

CORRESPONDENCE RELATING TO
THE AGRARIAN CRISIS

IN THE
UNITED PROVINCES

OCTOBER—DECEMBER
1931

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FOREWORD

In view of the developments that have taken place it is desirable that the correspondence between the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee and the local Government should be published and placed before the public. It is not possible however to publish all the correspondence as it is too voluminous. Immediately after the Delhi Settlement the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee put themselves in touch with the Provincial Government and a large number of letters were exchanged. Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant was specially appointed by the Provincial Congress Committee to bring to the notice of Government the various grievances of the people and to put before them the view-point of the Congress. The continuing agrarian crisis particularly occupied the attention of the Provincial Congress Committee, and the correspondence largely dealt with this. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru also wrote frequently to the Local Government. Both Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had several interviews with the Chief Secretary and other officials. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru also sought an interview on two occasions with His Excellency Sir Malcolm Haily but this could not be arranged. Mahatma Gandhi interested himself in the United Provinces agrarian crisis and besides writing to the officials of the Government of India and the Local Government interviewed Sir Malcolm Haily.

The condition of the United Provinces peasantry became progressively worse during the months that followed the Delhi Settlement. Inadequacy of remissions inspite of the heavy fall in prices resulted in great distress and this was intensified by large numbers of ejections and coercive processes. In many rural areas the tenantry were subjected to a reign of terror and atrocities were perpetrated on them. The United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee appointed several enquiry committees to visit the affected districts and to report on the prevailing agrarian conditions and the distress. These reports supported by evidence taken on the spot were then considered by a special provin-

cial agrarian enquiry committee. The reports of this special committee, known as the Pant Committee, was published in September 1931.

Meanwhile attempts continued to be made by Mahatma Gandhi and the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee to obtain relief for the unhappy and suffering peasants. In the Simla conversations between Gandhiji and the Government of India in August 1931 the United Provinces agrarian crisis was specially considered and it was pointed out by Gandhiji that failing relief the peasantry would be entitled to defensive direct action or Satyagraha. In the letter dated August 27, 1931 addressed by Gandhiji to Mr. Emerson, Home Secretary to the Government of India, which formed an integral part of the Simla agreement it was expressly mentioned that "if unfortunately any grievance is so acutely felt that it becomes a paramount duty of the Congress to seek some method of relief, in the absence of an enquiry, in the shape of defensive direct action, the Congress should be held free to adopt such remedy, notwithstanding the suspension of civil disobedience." This statement of the position of the Congress was noted in the reply of Mr. Emerson to Gandhiji, dated August 27.

It may be added that the President of the Congress, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, addressed the Government of India on several occasions on the United Provinces agrarian crisis.

It will thus be seen that the Congress in the United Provinces did everything in their power to co-operate with the Government in finding a solution of the agrarian problem. Repeated letters were sent after the Simla agreement but no relief was forthcoming for the ejected tenants and others and coercive processes and enforced collections, often accompanied by physical violence, continued long after the usual period for collections.

Before any satisfactory solution was found for the last season's difficulties and ejectments, a new situation arose with the beginning of the new Fasli year 1339 when the question of fresh collections had to be considered. The peasantry, exhausted and worn out, by a continuous struggle against heavy odds, had to face a repetition of this. The remissions announced by the Local Government were considered

wholly inadequate and no arrangements were made for the ejected tenants or for the arrears or for local calamities. On the top of this came the official announcement in many districts that if the full rent as demanded was not paid within a month, even the remissions sanctioned might be withdrawn. Further, it was stated that the tenants could only raise any objections after they had paid up the rent demanded. These announcements brought about an immediate crisis. It has to be borne in mind that in fixing the remissions neither the Congress nor any other representatives of the tenants was consulted.

The correspondence now being published deals with new crisis only. Correspondence previous to this is not being published at present. The Allahabad District Congress Committee raised the issue immediately after the official announcements were made and pointed out that it was not possible for the peasantry to pay the amounts demanded. Most other districts were in the same or in a worse position. The local Government was again approached and it was pointed out how unfairly the tenants were being treated in regard to remissions, ejectments, arrears and local calamities. A conference was arranged between some local officials and the Settlement Commissioner on the one hand and Congress representatives on the other, in order to discuss specially the case of Allahabad district as exemplifying most districts in the United Provinces. This conference proved ineffective as it was stated on behalf of Government that they were not prepared to discuss any of the vital matters in issue. They could only discuss the application of the rules already laid down by them. The crux of the problem was thus not touched.

