economic policy was accepted by the government as national policy, the AIKS exposed the negative impact of the policy on the life of the peasantry and people at large and called upon the toiling people to fight against this policy of the Narasimha Rao government. The conference also gave a call for building a united peasant movement all over the country.

The conference also called for an expansion of the movement, consolidation of the movement and activation of members. It stressed on the formation of unit committees at village level all over the country.

The conference adopted many important resolutions, including the four commission papers. 674 delegates from 20 states took part in the conference. The conference elected a 119-member AIKC, 40-member CKC and 9 office bearers. Comrade Binoy Konar was elected President and Comrade S.R. Pillai was elected General Secretary.

Twenty-ninth Kozhikode Conference -

The Last Conference of the 20th Century

29th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	5-8 March 1999
Where	Kozhikode, Kerala
Office bearers elected	
President	S Ramachandran Pillai
General Secretary	K Varadarajan

The All India Kisan Sabha had been expanding its activities since the Cuttack conference. Its members increased to 1.28 crore in 20 states. Along with this organisational growth, its movement also expanded on several agrarian issues. In this context, the 29th AIKS conference was held in Kozhikode, Kerala on March 5-8, 1999. This was the last conference of this century, after observing its 60th anniversary, as planned by Cuttack conference. This was organised by different states in a befitting manner and it helped to highlight the identity of the AIKS among the peasantry.

The vice President of AIKS, the senior-most leader of the Kisan movement Comrade H.K.S. Surjeet hoisted the red flag on March 5, at EMS Nagar, Kozhikode. The conference condoled the demise of our legendary leaders Comrade E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Comrade Godavari Parulekar and Comrade Dasarath Deb who passed away during this period.

The reception committee Chairman Comrade C.P. Balan Vydiar, MLA, welcomed the delegates. A total of 699 delegates and 27 observers attended the conference from 20 states, representing the 1.28 crore members. Comrade Freddy Huck, President of the Trade Union International of Workers in Agriculture, Food, Commerce, Textile and Allied Industries and Bernard Gleize of TUI attended the conference. Comrade H.K.S. Surjeet inaugurated the conference. He argued that though there had been many changes since the formation of AIKS sixty-three years ago, the land issue as such has not been resolved. He also lamented that the scientific and technological revolution, the Green Revolution and most importantly, the entry of capitalist relations in the field of agriculture brought many changes but they also brought many new challenges. The AIKS played an important role in the freedom struggle. Along with that, the AIKS fought many battles like the Tebhaga movement in West Bengal, Surma Valley movement in Assam, the tribal struggle in Tripura, the Punnapra-Vayalar battle in Kerala, the Worli tribal struggle in Maharashtra, tenant struggle in PEPSU, and the landmark struggle of the Telangana peasantry in Andhra Pradesh.

After Independence too, innumerable struggles were organised by the AIKS in different parts of the country. Two consecutive splits in the sixties, the first one engineered by reformists and the second by

left sectarian and adventurist slogans, did immense harm to the movement. But, we were able to overcome those difficulties very soon and march ahead.

Comrade Binoy Konar in his presidential address said, “The Indian ruling class under the dictates of imperialist powers and their institutions like IMF, World Bank and WTO, are fast heading towards liberalisation. Industrial workforce is declining adding more and more burden upon agriculture. Lending institutions, seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, cropping pattern, market, export, import, research and development, patent mechanism – everything is being left in the hands of monopolists and multinationals, without any protection for the peasantry. Peasantry as well as agriculture would be in danger... Extensive and continuous propaganda has to be carried on about the real meaning of liberalisation and this policy has to be exposed.”

In his General Secretary’s report, Comrade S.R. Pillai gave very extensive analysis of the agrarian crisis. To fully understand the real nature of the crisis, two all-India seminars were later organised by AIKS centre - one on April 5-7, 1997, along with the 60th anniversary of AIKS, and another on July 19-20, 1998, in New Delhi. In both these seminars, experts, intellectuals, and leaders of AIKS and AIAWU participated and helped the movement with a correct understanding of policy issues. Many important issues related to agriculture were analysed and discussed in the report covering the land reforms, expansion of irrigation, power and infrastructural facilities, use of science and technology, credit facilities, marketing system and prices, fertiliser and pesticides, ecology, tribal issues and peasant suicides, and social issues.

Comrade Pillai in his report explained how our apprehensions and analysis in our alternative policy documents of the agrarian policies were pursued by the government. He cautioned about imperialist conspiracy, through capitalist market forces, globalisation and patent laws and entry of the corporate sector and multinationals. He also critically examined the policy of the BJP government against the interests of the peasantry and urged the conference to build a broader unity and unleash a broader movement against the anti-peasant policies.

He also emphasised that the Kisan Sabha needs to support the agricultural workers in their struggles.

He warned about the growing communal danger and communal attacks against the minorities by the Sangh Parivar, disrupting the unity of the peasantry and people. He stressed on the need to fight against caste divisions and conspiracies and divisive forces. He noted the problems faced by women, especially peasant women, their deprivation of land rights, atrocities on them and the role of AIKS in combating these attacks.

Among the tasks, he stressed on the expansion of the Kisan movement and the strengthening of the leadership at different levels. Along with that, the need for cadre-building and democratic functioning of the organisation at all levels was most important, he added. Unity with the agricultural workers' union and trade unions for building worker-peasant unity was essential for the completion of the democratic revolution in the country, he concluded.

The conference elected a 124-member AIKC, 43-member CKC and 11 office bearers. Comrade S.R. Pillai was elected the President and Comrade K. Varadarajan was elected the new General Secretary of AIKS. A good number of resolutions on all important and burning issues were adopted by the conference important among them were those against imperialism, against dangerous communal forces, on the patent legislation and against social atrocities and barbaric attacks on Dalits in Bihar by landlords of criminal organisations like Ranvir Sena, Kunwar Sena, etc.

Five important commission reports were discussed and adopted. Important among them was that on the new economic policy and its impact on agriculture. The conference was concluded by a speech by the outgoing President Comrade Binoy Konar.

On the evening of March 8, a huge Kisan mass rally was held at AKG Nagar, Kozhikode beach, which was presided over by Comrade S.R. Pillai and inaugurated by Comrade Binoy Konar. It was addressed by Comrade E.K. Nayanar, V.S. Achutanandan, K. Varadarajan, Patola Md. Kutty, A. Vijayraghavan and TUI President Comrade Freddy Huck.

Thirtieth Jalandhar Conference -

Kisan Movement in the Era of Globalisation

30th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	6-9 March 2003
Where	Jalandhar
Office bearers elected	
President	S Ramachandran Pillai
General Secretary	K Varadarajan

The AIKS held its 30th conference at Jalandhar, Punjab, on March 6-9, 2003. A total of 670 delegates and observers from 23 states attended the conference including 20 women delegates, representing 1.57 crore members. Comrade H.K.S. Surjeet hoisted the flag on March 6. The conference was presided over by Comrade S.R. Pillai. The conference condoled the demise of great Kisan leaders Comrade Binoykrishna Chowdhury, Comrade N. Prasad Rao, Comrade M. Hanumantha Rao and Comrade Samar Chowdhury and others. The reception committee Chairman Comrade Rachpal Singh delivered his welcome speech. He recalled the glorious struggles of the Punjab peasantry such as the 'Pagri Sambhal Jatta Leher' against British imperialism, the Ghadar Party, people's role in the Kisan movement, the canal water movement and resistance to the Khalistani terrorist movement and the building of a strong Kisan organisation in Punjab. Comrade H.K.S. Surjeet inaugurated the conference. He recalled his six-decade-long association with AIKS since its inception in 1936. During this long journey, he experienced many changes in the condition of the peasantry, several policy changes and their impact on the life of the peasantry, the growth of innumerable struggles in different parts of the country, changes in organisational understanding due to reformist and sectarian attacks, the growth of limited movement, etc. He shared his ideas in the conference on how the ideology of the Kisan movement evolved. He also explained how capitalism was built up in a semi-feudal country and how capitalist-landlord exploitation intensified during the last fifty-five years. He also described the contribution of the Left Front

governments of West Bengal and Tripura and the Left Democratic Front of Kerala to the pro-peasant land reform and other policies. He also explained the role of the five-year plan to strengthen agriculture with the help of the rich peasants and landlords and the gradual pauperisation of poor peasants, tenants, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers.

He also criticised the Budget of the year 2003-2004, which carried forward the imperialist agenda of the government, was basically pro-rich and anti-poor, providing major fiscal concessions to the big businesses and corporate houses while entailing a further increase in the living cost of workers and peasants. He finally gave a clarion call to build a strong resistance movement of the peasantry against the anti-people policies of the NDA government.

In his presidential address, Comrade S.R. Pillai spoke about the US imperialist war against Iraq, which was supported by other imperialist powers. Their purpose was to control the huge oil reserve of the region. He criticised the NDA government for pursuing anti-peasant policies by surrendering to an imperialist agency like WTO. He stressed on the need for anti-imperialist struggle by the peasantry. Com SRP also emphasised another aspect of the Indian situation – the growing communal forces and caste polarisation. He expressed concern on the increase in communal riots against minorities and caste riots against Dalits. He appealed to the peasantry to strengthen unity with workers, middle-class employees and all other toiling sections of people and called for a united action of the left-led Kisan and agricultural workers' organisations.

In the General Secretary's report, Comrade K. Varadarajan made an assessment of the impact of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation (LPG) on the agrarian economy. Community ownership of land was gradually going to the corporates, restrictions on import were removed, public distribution system was being dismantled, the patent law changed in favour of MNCs, indigenous research was given the go-by and restrictions on government investment had gradually destroyed our peasant economy, leading to a serious agrarian crisis at the dawn of the 21st century. The assessment made in our alternative economic policy document became a reality in our agriculture. Reversal of land reforms happened. After removal of quantitative restriction, massive import of agricultural products and integration of our market with the world market brought disaster to our agriculture. The entry,

in a big way, of multinational corporations in our agriculture and food sector destroyed our peasantry. Procurement of foodgrains dwindled and forced distress sale by farmers. Agrarian income of the peasantry was coming down very fast, leading to pauperisation of the peasantry. Institutional credit facilities shrunk severely leading the peasantry to indebtedness.

He gave a description of the successful joint national convention of the left-led Kisan Sabha and Agricultural Workers' Union at Delhi and its call for a Delhi march. The convention was attended by 700 delegates from all over India and the Delhi march in the month of November 2000 was massive. The AIKS also took the initiative to organise crop-wise mobilisation and programmes were taken up for sugarcane, coconut, silk and milk producers. The Fishermen's Association was also active in this period and held an all-India convention.

AIKC observed the centenary of the great leader of the Santhal Mutiny, Birsa Munda in June 2000, highlighting problems of the tribal people. A statue of Birsa Munda was unveiled at Ranchi, Jharkhand.

The organisation expanded to 23 states and membership increased to 1,57,24,636. However, the major membership was from two states – West Bengal and Kerala where about 87.5 per cent of the members were enrolled. This unevenness of growth was the main weakness of the organisation. The report was unanimously adopted by the conference after discussion by 36 delegates. In the concluding speech of the President, Comrade SRP stressed on four important tasks:

1. Taking up of burning issues of the peasantry and building of consistent struggles by states.
2. Continuous work to raise the consciousness of the peasantry and building unity against communal and caste divisions.
3. Strengthening the organisation at all levels and planning continuous expansion.
4. Selecting certain priority states and building a strong movement there.

Many important resolutions were adopted by the conference. Some of them were on Iraq, on the Left Front victory in Tripura, against eviction of tribals from forest land, against reversal of land reforms, against communalism and divisive forces, on drought, etc.

The conference discussed and adopted four commission reports

on:

- a. Effects of LPG (Liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalisation) policies on our agriculture
- b. On irrigation and measures to meet natural calamities
- c. On credit to agriculture and
- d. On social atrocities.

The conference elected 13 office bearers, a 52-member CKC, and a 134-member AIKC. Comrade S.R. Pillai was elected President and Comrade K. Varadarajan was re-elected as General Secretary.

On the evening of March 9 there was a huge mass rally of thousands of farmers at Guru Govind Singh Stadium, Jalandhar. This meeting was addressed by H.K.S. Surjeet, Comrade Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, Deve Gowda, Comrade S.R. Pillai, Comrade K. Varadarajan, Comrade Balwant Singh, Comrade Rachpal Singh and Lahembor Singh Taggar.

Thirty-first Nashik Conference -

Kisan Movement during the UPA Regime

31st AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	28-31 January 2006
Where	Nashik, Maharashtra
Office bearers elected	
President	S Ramachandran Pillai
General Secretary	K Varadarajan

The AIKS organised its 31st conference on January 28-31, 2006 in Biplab Dasgupta Nagar, P.K. Tandon Hall in Nashik, Maharashtra. Senior Vice President Comrade Binoy Konar hoisted the red flag and gave a speech. After a floral tribute to martyrs, the session started with the condolence of President Yasser Arafat of Palestine and our AIKS leaders – Comrade P.K. Tandon, Comrade Biplab Dasgupta, Comrade E.K. Nayanar, Comrade L.B. Balgangadhar Rao, Comrade Nripen Chakraborty and others. The Chairman of the reception committee Comrade Jayanta Jaibhave delivered the welcome speech and gave a

brief history of the Maharashtra Kisan movement.

Comrade Binoy Konar in his speech said that India is a semi-feudal and capitalistically backward country. It is the peasantry, which forms the overwhelming majority of the exploited and oppressed people. It was our task to unleash their latent fighting capability through struggles organised on partial, immediate and realisable issues, and by conducting a campaign on basic issues and their intricate relation with partial issues, raise their consciousness and draw them out from the ideological and political enslavement by the landlords and bourgeoisie to the camp of the working class for completing the democratic revolution and the march towards an exploitation-free society.

Comrade H.K.S. Surjeet could not attend the conference and sent a message to the delegates. He outlined the history of the Kisan struggles in the 19th and early 20th centuries, which led to the formation of the All India Kisan Congress in 1936. He narrated some important struggles of the pre-Independence period.

He continued, 'It is indeed appalling that even after nearly six decades of independence, the condition of the vast majority of farmers and those dependent on agriculture continues to be grim.' After discussing the situation of agriculture in recent periods, he said, 'There is a big crisis facing Indian agriculture today. The distress facing the peasantry is reflected in the spate of suicides in many parts of the country, including Maharashtra.

'During this period, we also saw the defeat of the BJP-led NDA in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections and the assumption of power by the UPA with the support of the left parties from outside. For the first time, the Left got sixty-one members elected to the Lok Sabha. The CPI (M) alone got 44. The increased strength also demands a bigger intervention and role at the national level. The Left today is not merely criticising governmental policies that it is opposed to, but is also placing alternatives.'

In his presidential address, Comrade S.R.Pillai elaborately described the role of US imperialism against the third world countries and their military intervention in different parts of the world. He also noted the resistance against the imperialist conspiracies by a large number of Latin American countries in many of which left and democratic governments came to power.

He also noted that 'other than military attacks and threats,

imperialism is using international institutions such as World Bank, IMF and WTO to force developing countries to change their policies so that MNCs can exploit the resources – both material and human – of the developing countries. It is in this context that US President Bush is visiting India. His visit to India is to further entangle India as their junior partner in the global plan, which will endanger the interest of the people and the country. All India Kisan Sabha considers that US imperialism is the foremost enemy of humanity’.

He also talked about the UPA government in power with the Left support and the common minimum programme, which made promises for the common people such as:

- a. More public investment in agricultural research and extension of rural infrastructure and irrigation
- b. Ensuring doubling of the flow of rural credit which covered small and marginal farmers
- c. Better crop and livestock insurance scheme
- d. Fullest implementation of minimum wage laws for farm labourers
- e. Ensuring protection of farmers from imports so that fair and remunerative prices could be achieved
- f. Ownership rights in forest land for tribals
- g. Land to the landless and no reversal of land reforms
- h. Discontinuation of eviction of tribals from forest lands and
- i. Enactment of a national employment guarantee act for rural unemployed workers

Some of those steps were implemented but others were not sincerely taken up or taken up half-heartedly. The government appointed a national commission on farmers under the chairmanship of Dr Swaminathan. The report made certain good recommendations to the government but they did not make any sincere efforts to implement those recommendations.

Comrade Pillai linked this failure to the intensification of the agrarian crisis and elaborated on the nature of the crisis. He noted the growing unrest among farmers against it and appealed to organise them in a systematic, long and militant struggle independently by AIKS as well as by uniting with other organisations.

The General Secretary Comrade K. Varadarajan placed his report to the conference. He explained the agrarian crisis in the country due to the wrong policy pursued by governments and how the impact of

globalisation had intensified it. As a result, there was a sharp decline in public investment, slashing of agricultural subsidies, crunch in rural employment and income and agricultural growth, encouraging corporate farming and neoliberal reform. All these issues were explained with data and arguments. He also expressed concern over the growing attacks on tribals, Dalits, minorities and women.

He also criticised the UPA government's Seed Bill 2004 and the model set for agricultural markets. He mentioned that the declaration adopted at the WTO ministerial conference at Hong Kong made it clear that the global trading system continues to be weighed in favour of the advanced and developed countries and that the declaration failed to address the concerns of the developing countries. The cuts in import tariffs imposed on developing countries in respect of agricultural products would seriously aggravate the problems of small and marginal farmers, including those in India. India's role along with Brazil in pressuring other developing countries to accept the Hong Kong final draft had alienated India among the developing countries and served the interests of imperialism.

He also applauded the role of the West Bengal government for an alternative policy on land reforms, the Panchayati raj institution and overall rural development, and the massive increase in agricultural production and substantial decrease in poverty. Similar had been the experience in Kerala and Tripura under Left-led governments.

He also mentioned that AIKS and AIAWU jointly held a national seminar in Thiruvananthapuram in December 2003 and adopted an 'Alternative Agricultural Policy' – updating the Alternative Agricultural Policy document of 1993. This new document helped to improve our understanding on the agrarian problem.

The Foundation for Agrarian Studies along with AIKS-AIAWU organised two workshops, one at Bardhaman and another in Bangalore in which Left intellectuals took part. This also gave us an opportunity to study the prevailing agrarian situation and helped in organising subsequent state-wise classes.

AIKS also prepared and sent its suggestions to the Swaminathan Commission, which was working on a new agricultural policy for the country.

Massive destruction of life, property and land was caused by the unprecedented tsunami in 2004 and great damage occurred in Tamil

Nadu, Puducherry, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. AIKS took up some relief work to help the victims.

There were many movements and struggles all over the country. AIKS took the initiative to build those struggles. Three all-India general strikes were organised by trade unions against the government's anti-people policies, on May 21, 2003, on February 24, 2004 and on September 29, 2005. AIKS organised kisans in different states thus contributing to the success of the strikes. A joint convention was held at Delhi on December 3, 2005, against the Hong Kong WTO meeting and it was decided to organise campaigns against the government's failure.

On the organisational review, the General Secretary said that there was some growth in some states, but the question, which must be sharply posed, was why the Kisan Sabha had not grown commensurately as a force while having substantially increased mass influence at the all-India level. Why is it that despite a number of struggles and mass movements we had conducted we had not been able to consolidate and widen the movement in a big way?

As an important task, it was decided that at least three cadres should be identified exclusively for state centres. Annual conferences up to block level should be held and democratic functioning ensured. Annual state level plan should be prepared and reviewed periodically. State and district-level training should be planned, and a bulletin in Hindi should be brought out.

He stressed on struggle on local issues and education of cadres on the basis of our alternative policy and planning of our struggles accordingly. We needed to take up social issues seriously. Political and ideological education and fight against communalism and casteism had to be taken up more vigorously among the peasantry.

Many important resolutions were adopted. Some of them were on the national commission on farmers, on farmers' suicides, on reversal of land reforms, on atrocities against SCs/STs and women, on FDI in the retail sector, etc.

The conference was attended by 718 delegates from 24 states, representing 1.88 crore members. The conference elected a 137-member AIKC and 51-member CKC and 16 office bearers. Comrade S. Ramachandran Pillai was elected President and Comrade K. Varadarajan was elected General Secretary.

On the evening of January 28, a big mass rally was held at Nashik, which was presided over by Comrade S.R. Pillai and addressed by Comrade Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, K. Varadarajan, Ashok Dhawale, J.P. Gavit and others.

Thirty-second Guntur Conference -

Intensification of Agrarian Crisis

32nd AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	7-10 January 2010
Where	Guntur, Andhra Pradesh
Office bearers elected	
President	S Ramachandran Pillai
General Secretary	K Varadarajan

The All India Kisan Sabha organised its 32nd conference at Guntur, Andhra Pradesh on January 7-10, 2010. The venue was named after Comrade H.K.S. Surjeet. Since the inception of AIKS in 1936, Comrade Surjeet had been associated with the organisation and the Kisan movement in the country. For the first time he was not with us in the conference. After his sad demise, the AIKS lost its friend, philosopher and guide. His historic role through every twist and turn of the movement would remain a beacon of light to our march forward. The conference flag was hoisted by veteran Kisan leader Comrade Binoy Konar. Comrade H.K.S. Surjeet's portrait was garlanded by the President and General Secretary. The conference paid tribute to Comrade Surjeet's memory. The conference also condoled the demise of our beloved Kisan leaders - Comrades Sheopat Singh, Mehboob Zahedi, T.K. Ramakrishnan, Koratala Satyanarayan along with trade union leaders - Comrades E. Balanandan, Chittabrata Mazumdar, Ahilya Rangnekar, Prabhakar Sanzgiri, P. Ramachandra, Anil Biswas and Prithvi Singh among others.