During the last months repeated attempts were made on behalf of the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee to arrange a conference with representatives of the local Government who would be in a position to discuss all the aspects of the problem. The Provincial Congress Committee appointed a special committee with full powers to negotiate with Government. These attempts did not succeed as this correspondence will show.

In the course of the correspondence it was made clear on behalf of the Congress that they were prepared to accept any

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solution, however arrived at, provided it gave sufficient relief to the peasantry. When the time for collections came advice was repeatedly sought by the tenants as to what they should do. The United Provinces Congress wished to take no step to put an end to negotiations which might result in a settlement. At the same time they could not remain silent when advice was sought and they could not advise payment of a demand which they were convinced was grossly unfair and likely to ruin the peasantry whom they represented. The Congress thereupon after obtaining permission therefor from the President of the All-India Congress Committee, advised the peasantry to withhold payment of rent and revenue temporarily pending negotiations. They made it clear, however, that they were ready and willing to negotiate and, as soon as relief was given, to vary their advice. They further suggested to the Government that they would withdraw their advice as to withholding payment if Government would suspend collections while negotiations were going on. The suggestion was not accepted by Government and, the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee had no alternative left but to repeat its advice to the peasantry to withhold payment. In spite of all developments the Provincial Congress Committee adheres to the position that it is prepared to explore all avenues leading to a settlement and to withdraw its advice regarding non-payment as soon as sufficient relief is in sight or collections are suspended.

Allahabad

December 4, 1931

RAFI AHMAD KIDWAI

Secretary

United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee

Letter from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Kunwar Jagdish Prasad, Chief Secretary, U. P. Government, dated, Allahabad, October 15, 1931

DEAR KUNWAR JAGDISH PRASAD,

I have written to you on many occasions in the course of the last few months and brought to your notice various activities of Government officials, the police and zamindars' agents. You have been good enough to enquire into many of these matters and to inform me of the Government viewpoint in regard to them. Sometimes some relief has also followed. But, as a whole, the position has not improved and indeed it has deteriorated in many respects. We continue to get reports from a large number of districts showing that the tenantry are being ill-treated and Congress workers are harassed, and, what is even more important, that the rent policy of Government and its application is causing misery to vast numbers of people. I hesitate to write to you again and again on the same subject. Attempts to communicate directly with District officials have often been met with snubs from them. I do not know if Government have any uniform policy in regard to such matters. If they do not want us to communicate directly with District officers, please let me know so that we may issue our instructions accordingly. Would you like our Provincial Congress Committee to address you directly in regard to all complaints from districts?

I have recently visited some rural areas and many complaints were brought to my notice. In Bahraich district a note containing a number of recent complaints from the Nanpara, Payagpur and other estates was sent to the Deputy Commissioner. These complaints included charges of molestation and outrage on women. In his reply the D. C. indicated that he could only take action if the tenants approached him direct. The District Magistrate of Bareilly has consistently refused to take any notice of complaints forwarded to him by the local Congress people. I was in

Bareilly about two weeks ago and I wrote to him about these complaints. In his reply he has said that he will send his answer to them to the local Government. From Basti district many complaints have come of the activities of the employees of zamindars.

In Muttra it appears that the Thanadars of Chaumunha and Brijhari are again instituting cases under Section 107 Criminal Procedure Code. You will remember that the police of these two places were criticised in the recent judgments of the Sessions Judge. No steps have been taken against these police officers and they appear to be free to continue to act in the old way.

I presume the Government have made up their mind about the Semri and Baraipur occurrences, judging from the long communique they have published. I should like to tell you however that after personally meeting the parties concerned and talking to them at some length, I am quite convinced of the truth of the charges made. You know that the Baraipur occurrences were brought to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner of Gonda at the beginning of June by the President of the District Congress Committee. About Semri I was told that a registered letter containing an account of what had happened was sent to the Deputy Commissioner the day after the occurrence. I have seen the postal receipt for this. I do not refer here to other facts, such as the reported attempt of the women to lodge a complaint at the police station. The evidence is really overwhelming.