720 out of 749 delegates attended the conference from 23 states, representing 2.26 crore members. Comrade S.R. Pillai presided over the conference. In his presidential address, he counted the AIKS

conferences held in Andhra Pradesh earlier: in 1940 at Palasa, at Vijaywada in 1944, at Khammam in 1989; and now in Guntur. Andhra Pradesh was a state of many peasant struggles. The peasant revolt against the *jagirdari* system in 1923; the march to Madras in 1937 from Itehapuram was a historic event. The Telangana armed struggle will always be remembered as one of the important historic struggles of the peasantry in India.

He noted that the world was facing a crisis of finances, climate, energy, food and biodiversity. The only way out from these crises was to abandon neoliberal policies, to take an alternative path of development, and to put in appropriate safeguards. The Copenhagen climate conference ended without meeting its goal of creating a legally binding agreement. This pointed to the inhuman nature of capitalism. The richness and complexity of the natural world was declining at an ever-accelerating rate due to over-exploitation by capitalism. The peasant who provides food that fed the people of the world had been pushed to dire poverty. So, in many countries the slogan of food sovereignty was being raised.

He appealed to the delegates to analyse the concrete situation in their states, formulate genuine demands of the peasantry and build a united movement in the country.

The General Secretary's report placed by Comrade K. Varadarajan described the experiences of the last four years after the Nashik conference. We were witnessing the second term of the UPA government, which pursued the policies of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation with far greater vigour. The stagnation of agriculture and lack of public expenditure had also translated into growing unemployment for the rural labourer. The global economic crisis through domestic deflation, credit squeeze and a sharp fall in crop prices was certain to worsen the state of agrarian distress unless immediate corrective steps were taken.

He explained how agricultural growth slowed down due to the intensification of the agrarian crisis. The land question was one of the essential features in it. The 59th round NSS estimated that the landless households at the all-India level were 32 per cent (2002-03) compared to around 22 per cent during the 40th round survey in 1992. Now, the NSSO's 63rd round estimated the proportion of landless households to be 35 per cent in 2006-07. The final figure would be available after

sometime which would be more alarming.

The proliferation of SEZs, that were effectively islands of monopoly capital, was emerging as a serious threat to the peasantry and under the garb of industrialisation, there were efforts to deprive farmers of their land and place it at the disposal of the real estate mafia.

At the same time, skyrocketing prices of essential commodities were bringing the question of food security to the forefront. The remedial measure of public distribution was under threat under the proposal of the Food Security Act, which was aimed at cutting down entitlements as well as the number of beneficiaries. The universal PDS was gradually being dismantled to introduce a targeted PDS.

Another area of crisis was the exorbitant input cost and price volatility versus the unremunerative price for crops. This had been intensified by the Free Trade Agreement.

The debate on GM crops has been widespread. The MNC-led GM seeds could cause serious health hazards for the consumers. The AIKS was not against GM crops *per se*, but insisted that they be used only after adequate trials and safeguards were put in place, and only our public sector and indigenous research could ensure that. The MNCs are guided by the profit motive, not by human safety. So, the AIKS was opposed to their effort to introduce and capture the GM seed market. A serious debate was started against Monsanto-sponsored Brinjal GM seeds and due to massive protests, the government was forced to backtrack.

Another essential service for agricultural growth was extension service by the government but now the government withdrew from it and MNCs were given the right to conduct extension service. The AIKS opposed this anti-peasant policy. The report also elaborated on the role of left-led governments and their peasant-friendly policies, which helped the farmers in those states to prosper.

Regarding the movement, he gave details of the All India Jatha and Delhi rally in October-November 2006.

Four jathas from Kanyakumari, Behrampur and Sabrum, Mumbai and Jammu covered most of the states in three weeks and converged at Delhi on November 20. A huge number of the peasantry were mobilised in Delhi, which was the largest Kisan rally in recent times.

The report noted the considerable growth of membership and expansion of the organisational activities. The main organisational tasks

agreed upon in the 31st conference were implemented to some extent but much more was needed to be done. So, those tasks were reiterated for proper implementation in the coming days.

The conference adopted a resolution on 'In defence of the struggle for democracy' in West Bengal, on land reforms, against untouchability and oppression of Dalits, on the Forest Rights Act, on food security and universalisation of PDS, on MNREGA, on women's rights and against the Free Trade Agreement, on natural disasters and on the menace of wild and stray animals.

The conference discussed and adopted four commission papers:

- a. On land and land related matters
- b. On public investment, rural credit and insurance
- c. On seed monopolies, GM crops and Bt Brinjal and
- d. On agricultural prices.

The conference elected 14 office bearers, a 54+2-member CKC and a 140-member AIKC. Comrade S.R. Pillai was re-elected the President and Comrade K. Varadarajan, the General Secretary. Comrade Nurul Huda was elected as the finance secretary of the AIKS.

On January 10, 2010, a well-attended mass rally was held at Guntur, which was addressed, by Comrades S.R. Pillai, Brinda Karat, K. Varadarajan, Narasimha Rao and Srinivas Rao.

Thirty-third Cuddalore Conference -

Impact of Neoliberal Policy on Agriculture Assessed

33rd AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	24-27 July 2013
Where	Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu
Office bearers elected	
President	Amra Ram
General Secretary	Hannan Mollah

Another landmark conference of AIKS, the 33rd one, was held at Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu on July 24-27, 2013. The oldest senior comrade N. Sankaraiya hoisted the red flag. The reception committee Chairman

Comrade K. Balakrishna delivered his welcome address to the delegates. Comrade S.R. Pillai presided over the conference. The conference condoled the demise of many legendary communist leaders and veteran Kisan leaders who passed away during this period. They were Comrades Jyoti Basu, Samar Mukherjee, M.K. Pandhe, Ram Narayan Goswami, Comrade N. Varadarajan, Papa Umanath, Baidyanath Majumdar, Laxmi Sehgal, Pitabasan Das, Deepankar Mukherjee, Nizamuddin Khan among others and Comrade Hugo Chavez of Venezuela.

In his presidential address, Comrade S.R. Pillai remembered the great Kisan struggle in Kelvenmani, which took place in 1968. During the struggle, 44 agricultural workers were massacred by landlords. He also saluted Comrade B. Srinivas Rao, the founder leader of the agricultural workers' organisation in Tamil Nadu. He gave an elaborate description of the impact of neoliberal policies, the resultant process of corporatisation of agriculture and the loot by multi-national corporations in all countries. Land ownership was increasingly becoming highly unequal. Brazil, Colombia and the Philippines were notorious for their unequal distribution of land-based wealth. In the European Union, 3 per cent of the total number of holdings controlled 50 per cent of all cultivable land. The MNCs were grabbing land in Asia, Africa, Latin America, as well as Europe. The massive loss of land by the peasantry was a common feature everywhere, leading a majority of them to pauperisation. The peasants and agricultural workers in all these countries were getting united and organising struggles against corporate driven globalisation.

In India, landlessness was growing at a faster pace. It increased from 22 per cent in 1992 to 41 per cent at the time of the conference. He explained the agrarian scenario further. First, the cost of all agricultural inputs had spiralled due to government policies; seeds, fertilisers, pesticides – all handed over to the MNCs.

Secondly, output prices were not increasing in proportion to that. The government failed to give MSP as per the Swaminathan Commission recommendations, i.e., C2+ 50 per cent. Moreover, the integration of our agricultural market with the world market sounded the death knell of our agriculture - signing of FTA intensified the process. FDI in retail trade caused serious damage to this sector. Against all these assaults, the AIKS proposed alternative agricultural policies

that needed to be widely propagated and on the basis of which we had to build broad-based united struggles.

In his General Secretary's report, Comrade K. Varadarajan explained in detail the crisis of global capitalism and global resistance against that. On the national situation, he gave a grim picture of the Indian economy, due largely to the aggressive pursuance of neoliberal policies. Uncontrolled price rise of all essential commodities made the life of common people miserable. Moreover, rampant corruption made the situation worse. Widespread violence against women was a matter of great concern. Agriculture was suffering from serious crises and attacks on the peasantry had intensified. The main reasons were reversal of land reforms and corporate land grab. The tenant peasants were facing worse problems. Non-availability on institutional credit had broken the backbone of the peasantry, especially of small and middle peasants.

On the other hand, the government had given a red carpet welcome to the predatory agri-businesses. Unequal FTA and a free hand to FDI in agriculture and retail trade put the last nail in the coffin of the peasantry. Already a few *lakh* farmers had committed suicide. Public-private partnership in agriculture and decontrol of the fertiliser sector and sugar industry added to the unending misery of the farmers, poor peasants and agricultural workers. MNREGA was also in a bad shape due to lack of adequate funds and that was leading to migration of agricultural workers. The condition of the climate and attacks of wild animals only caused more difficulties in agriculture.

Against all these attacks, the AIKS organised a march to Parliament with the slogan 'Protect our land, seeds and peasant agriculture'. About 8,000 peasants from different parts of the country attended the rally in Delhi. AIKS also organised a round table meet on the Free Trade Agreement. An organisational workshop was also organised in Delhi for Hindi-speaking states. AIKS observed the 75th anniversary of AIKS on April 11, 2011, in different parts of the country.

On international tasks, a delegation from Trade Union International Agriculture visited the AIKS centre and had detailed interactions. An AIKS-AIAWU delegation (Comrade SRP and Comrade Suneet Chopra) visited Paris to attend the TUI's 3rd conference. A delegation also attended the Global Trans disciplinary process for sustainable phosphorus management at El Jadide of Morocco and in

Beijing. Comrade Vijoo Krishnan represented AIKS in those conferences. The conference noted the expansion of the organisation and the movement and increased activities in the states. There was improvement in the functioning of the all-India centre with added manpower. A fund for the office building was collected for the construction of a new office in Delhi.

The conference suggested a 4-point organisational task for future growth. All state committees needed to follow them:

- a. After enrolment of members, a chart should be prepared and approved by the respective state committees and submitted for approval of the centre. The state committees should plan membership and implement that in time.
- b. A yearly scrutiny of primary units and village level organisations within one month of membership completion and finalisation.
- c. Yearly fund collection by all state and lower committees, from each member and the public.
- d. Collective functioning at all levels of organisation. Annual conferences of all units should be held.

The conference also adopted an action plan for the next three years:

1. An action plan for expansion of Kisan Sabha for all states, with special stress on organisationally less developed states.
2. Broadest possible unity of the peasantry by reaching out to different organisations of the peasantry and agricultural workers. United struggle by all left peasant organisations.
3. Consistent organised campaign and struggles on local issues affecting the common masses by building a broad platform involving other mass organisations.
4. All-India campaign on policy issues.
5. All-India centre should be further strengthened with more cadre. Frequency of CKC/AIKC meetings should be increased.
6. Efforts to activate the local units, panchayats, blocks and district-level committees. Functioning of the state committees should improve with adequate cadres and funds.
7. Classes should be organised at state and district level to educate the cadres. General body meetings of members should be called regularly.

The conference adopted many important resolutions:

1. In defence of democracy in West Bengal
2. On remunerative price for agricultural products
3. Against corporatisation of agriculture
4. On fertiliser price
5. On food security
6. On forest rights
7. On MNREGA
8. Against FDI in agriculture and other sectors
9. Against communal and casteist forces
10. Against privatisation of child development schemes
11. On disaster prevention and management
12. On centenary celebration of Comrade Jyoti Basu
13. On Comrade Sundarayya centenary celebrations.

The conference also discussed and adopted 4 commission reports:

- a. On changes in agrarian relations
- b. On agricultural cooperatives and viability of production
- c. On issues of globalisation and corporatisation relating to agriculture
- d. On climate change and related issues in agriculture.

The 33rd conference was attended by 660 delegates and observers with 47 women delegates. They represented 2.1 crore members.

There were three amendments to the constitution:

1. Membership fee was increased from Re 1 to Rs 2 annually
2. Affiliation fee increased per member from 5 paisa to 10 paisa
3. Application fee from affiliated organisations from 5 paisa to 10 paisa.

Finally, the conference elected the new committee unanimously: 16 office bearers, a 60-member CKC and 143-member AIKC. The conference also elected Comrade Amra Ram as the new President and Comrade Hannan Mollah as the new General Secretary of AIKS. On the final day, a massive procession travelled the city of Cuddalore and converged into a huge rally. It was presided over by Comrade Amra Ram and addressed by Comrades Manik Sarkar, Chief Minister of Tripura, Hannan Mollah, S.R. Pillai, K. Varadarajan and K. Balakrishnan.

Thirty-fourth Hissar Conference -

Further Intensification of Agrarian Crisis under a Right-wing Reactionary Government

34th AIKS Conference at a Glance	
When	3-6 October 2017
Where	Hissar, Haryana
Office bearers elected	
President	Ashok Dhawale
General Secretary	Hannan Mollah

After implementing the decisions of the last conference, the AIKS had become more visible in the eyes of the people as an active, struggling organisation of the peasantry. With many successful movements and vibrant agrarian struggles, the AIKS decided to meet for its 34th conference in Hissar, Haryana. It was delayed by one year due to non-availability of a suitable venue and finally the Haryana State Committee came forward to host the event for the second time after twenty-five years. The conference was held on October 3-6, 2017, with a unique slogan 'Kisan Sabha in every village, every Kisan in Kisan Sabha'. The venue was named after the legendary Kisan leader of the country – Comrade H.K.S. Surjeet Nagar. The hall was named after Comrade Nurul Huda. President Comrade Amra Ram hoisted the red flag. Then the conference paid respectful tribute to the great national and international leaders who passed away in this period. It condoled the demise of Nelson Mandela and Comrade Fidel Castro – the beacon of struggle against imperialism. We also remembered our beloved leaders Comrades Binoy Konar, Nurul Huda, R. Umanath, Samar Baora, A.B. Bardhan and many others.

The conference was attended by 712 delegates representing 1.44 crore members from 24 states and two affiliated unions. Only 41 women delegates attended. The conference began with a massive public meeting at the centre of Hissar city with a huge contingent of women. This was the biggest ever women peasant rally of AIKS in the state. Thousands of peasants, workers, women, students and youth marched

through the city before reaching the ground. The entire city was glittering with a sea of red flags.

The meeting was presided over by President Comrade Amra Ram. The chief guest was Comrade Manik Sarkar, chief minister of Tripura. Comrade Sarkar made an inspiring speech before the vibrant gathering. Other speakers included Comrade Hannan Mollah, General Secretary of the AIKS, Comrade Hemalata, CITU President; the state leaders of Haryana also spoke in the rally.

The Chairman of the reception committee Dr R.N. Kundu delivered his welcome speech. He outlined the history of the peasant movement in Haryana and the characteristics of agrarian development in the state.

The conference was inaugurated by the President— Comrade Amra Ram. The speech covered the experience of the peasant movement during the period since the last conference, including the unprecedented attack on the democratic peasant movement in West Bengal – the biggest unit of AIKS – by the TMC regime, in which dozens of activists were killed, raped and seriously injured. He also spoke of state repression suffered by the peasant movement in various states – martyrdom of valiant farmers at Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh and other parts of the country including Jharkhand, Assam, West Bengal, Gujarat, etc. He also mentioned the inspiring victories scored in building issue-based united struggles at the all-India level and in various states like Maharashtra, Rajasthan, MP, Karnataka, etc. and the experience of resistance of the international peasant movements in the context of the intensifying impact of the systemic crisis that has gripped the world capitalist system.

He also exposed the NDA government's anti-peasant policies and the impact of neoliberal policy on our economy in general, the failure of the Modi government to keep its promises to the farmers, his policy of encouraging communal forces and the intensification of attacks against minorities, Dalits, Adivasis and women, and the surrender to US imperialism, damaging our independent foreign policy. The agrarian crisis had intensified leading to massive loss of land by small and marginal peasants, serious rural joblessness due to weakening of MNREGA, increasing suicides by farmers, massive migration due to rural unemployment, and the growing pauperisation of common people.

'The present situation provides immense possibilities and

opportunities for us to present these alternatives to the present exploitative agrarian system. AIKS has to help the peasantry in a big way to challenge the corporatisation of agriculture and develop cooperative agriculture as a potential alternative.

‘The basic slogan of the 34th conference “Issue based united struggles to resist the agrarian crisis” and “Kisan Sabha is every village, every Kisan in Kisan Sabha” were coined with our sound outlook on the role of the peasant movement today.’

Finally, he appealed to the conference that ‘we have to make serious efforts to strengthen the unity of the peasantry and worker-peasant alliance’.

The General Secretary’s report was presented by Comrade Hannan Mollah. He recalled the 27th Hissar conference of AIKS in 1992. After just 25 years, we were again assembled at Hissar for the 34th conference. The last Hissar conference was held at the dawn of neoliberalism and now we are to evaluate the impact of those policies two-and-a-half decades later. At that time, we tried to understand the neoliberal policies and discussed in a commission paper in detail the features of the policies and their probable impact on our agriculture. We identified that this would lead to major policy changes – that is exactly what happened such as good bye to planning and withdrawal of state from many of public investment, reversal of social banking, strengthening of agro-business, and end of extension services, integration to world market, cut in subsidy, reversal of land reform, corporatisation of land, agriculture and food, replacing peasant agriculture. At that time, all Kisan organisations, particularly those led by kulaks and many other sections came in strong support to that big policy and expected big development of peasantry and agriculture are forced to change their opinion. With this note on the correct understanding of the policy and situation, the AIKS conference would analyse the agrarian issues today and formulate its action plan.

We noted the change in agrarian relations during this period. A new nexus of rural exploiters – feudal landlords, capitalist landlords, contractors and big traders – was the dominant force in the countryside. To fight against the powerful nexus, the forces that emerged were poor peasants, agricultural workers, landless, tenant peasants, middle peasants, rural manual workers, artisans, etc. Building the unity of these forces was the main task of the Kisan Sabha. Land is the central

issue and it will remain but other forms of land struggles needed to be built. Besides, the ruling classes intensified social oppression using communalism, casteism and other divisive methods to divide the rural poor. Women are not considered peasants due to the feudal outlook in the country. The AIKS would fight for women agriculturists' rights. We noted the new political developments after NDA came back to power (after 10 years). There was a greater rightward shift in our political system and economic policies were guided by neoliberal policies – at the direction of IMF and World Bank. The global economic crisis was deeply affecting our economy. The slow growth, unemployment, concentration of wealth, massive inequality, and unlimited power of the corporate sector were preventing the government from coming out of the crisis, which was asystemic, and not an ordinary crisis. Corporate profiteering – maximisation of profiteering – is the goal of international finance capital, which is controlling our economy today. As a result, there was an intensification of exploitation of the masses, cuts in welfare schemes forcing austerity on the common people. It was leading to massive price rise, increase in NPAs, and reduced GDP growth. The last three years of Modi rule had been disastrous for the country. The conference also noted the unprecedented growth of communal, casteist and divisive forces. The RSS policy of Hindutva was capturing every aspect of our life – social, political, ideological, economic and cultural. There was a growing attack on democracy, on the Constitution and the parliamentary system, on human rights and voices of dissent and freedom. The agricultural crisis had intensified under BJP rule. They had said no to land reforms as reverse land reform had started taking place. The continuous loss of land by peasants and tenant peasants had put them in great difficulty. Agricultural growth had reduced to negative, massive indebtedness was leading to peasant suicides, due to squeezing of institutional credit and bank loans to the agri-businesses, small and middle peasants were forced to go to private moneylenders. No cheaper inputs were being given and a massive cut in subsidies multiplied the cost of production. On the other hand, there was no remunerative price for agricultural produce. The MSP was less than the cost of production. Agriculture had thus become a loss-making venture for the majority of the peasantry.

Peasant agriculture was being replaced by corporate agriculture. Planning was no longer a part of our economic policy, Planning

Commission was disbanded and replaced by NITI Aayog which was working as an agent of agri-businesses and corporates. FDI had a free hand in retail trade and agriculture. The export subsidy had increased and the government was going for a massive free trade agreement, which would be the last nail in the coffin of agriculture.

Land grab was the new method of attack on the peasantry by corporate houses with the help of the government. The Land Acquisition Ordinance was brought in for the purpose. Innumerable SEZs, industrial corridors, dams, highways, smart cities, all mining, land pooling, real estate, etc. had come up – the World Bank blueprint of development. These initiatives would lead to the grab of lakhs of acres of land and even fertile land – the only source of livelihood for crores of farmers. The BJP state government of Jharkhand had tried to capture tribal land for corporations by amending the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act and Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act made by the British government to ensure tribal rights on land. Now, even the Forest Rights Act was not implemented by most of the state governments.

The conference noted the devastating impact of demonetisation on agriculture, which caused massive loss of prices for crops as well as curtailing 9 million jobs. The next anti-people step by the Modi government was GST, which levied a high rate of taxes and adversely affected the interests of traders, especially small traders. The conference also noted the failure of the Modi government to provide adequate compensation for crop loss due to calamity; the Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojna only helped insurance companies, not farmers.