I have drawn your attention on several occasions to the ejections, specially in Allahabad district. Many of these ejected tenants driven by their passionate attachment to their land, have got them back, but they have done so at the cost of heavy additional debts and selling their cattle. They are in a bad way and are sinking deeper and deeper into the mire. Their capacity to pay anything in future is being reduced to vanishing point. Collections backed by coercive processes have continued without a break both here and in other districts, in some of which Section 12-A Oudh Rent Act is being enforced now.

It has been a continuous story of pay, pay, pay or lose your lands and in addition suffer other penalties. Cases of

trespass against ejected tenants have been frequent and have resulted in imprisonment and fine. And before the old chapter has ended, a fresh one of payment backed by threats has now begun.

It has been our contention that the basis of the remissions for the new year is incorrect and inadequate. But even worse has been the method of applying this basis. A great deal has been left to the discretion of the district officials and remissions have thus varied in accordance with individual temperaments. In Allahabad district the remissions for the current year as announced are actually less than for the last Rabi, although they are meant to be for two seasons while the Rabi remissions were for one season only. Apart from this it would appear to be obvious that this year's remissions should be greater than last years as they are supposed to be based on the 1901 figures. The District Magistrate of Allahabad has come out with many columns of figures and contends that the figures for 1901 were the same as those for 1914-15. This is difficult to believe and such figures as we have in our possession go to contradict it. In this connection it is interesting to note that the District Magistrate allowed less remissions in Rabi last year than the Government had actually sanctioned.

The tenants have had practically no opportunity to object to the amount of the remissions. It is now stated that they may file objections provided they pay up the full demand first. This proviso is curious and instructive. The tenants are not flush with money and their difficulty is often that they cannot pay the full amount. If they cannot do so then they are debarred from even raising objections. If they manage to pay by begging or borrowing or selling then prima facie they were in a position to pay and little value need be attached to their objection.

In some of the districts I have visited notices have been officially circulated that if the tenant does not pay within a month the remission may be cancelled. I understand that this has been done under directions from the local Government. The object of such a direction can only be to frighten the tenants into payment anyhow. So far as I know it is very seldom, if ever, that the full amount due is paid up in November. For many tenants, dealing in

particular crops, this is quite impossible as some such crops are only gradually collected. Then again if all the tenants have to pay up within the month this necessarily means that the tenants must sell their produce immediately and more or less together. If a large quantity of grain or other crop is thrown on to the market at the same time this is bound to result in a fall in the price of grain or other crop, and this in its turn will make the condition of the tenant as well as his zamindar worse.

It may be that Government does not intend to enforce rigidly this direction about payment within a month and that it was meant merely as a threat. Even so many zamindars will take shelter under the direction and profit by it and the poor tenant will go to the wall.

Thus the outlook for the tenant is about as black as it could well be and there seems no way out. If the Government policy is enforced, he is doomed to even greater suffering than he has passed through. We have been anxiously considering this and the Allahabad District Congress Committee have felt that they can be no parties to this continuous oppression of the Kisan leading to his economic death. They feel that it may be necessary for them to advise the tenantry to withhold payment of rent till a satisfactory solution is found. They do not wish to take any decision, involving far-reaching consequences, without the fullest thought and consultation. As at present advised however they see no other way. They are however calling a representative kisan conference to consider the question, and are also communicating with the Provincial and the All India Congress.

I regret greatly that such a step should be contemplated by them, specially at a time when Gandhiji is attending the Round Table Conference. But the question of payment or non-payment is an urgent issue and cannot await the deliberations of the Round Table Conference or the return of Gandhiji. We have tried to avoid raising any issue which might lead to friction and we shall continue to do so. But the fates seem to be against this.

Yours sincerely
(Sd). JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Letter from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Kunwar Jagdish Prasad, dated, Allahabad, 15, 1931

DEAR KUNWAR JAGDISH PRASAD,

Mr. R. F. Mudie, the Collector of Allahabad has giving some figures to the press to show that the remissions he is giving are fair and in accordance with the principles laid down by the Local Government. He has also made certain statements that the Settlement Officer's standard rates were taken as fair rates as these were based on rents fixed between 1271 and 1300 Fasli, i.e., 1863 and 1892. I do not know how far these figures are correct as other figures obtainable from the Gazetteer and Settlement Reports conflict with them. In this connection I should like to draw your attention to some of these latter figures and to the amount of remissions given and announced.