The conference expressed concern about climate change and the failure of the government to protect the environment, which hurt agriculture the most. Wild animal attacks on all types of crops was another problem faced by farmers.

III. The Successes of the AIKS

The conference noted the innumerable initiatives by AIKS, which built several peasant struggles in different parts of the country. The campaign for solidarity with West Bengal comrades, who are under semi-fascist attack by the Trinamool government and their goons, was organised by AIKS in the country as well as the intervention on the Western Ghats issue affecting farmers and people of six states. A dharna was organised at Delhi by AIKS and the government finally retreated. Besides, a series of interventions held on different issues such as the Prakash Bakshi Committee report on cooperatives, the save ICDS issue, peasant suicides, environmental protection, crop-wise movement on sugarcane, rubber, jute, vegetables, silk, etc., several land struggles, campaigns against FTA, regular discussion with CACP for crop price, support to states as required, etc.

Maximum success was achieved during this period in building a united platform and united struggles. Immediately after coming to power, the Modi government's big attack on the peasantry was the promulgation of the Land Acquisition Ordinance, 2014. By this ordinance, the Modi government planned to grab peasants' land for the corporates. They tried to snatch all the benefits of the Land Acquisition Act, 2013. The ordinance declared that land would be taken without the consent of the owner-farmer without proper compensation, the social impact assessment was removed, the clause regarding the return of land if not used in time was diluted, etc. AIKS took the lead and called upon its members to burn copies of the ordinance in the whole country, and tried to build a united platform against it. Meetings were organised in hundreds of places. Two massive Parliament marches were held, protests launched in the Parliamentary Standing Committee, and all political parties were approached for their support. All the left and democratic Kisan and agricultural unions joined hands and a large number of social organisations joined the struggle. In the process, a

new platform - the 'Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan' - emerged. All the movements against the ordinance were conducted under BAA leadership.

This platform is unique in its character. About a hundred organisations joined in and worked together for four years. Three national conventions were held. In seven to eight states, the state chapters of BAA were formed and are active. But, the BAA has no formal President, secretary or convenor. It works fully on consensus. It led many actions without any difference of opinion. There is a working group to keep it running through consultation. There is absolute faith, respect and confidence among its leaders. This movement is growing and expanding in different states. This is a unique experiment, a united movement in the country and it has proved that such wider platforms can work and function and grow without any competition to capture leadership.

The basic principles that all organisations and leaders follow are:

- a. Mutual respect and faith
- b. Work on consensus and consultation
- c. All should get equal treatment and honour irrespective of their strength
- d. Only issues on which all agree would be taken up. The issues of difference would not be raised on the platform. All units could take different views on some issues in their respective organisations but should be balanced in expressing their differences keeping the others' sentiments in mind as much as possible.
- e. No attempt should be made to grab leadership.

This unique platform has been working for the last four years and AIKS has played an important role in its formation and growth. BAA took the initiative on many more issues like farmers' suicides and held dharnas before the parliament with the family members of the victims.

The Narendra Modi government made another attack on the farmers by banning cattle trade. About 30 per cent of the income of peasants, especially small, landless poor and middle peasants, comes from cattle rearing. In India, old cattle have been sold and new calves purchased by peasants almost every year for ages. Now, the trade is banned and the already poor peasantry has lost another source

of income. Besides, the RSS-led Bajrang Dal and Vishwa Hindu Parishad criminals are attacking the peasants under the garb of 'gau raksha' and lynch those who sell or purchase cattle. Pehlu Khan was lynched in Rajasthan and after that, about 40 peasants – minority and Dalits – have been lynched so far. The AIKS and BAA took up the issue, organised protest meetings against the ban and lynching before the Parliament, and at different places, organised seminars on the cattle economy. Finally, the government was forced to withdraw the ban after the Madras High Court and the Supreme Court ruled against it. The AIKS had filed a petition in the Supreme Court against it.

The joint movement by BAA and many other organisations forced Modi first to give up on the land ordinance without further attempts to pass it and to withdraw the ban on cattle trade. Probably, this is the first time that the central government was forced to backtrack. Kisan Sabha played a key role in this movement. The BAA built a movement in Jharkhand against the CNT and SNT Act amendment along with many other issues and the BJP government was forced to step back. The BAA and AIKS jointly sent a fact-finding team to Alwar, Bharatpur Rajsamand of Rajasthan against the lynching of minorities by RSS goons and the committee submitted its report in a well-attended convention in Delhi. Many political leaders, intellectuals and peasant leaders attended this convention.

The Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan has been formed in Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and preparation is on in other states like Assam, Karnataka, Bihar, UP, etc. The BAA organised protests against the killing of two farmers, including a woman in police firing at Kaziranga in Assam, at Assam Bhawan, and at MP Bhawan against the killings in Mandsaur. Protests were held before the Water Resources Ministry against the insensitive approach to the plight of the people of the Narmada Valley and another protest outside MP Bhawan against the lathicharge on the people of the Narmada Valley and the arrest of Medha Patkar. A protest against the arrest of Akhil Gogoi before the Assam Bhawan was also held.

For the consolidation of the work of BAA, the first national convention was held in Delhi in 2015 in which 130 delegates attended from 35 organisations. The second convention was held at Ahmedabad, Gujarat on July 16, 2016, in which about 170 delegates from many organisations joined. The third convention was held at Ranchi,

Jharkhand on June 29-30, 2017, in which 350 delegates took part from many organisations. 26 new organisations joined us there. We have to strengthen this platform, which is more closely related and Left oriented. The Narmada Bachao Andolan, the Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha, National Alliance of Peoples' movement, All India Forest Union of Working People are very closely and actively involved in the BAA along with Left Kisan and agricultural workers' unions.

Another success of the united platform came after the police firing and killing of six farmers in Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh. Farmers were agitating for the price of soyabean and garlic, which had collapsed due to demonetisation. On June 6, 2017, the MP police fired on a peaceful dharna killing six farmers. The entire area was put under curfew for a few days. The AIKS delegation reached the spot and met the families of the victims. Later on, other Kisan organisations reached there. Neither the leaders of the BJP from Madhya Pradesh nor government officers had visited those families. Only two days after the AIKS demanded compensation in a press conference, the chief minister was forced to come forward and announce some compensation to those families. After this incident, a meeting of peasant organisations was called in Delhi on June 20, 2017. About 120 delegates attended the meeting. After a long discussion, it was decided to form a broad platform of the farmers. The meeting reached a consensus that on two demands a united Kisan movement would be built for the implementation of two major recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission:

- a. Remunerative prices for all crops at the rate of C2+50 per cent – that is one-and-a-half times the cost of production and assured procurement.
- b. One-time waiver of all agricultural loans from banks, cooperatives and private moneylenders for all farmers.

To lead the movement an organisation was formed called the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee. AIKS was one of the important components of the platform and played an important role in this movement. This organisation also has one convenor and a working group comprising of representatives of all main organisations. B.M. Singh was made the convenor. It was decided that the working group would lead the movement on the basis of consensus. AIKSCC called for a Parliament march in July 2017 raising these two demands. It was

a good rally. The working group then decided to organise a ‘Kisan Mukti Yatra’ in the whole country and hold a ‘Kisan Mukti Sansad’ before Parliament House for 2 days to press the government to pass two bills on these two demands by the Kisan Sansad. Accordingly, the Kisan Mukti Yatra travelled about 11,000 km covering 22 states and hundreds of Kisan rallies took place in different places in October-November converging at Delhi and formed the Kisan Sansad on November 20-21, 2017. There was a massive Kisan gathering at Parliament Street. The first session was a women’s sansad; women from families of farmers who had committed suicide took part in it. They explained their difficulties and raised their demands very effectively. Medha Patkar was the speaker. AIKSCC prepared two draft bills for the Kisan sansad:

- a. Farmer’s Freedom from Indebtedness Bill, 2018
- b. The Farmer’s Right to get Guaranteed Remunerative Minimum Support Price for Agricultural Commodities Bill, 2018

The loan waiver bill was placed by Hannan Mollah and bills for one-and-a-half times the price for all crops was placed by Raju Setti. All the leaders of the Kisan organisations spoke on the bills and made many suggestions for improvement. Those draft bills were widely circulated and AIKSCC decided to organise a discussion in the whole country, mainly in State capitals, inviting experts, lawyers and leaders to get their inputs and incorporate their amendments. Fifty such meetings were organised and hundreds of amendments were received. This campaign brought Kisan issues to the forefront. All media – print and electronic – widely covered and discussed the issues. A screening committee of AIKSCC studied all those suggestions and amendments and finalised those two draft bills. The AIKSCC invited all political parties and their leaders to a round table meeting at Constitution Club for discussing these two drafts. Twenty-one parties and their leaders attended the meeting and extended support to these two bills. As per their suggestions, a small team was formed to study those bills again, clause by clause, and give it a final shape. This meeting was also held at Parliament House Annexe in which twelve MPs and AIKSCC leaders attended and those bills were finalised.

Those bills will be placed in Parliament as private member bills by K.K. Ragesh, MP, Rajya Sabha, and Raju Setti, MP, Lok Sabha.

Two letters addressed to the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, and Speaker,

Lok Sabha, have been sent by thousands of farmers through district collectors of all districts of the country, requesting them to help pass these two bills for the protection of farmers' interest.

Thus, AIKSCC has taken up Kisan issues in a big way. Never before in the past has there been such a joint initiative of peasant organisations to defend the interests of our peasantry. During this movement, many new organisations joined us - the present number of member organisations stands at 207. This large Kisan platform played an important role in bringing Kisan issues on the national agenda. In this historic effort, the AIKS along with others played a major role.

Another joint platform was formed called the All India Kisan Mahasangh in which some other organisations joined and gave calls on loan waiver and remunerative price. A one-day 'rasta roko' was organised by the Kisan front. The All India Kisan Sabha has also joined this platform and participated in the programme in a big way.

These united struggles created great enthusiasm among the farmers of the country and brought the Kisan movement to the centrestage of the democratic movement. We have to carry forward these struggles to force the ruling classes to accept the demands of the peasantry.

The AIKS took the initiative to build unity among Left Kisan-agricultural workers' unions. We organised a joint meeting of AIKS, AIKS (Ajoy Bhawan), Agragami Kisan Sabha, All India Kisan Khet Mazdoor Sangathan (AIKKMS), All India Kisan Mahasabha (AIKMS), AIAWU and Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union (BKMU) and took some decisions to build a movement. During this time, broader Kisan unity became imperative and all the above left-led organisations unitedly got fully involved in the Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan and the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee activities.

AIKS also took the initiative to build worker-peasant unity and regular joint meetings of AIKS, AIAWU and CITU were held to discuss this issue and to take up the task of helping the people's democratic movement through intensifying class struggles and working for a change in the correlation of class forces. A joint decision was taken to observe the 19th of January as a worker-peasant unity day. In 1982, on the day of first Bharat Bandh on January 19, 10 workers, peasants and agricultural workers were killed by police firing. To remember that day, joint programmes were taken up in different parts of the country, but adequate importance was not given to implement the programme.

Along with these joint movements, the AIKS took a series of initiatives to build independent struggles during the intervening period. The 33rd conference identified the problems of the peasantry and formulated a 15-point charter of demands for building the Kisan movement and organising Kisan unity around those demands. AIKS observed the 1st of September as 'demands-day' and organised a campaign on those demands in 2015 and 2016. To highlight the plight of the peasantry, the AIKS decided to organise a Kisan Sangharsh Jatha across the country and a Kisan Sangharsh rally at Delhi. All four central jathas were led by central leaders who travelled the entire 15-20 days. State leaders accompanied them in their respective states. Nearly 20,000 km road was covered by the Kisan Jatha covering 18 states. The four jathas together travelled 65 days and met about 1,10,000 peasants on the way. Many sub-jathas joined the main jatha in Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka and Wayanad in Kerala and met an additional 40,000 people. The charter of demands and a booklet were printed and distributed in thousands on the travel route in English and Hindi and in other national languages. After completion, the jathas converged at the Delhi Ramlila Ground and proceeded to Parliament on November 24, 2016. This was one of the most attractive, decorative, colourful jatha, the largest one in recent times. This rally was the most successful programme of AIKS, highlighting the agrarian crisis and problems of the peasantry before the whole country. Along the entire route, the media gave wide coverage of the jathas everyday – along with public meetings, press conferences were also organised. This independent programme of AIKS brought the Kisan issue to the forefront on which many more independent and joint struggles of the peasantry developed, which have been described in earlier pages. AIKS was in the forefront against all the major attacks on the peasantry during the period. The issue of farmers' suicide remained unnoticed by the people, even though more than three lakhs farmers had committed suicide by that time. The AIKS leadership decided to visit the houses of those victims to understand the reasons. The General Secretary and other central leaders met the families in Vidarbha, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, etc. and the facts were collected and propagated to the people. The AIKS organised a 2-day dharna of the family members of the victims before the Parliament and after that, it got media attention at the national level and became a

national issue in course of time.

The AIKS took up first the campaign against vigilante 'cow-protection' groups and cattle trade restrictions. AIKS filed a petition in the Supreme Court against the cattle trade ban by the Modi government. AIKS leader Comrade Vijoo Krishnan marched at Una in the movement against flogging of four Dalit youth who were skinning dead cattle. Then in Rajasthan's Alwar, the Bajrang Dal-VHP killed Pehlu Khan, a milk farmer. AIKS General Secretary Comrade Hannan Mollah, Comrade Krishna Prasad and Comrade Vijoo Krishnan visited on the second day after his death, met his family, and built a wide campaign against this lynching. They collected funds, donated Rs 15 lakh to the family, and organised a protest before Parliament. The Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan also joined AIKS. Initially, it was sought to be given only a communal colour, as Pehlu Khan was a Muslim. But, AIKS gave a new understanding, that this was an attack against Muslims/Dalits as well as against peasants. It was propagated that such attacks would reduce the income of farmers, since 30 per cent of their income comes from cattle and dairy business.

This helped us to mobilise secular forces and peasantry against this type of vigilantism and lynching by RSS and their different outfits. The AIKS for the first time set up the P. Sundarayya Memorial Trust. This would take up agrarian issues for research and publication of books, and organising of seminars on the agrarian economy. The Trust has been registered and has started some work. Much more should be done to make it an active institution to help the peasants and the democratic movement. The Trust observed Comrade Harkishan Singh Surjeet's centenary. The 'Peasant Struggle' bulletin in English has been published regularly. This should be improved and registered with RNI. A website for the All India Kisan Sabha has been started. The history of Kisan Sabha is now being digitised. All these new initiatives of the Kisan Sabha help the all-round improvement of Kisan Sabha and the Kisan movement.

There were two all India general strikes. AIKS decided to support those struggles and expand them into an agrarian strike. It mobilised all other Kisan organisations and the Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan to support those strikes through a massive road and rail roko at the village and taluka level making the strikes a greater success. The AIKS along with AIAWU and BKMU participated in the fourth international

conference of TUI in Paris on June 13-17, 2016. Comrade Hannan Mollah and Comrade Vijoo Krishnan attended it on behalf of Kisan Sabha. The first meeting of the Asian constituents were held and Comrade S.R. Pillai has been elected as the convenor of the Asian Bureau, which will function from the AIKS office. A six-member committee including representatives from Vietnam, Nepal, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Philippines has been formed to carry forward the activities and conduct the Asian conference in 2017-18.

The AIKS delegates also participated in the historic workers' protest march in Paris with over 1.2 million on the 14th of June 2016. South Asian peasants' conference was held at Kathmandu, Nepal on February 2-3, 2017, which was attended by Comrade N.K. Shukla, joint secretary of AIKS and Suneet Chopra, joint secretary, AIAWU.

The movement for crop-wise organisation was initiated by the AIKS. The jute farmers' convention was held at Kolkata for eastern states. A charter of demands was prepared and the headquarters of the JCI were gheraoed for MSP for jute and proper procurement.

The sugarcane farmers' convention was held at Madurai on September 27-28, 2015. Delegates from 12 states participated, a coordination committee was formed, and a dharna of those farmers was organised at Delhi.

The rubber growers' convention was held at Kottayam, Kerala on September 29, 2015, and delegates from four rubber-growing states took part. A coordination committee formed and a dharna of the farmers was organised before Parliament on January 2, 2016.

In Assam, a vegetable growers' convention was held at Sorbhog, which chalked out a programme of movement. In Karnataka, the toor/arhar growers' convention was held at Gulbarga and the coconut farmers' convention was held in Hassan. A tenant peasant convention was held in Odisha.

The 33rd conference called for struggle on social issues. This was a weak area of the Kisan movement even though peasants suffered from attacks by casteist, communal and other reactionary feudal forces. Today, the NDA government at the centre is led by RSS-BJP. 21 state governments are also led by the BJP. The front organisations of RSS such as the Vishva Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, etc enjoy state patronage. So a consistent fight is needed against communal ideology, and attacks against minorities, Dalits, tribals and women should be

resisted. The AIKS should take a lead in those struggles.

The AIKS intervened in all policy matters during this period. The question of land acquisition for corporates, issues of cattle trade ban, of loan waiver, remunerative price & MSP and Fasal Bima – all were taken up in time. We opposed the anti-peasant proposals/decisions forcefully and took those issues to the street. We attended the CACP meeting and argued for proper MSP. We exposed the real face of the Fasal Bima Yojna. Our stand on the WTO ministerial decision was widely appreciated. Our crop-wise movements and struggle against government policies were widely covered by the media. We exposed the anti-people budgets including E-markets and FDI issues. We met the agriculture standing committees and effectively argued the case for the peasantry. We opposed the Free Trade Agreement and organised a roundtable discussion. We submitted a detailed memorandum to the agricultural minister and the government on peasant problems and our demands for remedying the situation. We took up the issue of foot and mouth disease in animals with the government. We opposed and campaigned against demonetisation and the ill effects of GST. We firmly stood for democratic rights and secular values whenever they were under attack by Hindutva forces. We issued statements on all issues besetting the people during this period, which guided our comrades at all levels to propagate our views.

The conference discussed the General Secretary's report on organisation, which reviewed the status of review of the decisions taken at the 33rd conference. Scrutiny and monitoring of membership has been started in some states. Many states are yet to do that. The proper chart of membership, its clarification and approval by CKC is yet to take off. Formation of primary units has started in most of the states but the practice of scrutiny of units and district level registration within one month has not been taken up seriously by the states. The major task of the yearly fund collection remained a weak area of the organisation. The collective functioning was practised in some states but due to lack of cadres in weaker states individual functioning still dominates. Membership enrolment was an important organisational decision as it has been declining during this period. In 10 states, it is either stagnant or has decreased. A major decline happened in West Bengal. The main reasons are the attacks and terror spread in rural areas by TMC goons. In many villages, enrolment is not allowed; we

do it cautiously and sometimes secretly. Besides, in the state, the AIAWU has now been formed in WB and about 17 lakh members of AIKS were transferred to that organisation. The conference decided to plan proper recruitment and enrolment of members in the coming days. The conference decided to fully implement the tasks taken up by the 33rd conference. The future tasks have been decided as:

- a. Strengthen and ensure independent functioning of the organisation at all levels. Take up each and every Kisan issue – formulate local demands in consultation with peasants and build a consistent and strong movement.
- b. Build a united movement and implement all the national-level decisions of joint platforms. Take the initiative to form all those platforms at the state level.
- c. Work seriously to build worker-peasant alliances with CITU and AIAWU down to the ground level.
- d. Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan should be strengthened in all states.
- e. Social movements should be taken up seriously in the context of growing communal, casteist and feudal, reactionary attacks against weaker sections.
- f. Crop-wise movements should be built for crops, which have not been covered so far. Strengthen their coordination committees.
- g. Alternative policies should be stressed and propagated. States should develop social cooperatives wherever possible.
- h. Develop and strengthen the all-India centre with more cadres along with developing modern practices.
- i. Research, study and political education should get priority at the centre. Improve and regularise the publication of ‘Peasant Struggle’ and ‘Kisan Sangharsh’. Register it with the RNI – collect, permanent subscribers.

With all these decisions, the AIKS is set to become a more powerful and vibrant organisation of the peasantry of our country and it should shoulder more responsibility, build a wider democratic movement to fight against feudal exploitation, capitalist extortion and imperialist conspiracies. 43 delegates took part in the discussion of the report after which it was unanimously adopted by the conference.

The conference adopted many important resolutions:

- a. Against killing of Gauri Lankesh and other dissenting voices
- b. On the communal menace
- c. On social oppression
- d. On cow vigilantes and cattle trade restrictions
- e. On the role of women in agriculture
- f. On GST
- g. On strengthening the worker-peasant alliance
- h. On climate change
- i. On the call for joining the Palestine-led boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement
- j. On RECP and other FTA
- k. On the Forest Rights Act
- l. On attacks by the RSS/BJP and TMC in Bengal, Kerala and Tripura
- m. On disasters and their management
- n. On sugarcane farmers' problems
- o. Against indiscriminate land acquisition.

The conference also discussed three commission papers and adopted their recommendations:

1. On the role of Kisan Sabha in building issue-based united struggles
2. On agricultural costs and prices
3. On credit and insurance.