In 1338 Fasli the remissions were calculated as follows:

- (i) Fifteen years increments to be remitted.
- (ii) Less than 12½ per cent increments not to be remitted.
- (iii) Remissions for Rabi only.

For 1339 Fasli, i.e., the current year, remissions are supposed to be calculated on the following basis:

- (i) Thirty years increments to be remitted.
- (ii) Remissions to apply to all increments, including those less than 12½%.
- (iii) Remissions are for both Kharif and Rabi.

Prima facie the remissions for the current year should thus be far greater than the remissions for 1338 F. The actual figures are:

In 1338 Fasli—

For fall in prices	Rs.5.55 lakhs
For local calamities	Rs.6.75 lakhs

Total remission	Rs.12.30 lakhs
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For 1339 Fasli—

For fall in prices	Rs.9.50 lakhs
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Although the sanctioned amount for 1338 F. was 12.30 lakhs it appears from the Collector's statement that the only 11 lakhs were distributed. The Collector has also stated he gave 7 lakhs for fall in prices and 4 lakhs for calamities. Further he states that the remissions were for both Kharif and Rabi 1338 F. although Government have previously stated definitely that they were for Rabi only.

The total remissions for 1339 F. are thus apparently less than they should be even if the 1338 F. remissions are taken into account.

In this connection it is pertinent to compare the population figures for Allahabad district for different years, as also the figures for area of holdings and under cultivation.

Population in—

1911	12.96 lakhs
1921	12½ lakhs
1931	14½ lakhs

(the population of the municipality and cantonment has been excluded).

Area of holdings in—

1907-08	12,37,000 acres
1925-26	12,31,000 acres

Area under cultivation in—

1903-07	10,67,000 acres
1922-27	10,47,000 acres

Thus while the population has gone up considerably in the last decade, the area of holdings and actually under cultivation has gone down. This obviously puts the greater burden on the tenantry. Mr. Drake Brockman wrote in his settlement report of Allahabad, basing his remarks on the population figures of 1911, that a bigger population could not be maintained economically. The outside margin, according to him, had been reached. Even then there were a large number of un-economic holdings. As the population has gone up by 12% and the area under cultivation has gone down the position of the tenants has greatly deteriorated.

The total rental demand in 1915-16 was Rs.44.7 lakhs; in 1929-30 it was Rs.57.3 lakhs. The increase in these 14 years was thus Rs.12.6 lakhs. If even the 1915-16

figures are taken the amount remitted now for 1339 F. (Rs.9.5 lakhs) is Rs.3.1 lakhs less. But the figures for 1915-16 must be greatly in excess of the 1901 figures and therefore the difference will be all the greater.

Mr. Mudie states that a special scheme was sanctioned by Government for Allahabad, Fatehpur and Etawah Districts. Under this he need not go, for Allahabad, beyond the last settlement in 1320 F. i.e., 1914-15. The Settlement Officer's standard rates are said to be based on rents fixed between 1271 F. and 1300 F. i.e., 1863 and 1892. This appears to conflict with figures given in Mr. Drake Brockman's report and in Allahabad Gazetteer. These figures are as follows:

	Occupancy		Non-occupancy	
	1907-08	1914-15	1907-08	1915-16
For Gangapar ...	5.93	6.15	5.59	6.96
For Doab ...	4.71	5.10	6.16	6.38
Average for above two...	5.32	5.70	5.88	6.80

The figures for 1907-08 are from the Gazetteer and the figures for 1914-15 from Mr. Drake Brockman's Settlement Report. Jamnapar has not been given as it is taken separately with Bundelkhand.

The figures for 1907-08 given above are likely to be greatly in excess of 1900 figures as rents went up rapidly after the passing of the Agra Tenantry Act in 1901.