Finally, the conference elected the new leadership. A 141-member AIKS and 65-member CKC was elected unanimously. 18 office bearers were also elected by the conference. Comrade Ashok Dhawale was elected as the new President and Comrade Hannan Mollah was re-elected as General Secretary. Comrade P. Krishnaprasad was elected Finance Secretary.

IV. Post-Hissar-Conference Developments

All India Kisan Sabha joined another major initiative in building the ground work for future Left and Democratic front. As the Kisan movement has to work tirelessly by mobilising maximum number of peasantry and agricultural worker and building worker-peasant alliance to change the co-relation of class forces through its independent struggles, it should join any attempt to that end as well as initiate creating broader platforms of different types. These could contribute to the creation of a foundation on which real revolutionary left and democratic front can emerge. Some initiatives have already been mentioned above as part of AIKS conferences. Along with more and more independent activities and struggle, AIKS has always tried to join AIAWU for bringing together the majority of the rural peasantry and agricultural workers and the unorganised manual workers and rural artisans, and for united action with workers, women, student and youth movements and their organisations. This is to strengthen the basic ideological unity in the class struggle. AIKS has also taken the initiative to build left unity in the agrarian movement. We have worked for unity of left forces in Kisan and agricultural workers movement. A number of left wing Kisan organisations have held joint meetings and undertaken joint programmes. We should focus more these initiatives. Sometimes it was our weakness, sometimes it was other organisations' lack of interest that contributed to this slow growth but we must work hard to come out of this impasse and strengthen unity among left organisations of kisans.

AIKS took another initiative against the Land Acquisition Ordinance 1915 by the Modi government. There was a long united struggle against that and finally the government had to retreat. In the

process, a broad united platform emerged as Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan in which many Kisan, agricultural worker organisations and social organisations joined. Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan is a functioning platform, with state level chapters and has undertaken many issues for struggles in the last 3 years. This is a good contribution to united movement in the country.

In the meantime, 6 peasants in Mandsaur, MP were killed by the BJP-led state government while they were in struggle demanding remunerative prices. To fight against this attack, a new formation emerged - All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, which took up two major demands of the peasantry: remunerative price for their produce and complete loan-waiver. About 207 Kisan organisations joined this platform. AIKS played an important role in setting up the platform and in the movement that followed. This was a much broader platform and all types of organisations, except communal organisations, were part of this movement. We have to carry forward this platform for further united movement. This is not an ideologically cohesive platform. Many organisations (with different colour of flags like red, blue, white, green, yellow,) joined this platform with genuine concern for the peasantry. This type of platform also has a role in bringing farmers together for their struggles. AIKS has been working to expand this movement without any sectarian prejudices. All these processes increased the acceptability of the AIKS among large sections of the people in the country.

The latest efforts to further the movement were jointly initiated by the class, mass and social organisations and many well-meaning progressive social movements. A national convention was held in Mavlankar Hall in New Delhi on 18th September 2017. Nearly one hundred class, mass and social organisations of workers, peasants, agricultural workers, youth, students, women, insurance and bank employees, state and central government employees, teachers of schools, colleges and universities, medical associations, etc and NAPM, Dalit and tribal organisations and intellectuals participated in the convention. The convention decided to form a platform Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan (People's Unity, People's Rights movement). It was a left oriented platform. It was estimated that all these organisations collectively have over 20 crore members. Though they are ordinary members, not active in the movement but they have an inclination

towards the Left. We do not have regular contact with them. At the national level, the interaction amongst the leadership of these organisations is better. At the state level also, there may be some interaction among those organisations but at the district, tehsil or block level there is hardly any interaction and at grass roots level, they are even unknown to one another. The main purpose of JEJAA would be to build a bridge among the people in these organisations up to the village level. If all these organisations come closer at lower levels then their members would also come closer to each other. It may create a huge base for a united democratic people's movement. This is a very difficult job but we have no other way but to create a broad foundation on which a left democratic front for democratic revolution can be built up.

With this idea in mind, JEJAA passed a resolution and a declaration in the convention and a charter of demands for all sections of the people was adopted. It was decided to form the platform democratically, and try to build a consensus among the organisations. This should pave the way to gradually energise and motivate the members of these organisations and bring them more actively into the movement. We are conscious that it is a very difficult job and it may take years, but if we work sincerely, we can gradually advance. AIKS is one of the main forces behind this effort and it would work hard to make it a success.

At the same time to strengthen class unity, AIKS has been working with AIAWU and CITU to build worker-peasant alliance. This is the most important task of any movement of the toiling people. Though this is an essential condition for making democratic revolution a success under the leadership of the working class, the progress on this aspect of the movement has been negligible. It remained merely a matter of speeches and resolutions for decades. Some rituals in holding joint meetings, etc, were taken up but no formidable basis for the alliance was in sight. We should formulate concrete plan of action for this purpose. Seriously concerned about this failure, AIKS resolved to work wholeheartedly to achieve this goal.

V. Evolution of Policies of AIKS

Formulation of Alternative Agricultural Policies

During the formation of AIKS, the aim and objective of the Sabha was clearly declared: “The objective of the Kisan movement is to secure complete freedom from economic exploitation and achievement of the full economic and political power for peasants and workers and all other exploited classes.” Based on this declaration, the 11th conference of AIKS held at Cannore in Kerala, in 1953 formulated and adopted the “Statement of Policy” of All India Kisan Sabha, after the independence of the country. The policy mentioned the danger of the growth of fascism and attacks against democracy and the need for massive united resistance against this danger. It condemned the continuance of British domination on our economy and burden of paying compensation to the princely states and landlords. It foresaw the imperialist games of division of the country that would keep the two countries in conflict. It critically examined the nature of bourgeois planning and five-year plans. It directed a threefold struggle: a) on basic immediate demands of the peasantry, b) defence of national independence and sovereignty and c) for peace and against war. That was possible only if every Kisan was brought into the fold of Kisan Sabha. AIKS is essentially an organisation of kisans irrespective of their religion, caste and political affiliation. It also stressed on united movement of kisans. AIKS appealed to all other Kisan organisations to forge unity in action and build the broadest possible unity and resistance movement. It also stressed on formation of lower units and importance of organising rural agricultural workers. It also directed to build broad alliance with the working class and trade unions, middle class employees’ unions and other sections of urban poor.

1st Alternative Agricultural Policy

All India Kisan Sabha and All India Agricultural Workers' Union had a meeting on September 27-28, 1993 in New Delhi to discuss and adopt an alternative policy as opposed to the government's new agricultural policy resolution. The government termed their policy as the only option available in the country for all round development of agriculture. Their policy was an integral part of the "liberalisation" cum structural adjustment programme adopted by the government of India under the dictates of the IMF and World Bank. It consisted of a) removal of input subsidies, b) removal of trade restrictions on agricultural commodities, c) uniform pricing d) drastic curtailment of food subsidies and PDS only for poor, e) changing of cropping pattern and f) freedom of operation of agricultural business and elimination of land ceilings.

We were fully opposed to the anti-people policy direction and explained how this will damage the interests of the peasantry and endanger the livelihood of the peasantry. This policy totally ignored the interest of the agricultural workers and led them to pauperisation and starvation.

We proposed alternative suggestions in our policy document such as:

1. Complete abolition of landlordism and proper land reform.
2. Extension of irrigation facilities and scientific water management.
3. Adequate power supply - cheap and timely.
4. Public investment in agriculture, infrastructure to increase.
5. Improved variety of seed, fertilizer, pesticides, machinery etc. to farmers.
6. Protection of the interest of small and middle peasants.
7. Proper wage, work and social security for agricultural workers.
8. Extension of PDS to all.
9. Self-sufficiency in food grain production.
10. Protection of peasants from MNCs' exploitation.
11. More employment generation in agriculture.
12. Adequate provision for research.
13. Drinking water facility.
14. Improvement in the present rural employment scheme.
15. Proper skill management training to increase productivity.
16. Promotion of rural panchayat institution for the development in

agriculture.

17. Planning and decentralisation of rural administration.
18. Tribal land rights to be fully ensured.
19. Dunkel Draft to be fully rejected.
20. Protection of environment.

2nd Alternative Agricultural Policy

AIKS and AIAWU met again on December 28-29, 2003 at Trivandrum to review the changes in agriculture in the last one decade and how the agrarian policies of the government created newer problems for the peasantry which needed proper understanding to develop resistance.

The impact of the neo-liberal policies on agriculture since 1991 was assessed. The meeting examined the state sponsored phase of capitalist development in agriculture and the shift of the policy to neo-liberalism and declining role of the state in agriculture. We found these new policies resulted in creating serious crisis in our agriculture. We examined the nature of that crisis and effect on the economy and livelihood of the farmer. We also examined the resultant new rural contradictions that emerged in the rural society. On the basis of this analysis, we formulated the new alternative agriculture policy; on many counts, this was an update of the last policy document. The analysis and the policy could be summed up as:

1. Status of land reform unchanged, the reverse land reform started. Landlessness increased.
2. Agricultural workers' problem intensified. They need proper wage, job, house sites, debt relief etc.
3. Social justice is a major issue before the peasantry. It should be implemented properly for upliftment of SC/ST Dalit, Adivasis, women, minorities and children.
4. Irrigation – no significant improvement. Many corruption cases come up. Need proper policy guidance on water.
5. Electricity - should be supplied adequately regularly and at subsidised rate. Privatisation should be checked.
6. Public investment: more infrastructure - special outlay for backward areas.
7. Agriculture inputs should be supplied at subsidised rate.
8. Rural credit: majority of farmers do not get institutional loan –

what is required is cheap loan to farmer, especially to the poor, marginal and middle peasants, protection from private money lenders.

9. Cooperative movement - necessary for agriculture- no attempt should be made to weaken credit cooperation.
10. All subsidies in agriculture to increase for reducing cost of production.
11. Remunerative price and procurement. MSP is less than cost of production- no proper government procurement except in few crops. This should be taken up properly.
12. Crop insurance scheme: the schemes are ineffective- in most cases, farmers do not get proper compensation for crop loss.
13. Public Distribution System: government is gradually dismantling PDS, it should be universal. More articles to be given through the system.
14. We need self-sufficiency in food grains to meet domestic needs and encourage export.
15. Agro based industries: government should take steps, help cooperatives to set up such units. More investment in this sector needed.
16. Animal husbandry and other sections: it is very important for peasant economy. All help to be given in this sector, like poultry, fishery etc.
17. Agricultural research to be widened and extended to all aspects of agriculture.
18. Give the benefit of research to farmers by proper extension service and training.
19. Tribal organisation: their land and rights in forest products to be protected and need proper forest right law. Protect tribals from mining and MNC exploitation.
20. Social welfare: drinking water facilities, civic amenities, public health, nutrition, sanitation, public education, housing facilities to all peasantry and welfare projects for women and children.
21. Rural employment: need rapid increase in rural jobs through central schemes. Form self-help groups.
22. Panchayat institution: decentralise power-panchayats should help agriculture to develop.
23. Centre-state relations is very important as agriculture is in

concurrent list-both centre and state governments should help agricultural development.