Mr. Mudie's figures according to Tehsils may also be compared to the Gazetteer figures for 1907-08:—

Tahsil		Mr. Mudie's figures	Gazetteer 1907-08
Bara ..	Occupancy ..	2.90	2.95 per acre
	Non-occupancy	2.80	1.87 " "
Chail ..	Occupancy ..	5.90	5.07 " "
	Non-occupancy	6.60	6.24 " "
Handia ..	Occupancy ..	6.10	5.72 " "
	Non-occupancy	6.50	6.32 " "
Manjhanpur	Occupancy ..	4.70	4.16 " "
	Non-occupancy	5.70	4.83 " "
Phulpur ..	Occupancy ..	5.90	5.95 " "
	Non-occupancy	5.90	5.69 " "
Meja ..	Occupancy ..	2.80	2.64 " "
	Non-occupancy	1.80	1.70 " "
Sirathu ..	Occupancy ..	5.60	4.97 " "
	Non-occupancy	5.40	5.48 " "
Soraon ..	Occupancy ..	6.40	6.33 " "
	Non-occupancy	6.40	6.75 " "

All these figures go to show that the rents of 1914-15 were as a whole considerably in excess of rents of 1907-08 and it is reasonable to presume that they are still more in excess of those in 1900-01, specially as the Agra Tenancy Act was passed in 1901 and rents went up subsequently. It is thus not correct to say that the figures for 1914-15, taken as a basis by Mr. Mudie, are equivalent to the figures for 1901, which year the Government accepted as the basis of calculation. The result of having taken the wrong year as a starting point means a considerable reduction in the remissions.

Allahabad district has been particularly hard hit during the past six months. The large number of ejectments and the attempts made by the ejected tenants to get back their

lands at any cost and at any loss has exhausted them completely. Even the most liberal application of the Government's directions as to remissions would not have brought enough relief to them. But the present application of this policy based on 1914-15 makes matters far worse.

So far as I know, no notice of payment within a month has been issued in Allahabad. In the adjoining district of Fatehpur this has been done. Apart from the obvious difficulties of tenants paying up within a month there is another point of consideration. It is well known that the receipts are often not given. This will make the poor tenant's position still worse as he will not be able to prove payment. Then again arrears are always with him. It is a little difficult to imagine how a tenant who is given remission because he cannot pay the full demand, is expected to pay arrears. Yet we have seen during the last six months that he was expected and was ejected for failure to do so.

I am told that every consideration will be shown to the tenant and every facility afforded to him. Our experience during these past months and even now has been unfortunate. The revenue staff seems to look upon the tenant as the enemy of society to be harassed in every way and made to pay up by any means. For him the period following the Delhi Settlement has been one of the most intense suffering, and it is a little difficult to conceive that he will get better treatment now. But if the treatment was good the fact remains that he must be made to pay and whether he can do so or not is immaterial.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

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**Letter from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Mr. E. C. Melville,
Private Secretary to the Viceroy, dated, Allahabad,
October 16, 1931**

DEAR MR. MELVILLE,

You were good enough to write to me some time ago and convey His Excellency's message to me that he wished me to communicate with him in the event of my having any

difficulty. I pointed out in my reply that I was greatly troubled at the large number of ejections of tenants and the coercive processes employed to extort rent from them which they could not ordinarily pay without selling their cattle and other property or borrowing at a heavy rate of interest. I have not written again to you as I did not wish to trouble His Excellency. But I have been writing to the local Government and keeping them informed of our difficulties. I believe Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel has also written to Mr. Emerson on the subject.

I am now availing myself of His Excellency's suggestion to write to you, for his information, as the agrarian situation has again become critical. The tenantry have had to face during the last six months continuously coercive processes and forcible measures to extort rent from them. Large numbers of them were ejected from their lands. His Excellency will appreciate what the reaction of a peasant is when he is dispossessed of his land, specially if he has had an occupancy holding which has been in his family for generations. The Indian peasant like any other peasant, or perhaps even more so, is passionately attached to his land. Thousands of ejections caused deep distress and misery and repeated attempts were made by us to get the lands returned to them on fair terms. Mr. Gandhi discussed this matter with Mr. Emerson and I have been continually writing about it to the U. P. Government. The problem and the distress were recognised to exist but it was apparently hoped that something would happen which would automatically solve the problem and remove the distress. So nothing was done except to continue the coercive processes and to proceed for criminal trespass against those ejected tenants who remained on their lands.

Gradually the poor tenant was beaten down and made to feel that his land was going for ever. His passion for the land was too great for him to put up with this idea and so many sold their cattle and other belongings and often borrowed at heavy rates of interest. They managed to get back their land after paying not only the full demand but also various other charges. Thus the tenant, who was recognised to be very hard hit by the fall in prices and therefore entitled to remission on the usual rental demand ultimately

had to pay a sum often in excess of the full demand. He did so practically at the cost of selling himself to the money lender. It was an act of folly for which he and all concerned will suffer, but it is difficult to blame him for it. He has nothing in the world except his land to fall back upon.

Ever since the Delhi settlement the tenant in the United Provinces has had to face a most difficult situation. He has been treated to every kind of indignity and harassment and every device has been employed to make him pay. The general depression and the economic situation were against him. To this was added the treatment he got from his landlord and from the revenue staff. To both these the tenant seemed to be an enemy to be combatted and beaten down. His Excellency knows of the numerous complaints we have made from time to time about the treatment of the peasants. In varying degrees this treatment has continued and there has been no interval or period of rest for the tenantry. Ordinarily the period of collections is supposed to close about the time the rains break out and the peasant is left in peace to till his field. There has been no such break or suspension this year and forcible collections for the past season have continued and are continuing. In many cases, the peasant has been allowed to till his field and sow his crop and just when the crops appear and harvest time approaches and he hopes to get some return for his toil, he has been threatened with dispossession and actually dispossessed. Now the new season has begun and the new rental demand falls due. Thus before the tenant has survived the coercive processes of the last season, he is confronted with a repetition of the same processes. The period of the Delhi settlement has been one of ceaseless war against the tenant.

I do not wish to trouble His Excellency with lists of complaints. We have communicated these from time to time to the local Government. But I should like to mention two cases which have filled us with humiliation and indignation. These are instances of barbarous outrage on women in the villages of Semri and Baraipur in the Balrampur Estate under the Court of Wards in Gonda district. The U. P. Government has issued a long communique denying that anything of the kind alleged occurred. If this is

the U. P. Government's view after a private enquiry I suppose we cannot help it. But it is no one else's view. Many prominent public men have personally investigated the matter with care and are convinced of the truth of the charges. I have myself visited the localities and met the persons concerned. I have no doubt whatever that the outrages were committed. But the U. P. Government has ignored all the direct evidence and put forward certain circumstantial arguments which were not worthy of them. If they are so sure of their facts a public and impartial enquiry would have satisfied everybody. His Excellency will appreciate that people feel strongly where the honour of their womenfolk is concerned.

Our present difficulty is that the new scale of remissions, for the current agricultural year, is not only inadequate in principle, but has been applied in such a way as to reduce even the remissions which ought to have been given under it. Further, it is stated that if the tenant does not pay up in full within a month even these remissions might be cancelled. It is obvious that after all that has occurred during the last six months he is not in a position to pay up anything quickly. He has not got over his last payment yet. And if all the tenants tried to pay within a month, they would have to flood the market with their produce and thus further reduce the price of grain etc. This would be disastrous for the tenant as well as the landlord and the State. The prospect ahead of the tenantry is again therefore one of coercive processes, ejections, harassments, attachments, sale of cattle or property, if they still possess any, and all that has happened this summer will be repeated. They faced this prospect on our advice last season and they have come out of it terribly shaken up. We dare not offer them this advice again. Therefore we may be driven to advice them to withhold payment of rent for the present. One of our local Congress Committees—the Allahabad District Congress Committee—has after anxious and prolonged consideration decided to approach its superior body the U. P. Provincial Congress Committee and our President Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel for permission, should need arise, to advise withholding payment of rent till relief is given in regard to various matters connected with it. This refers to one district only but we

realise that this may have far reaching consequences. Circumstances and the miserable plight of the tenantry appear to leave us no option. They have suffered enough during the past six months. We cannot be willing parties to further suffering for them.

I am sorry to have to write at such length. I feel that some explanation is due to His Excellency for the step which one of our Congress Committees intend to take. It is with great regret that the taking of such a step has been contemplated, specially at a time when Mr. Gandhi is attending the Round Table Conference. But the question of payment or withholding of payment of rent is a vital and an urgent one for the tenantry and it cannot afford to be shelved till the conclusion of the London Conference.

I trust His Excellency is well now.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

4

Cable to Gandhiji from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, dated, Allahabad, October 16, 1931

Agrarian situation becoming critical coercive processes attachments forcible collection rent continued right through without interval many ejected tenants proceeded against for criminal trespass many for fear permanently losing land sold cattle belongings borrowed money paid full demand plus extras. Fresh demand now made for current season inadequate remissions threat that if full payment not made within month remission might be cancelled also no objection considered on behalf of tenants till full payment made. Condition kisans deplorable thoroughly exhausted after past six months continuous harassment forcible measures apparently process likely be repeated this season also. Allahabad District Congress Committee resolved under circumstances ask permission start Satyagraha if necessity arises by advising withholding payment rent application for permission made to Vallabhbai and provincial committee. Representative district kisan Conference being held next week to decide

question. Decision likely have far reaching consequences but question payment or withholding payment must be decided soon vital urgent problem for kisans admitting no delay.