24. Trade related issues: stop export subsidies of developed countries, reintroduce quantitative restriction on import, restore patent act 1970; protect bio diversity.
25. Protection of environment, ecological balance to maintain and protect wild life and flora etc.

When we opposed the neoliberal policy, most of the farmers' organisations welcomed the policy and propagated in favour of the policy. But, farmers faced serious crisis due to blind persuasion of that policy. The AIKS took the alternative policy to the peasantry in order to organise them in broader struggles against the neo-liberal policy.

The 3rd Alternative Agricultural Policy of AIKS-2009

While propagating the alternative agricultural policy adopted in 2003, some new developments took place in the agrarian scenario. It thus became necessary to review that policy and update it according to the changes in the context of global economic crisis. A national seminar was held jointly by All India Kisan Sabha and All India Agricultural Workers' Union at Kalpetta, Wayanad in Kerala on 31st January and 1st February 2009 that examined the nature of agrarian crisis in the country and adopted the resolution on "global economic crisis and the Indian peasantry." The summary of the document is given below:

Today, as the world goes into an economic crisis, unprecedented since the Great Depression of 1930s, which is already weakened by a prolonged crisis of its own, these contradictions are being intensified. The burden of the current crisis is being shifted to the peasantry, rural labour and the working class. The neoliberal policies pursued by successive governments have led to stagnation in agriculture as public investment and institutional credit have been systematically withdrawn from the agricultural sector. Trade liberalisation has exposed the peasantry to the volatility of international agricultural prices and highly subsidised import competition. The lack of adequate social expenditure and the crippling of the public distribution system have led to the impoverishment of the rural poor. The stagnation of agriculture and lack of public expenditure has also translated into growing unemployment for rural labour. The global economic crisis - through domestic deflation, credit squeeze and sharp fall in crop prices - is

certain to worsen the state of agrarian distress unless immediate corrective steps are taken.

In the backdrop of the unfolding crisis of the capitalist world today, there is a need to forge worker-peasant unity to unleash mighty struggles against the neoliberal regime in India. The All India Kisan Sabha and the All India Agricultural Workers' Union had adopted an alternative policy document in 2003 to put forward our alternative vision of agricultural policies and build struggles on that basis. Carrying forward this legacy, the AIKS and AIAWU, raised the following demands and resolved to unite the peasantry and agricultural workers around them in order to provide immediate relief to the rural toilers and to pave the way for a democratic and egalitarian trajectory of development.

The present situation in Indian agriculture is characterised by two important contradictions. The first is the sharp division between the rural rich comprising landlords, big capitalist farmers, large traders and the money lenders and their allies on the one hand and the mass of the peasantry comprising agricultural workers, poor peasants, middle peasants and rural artisans on the other. The second is the growing opposition to imperialist driven policies of the government not only from the mass of the peasantry but also from sections of the rural rich. In the context of the above situation, AIKS-AIAWU should take up the following issues and demands of the rural people and build up peasant struggle in the country.

- a. Increase public expenditure on agriculture and rural development. In the face of slowdown in the Indian economy, a substantial increase in public expenditure on the rural sector both to enhance the purchasing power of the rural poor and to increase productivity in agriculture is required. Investment should include the small and medium scale irrigation projects along with other infrastructure development.
- b. Ensure stable and remunerative crop prices: to protect farmers from the vagaries of world commodity market, government should procure crops at remunerative prices, so that prices do not go below MSP. Contract farming should be scrapped.
- c. Revert to universal PDS and ensure food security. Universal PDS at affordable cost, not at economic cost and it should cover all rural habitations and more articles to be sold through ration shops.
- d. Provide comprehensive debt relief and cheap institutional credit-

massive indebtedness is one of the main causes of farmers' suicide. Majority of the poor and small farmers and agricultural labourers do not get bank loan and are forced to take loan from moneylenders with high interest. So loan waiver is necessary to protect farmers and bank loan at 4% interest be provided.

- e. Oppose moves for future trading in essential agricultural commodities- future trading is speculative marketing which exposes farmers to price volatility. It should be banned for all commodities for which there is public procurement.
- f. Provide crop insurance to all farmers- access to crop insurance for all farmers and subsidy for small and marginal farmers should be ensured.
- g. Control input prices- ensure cheaper inputs to the peasantry at affordable prices. Repeal the seed bill and make farmer friendly seed legislation. Regulate seed market for quality seeds.
- h. Expand access to irrigation and power facilities. Ensure equity in access to surface water resources. Regulate ground water sources. Extend NREGS for small irrigation work. Stop privatisation of power and electricity. Ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity to farmers.
- i. Recognise the rights and needs of women farmers- they are not recognised as farmers in our feudal society. They should have land title, should get institutional farm loan, extension service, subsidised inputs. Ensure their right as farmers.
- j. Extend the NREGS - It should cover all adults of a family and for as many days as required. List of work be expanded to include all rural activities to improve life. Ensure minimum wage.
- k. Protect agricultural workers- Enact comprehensive separate law for agricultural workers, ensure minimum wage for them, their right to bargain collectively and provide all social security including pension, accident benefit etc.
- l. Ensure public funded agricultural research and extension. Increase budget for research in agriculture, expand extension services to all farmers, change IPR (Intellectual Property Right) to protect farmers' livelihood. Ensure bio safety, bio diversity and scrap Indo-US knowledge initiative in agriculture.
- m. Dry land farming to be extended by proper research and extension services.

- n. Strengthen cooperatives through peasant mobilisation. Cooperative of farmers - no bureaucrat interference in it. Cooperatives for water use, input purchase, crop storage, marketing in all farming including dairy etc.
- o. Carry out land redistribution - A proper radical land reform should be implemented to break the shackles of landlordism in the country, on agricultural economy and on rural society. Land should be redistributed free of cost to the landless, poor peasants and agricultural workers. Proper recording of tenants is essential in land relations.
- p. Implement the Tribal Forest Rights Act - FRA must be implemented throughout the country to ensure that land is vested in the name of tribal and traditional forest dwellers.
- q. Protect the displaced - the massive displacement of rural people in the name of development is a big problem. Their consent is a must and they must be given proper compensation and rehabilitation before displacement.
- r. Expand social services in rural areas - ensure proper and quality health services. Provide homestead land to all homeless and construct houses for them under central scheme. Provide clear water to rural people. Provide electricity to every household, ensure quality education for rural children, and increase scholarship for higher education.

The above alternative agricultural policy was adopted and propagated among peasantry by AIKS. Due to the blind implementation of neo-liberal policies by successive governments, these positive suggestions are not acted upon. Already almost a decade is gone after adoption of the above document. Further, accentuation of agrarian crisis took place more intensively after the NDA government came to power. Onslaught on rural economy has intensified under the Modi government led by BJP-RSS, which not only pursues right wing economic policies, but its crony capitalism is destroying the economy of the country. It has, therefore, become imperative to go in for further in-depth analysis of the agrarian crisis and to update our policy. AIKS shall soon take necessary steps in that direction.

VI. List of AIKS Conferences

#	Date	Venue	President	General Secretary
1.	11 April 1936	Lucknow	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati	Prof N.G. Ranga
2.	25-26 December 1936	Faizpur, Maharashtra	Prof N.G. Ranga	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati
3.	11-14 May 1938	Comilla (now in Bangla Desh)	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati	Prof. N.G. Ranga
4.	9-10 April 1939	Gaya, Bihar	Acharya Narendra Dev	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati
5.	26-27 March 1940	Palasa, Vishakhapatnam	Rahul Sankrityayana	Indulal Yagnik
6.	29-31 May 1942	Bihta, Bihar	Indulal Yagnik	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati
7.	2-4 April 1943	Bhakna Kalan, Amritsar	Bankim Mukherjee	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati
8.	14-15 March 1944	Vijaywada	Swami Sahajanand Saraswati	Bankim Mukherjee
9.	5-9 April 1945	Netrokona (now in Bangla Desh)	Muzaffar Ahmad	Bankim Mukherjee
10.	22-26 May 1947	Sikandra Rao, Aligarh	Karyanand Sharma	Abdullah Rasul
11.	2-4 April 1953	Cannore, Kerala	Indulal Yagnik	N Prasad Rao
12.	13-19 September 1954	Moga, Punjab	Indulal Yagnik	N Prasad Rao
13.	17-22 May 1955	Dahano, Maharashtra	Nana Patil	N Prasad Rao
14.	25-29 September 1956	Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar	AK Gopalan	N Prasad Rao
15.	1-3 November 1957	Bongaon, 24 Paraganas	AK Gopalan	N Prasad Rao
16.	29 April – 3 May 1959	Mayavaram, Tanjore	AK Gopalan	Bhabani Sen
17.	17-19 May 1960	Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh	AK Gopalan	Bhabani Sen
18.	30 March – 2 April 1961	Trichur, Kerala	AK Gopalan	JS Layallpuri
19.	26-28 January 1968	Madurai	AK Gopalan	Harekrishna Konar
20.	30 October – 3 November 1969	Barsul, Bardhaman	AK Gopalan	Harekrishna Konar
21.	23-26 September 1971	Rurka Kalan, Jalandhar	AK Gopalan	Harekrishna Konar
22.	11-14 April 1974	Sikar, Rajasthan	AK Gopalan	Harekrishna Konar
23.	30 March – 1 April 1979	Varanasi	Binoykrishna Chowdhury	Chetuni Master
24.	8-11 November	Midnapore, West Bengal	Udaraju Raman	Santimoy Ghosh

#	Date	Venue	President	General Secretary
	1982			
25.	17-19 May 1986	Patna	Godavari Parulekar	N Sankaraiya
26.	27-30 April 1989	Khamman, Andhra Pradesh	Harkishan Singh Surjeet	Ram Narayan Goswami
27.	27-30 September 1992	Hissar, Haryana	N Sankaraiya	Ram Narayan Goswami
28.	19-20 November 1995	Cuttack, Odisha	Binoy Konar	S Ramachandran Pillai
29.	5-8 March 1999	Kozhikode, Kerala	S Ramachandran Pillai	K Varadarajan
30.	6-9 March 2003	Jalandhar	S Ramachandran Pillai	K Varadarajan
31.	28-31 January 2006	Nashik, Maharashtra	S Ramachandran Pillai	K Varadarajan
32.	7-10 January 2010	Guntur, Andhra Pradesh	S Ramachandran Pillai	K Varadarajan
33.	24-27 July 2013	Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu	Amra Ram	Hannan Mollah
34.	3-6 October 2017	Hissar, Haryana	Ashók Dhawale	Hannan Mollah