5

Letter from Shri Purushottamdas Tandon to Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani, dated, Allahabad, October 17, 1931

MY DEAR SHERWANI,

I informed you verbally on the 15th of the resolution passed by the Allahabad District Congress Committee that morning asking the permission of the Provincial Congress Committee to start Satyagraha in Allahabad District by advising non-payment of rent and revenue. I also requested you to write to the President of the Congress and obtain beforehand the permission of the Working Committee, since it is likely to meet before the meeting of the Provincial Council comes off.

I forward herewith a copy of the whole resolution of the 15th instant.¹ Reference is made in that resolution to another resolution of September 22. The latter simply adopted a report of a Sub-Committee appointed by the District Congress Committee to consider and report on the Government policy regarding the agrarian situation. A copy of that report is also enclosed.²

When we stopped the no-rent-and-revenue campaign as a result of the Delhi Settlement we expected that Government policy would become more sympathetic and the oppression on tenants would cease. But what has happened is that taking advantage of their freedom from the political pressure of the Congress the Government with all its legal and illegal machinery and in combination with zamindars has concentrated on crushing the tenants. Coercive processes, ejections, tortures, collection of rent with police aid have been freely resorted to. When cases of torture have been brought to the notice of the authorities they have turned a deaf ear and have taken the side of the zamindars or the police.

¹ See Appendix A

² See Appendix B

The situation is full of misery for the poor cultivator. The combination of forces against him is strong. He is already exhausted after the payments for 1338 Fasli which obviously on account of the fall in prices he could not make out of the sale of the produce. He has had to sell his bullocks, and the few ornaments of his family or has had to borrow at heavy rates of interest. For the current Fasli year 1339 the remissions announced are again thoroughly inadequate. As the resolution of the District Committee shows there is to be a remission of two annas and seven pies in the rupee while the price of agricultural produce has gone down by over eight annas in the rupee. It will therefore be impossible for the tenant to pay the demand from the yield of the land, and the natural consequence will be that he will again be pursued, hunted and tortured.

In the circumstances it seems to us that the only course to be adopted is to advise the tenants to withhold payment of rent altogether. We know that this will also entail misery; but it is better to put up a fight and die than allow ourselves to be crushed under a grinding machine which knows no rest.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) PURUSHOTTAMDAS TANDON

6

Letter from Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani to Shri Vallabbhai Patel, dated, Allahabad, October 18, 1931

DEAR SIR,

I herewith send you a copy of the resolution passed by the District Congress Committee, Allahabad, on October 15, 1931, by which they have asked my permission to start satyagraha in the form of non-payment of rent and revenue. I also enclose a copy of the covering letter of the President of the aforesaid District Congress Committee summarily describing the condition of the district as regards the payment of rent for the coming crop.

The report of the sub-committee appointed by the said District Congress Committee to consider the Government

scheme of remission is also herewith attached.¹ They will show that the proposed remissions are utterly inadequate and under the present circumstances the tenants will not at all be able to meet the demand. I may further point out that the standard year taken by the Government in their scheme of remission was the year when the Agra Tenancy Act was passed, namely 1901. Before this Act there was no security of tenure whatsoever for the non-occupancy tenants who formed the bulk of agricultural population of the province. Every non-occupancy tenant then was a tenant from year to year and one can very well imagine the miserable condition in which the majority of tenants must have been in those days. There was complaint all round that the tenants were rackrented and this complaint forced the Government to secure the tenure at least for seven years by means of the enactments. Thus the standard year was fundamentally wrong as a standard.

The methods adopted by zamindars with the help of the Government for realising rent of the last season were so drastic and brutal that they have exhausted both the patience and the resources of the tenants and tenants in general will not be able to put up with them any longer.

Further most of the Government officials in the province never acted in the spirit of the Delhi settlement. They tried and are still trying their best to stop ordinary Congress work in the rural areas. They have freely used the preventive section as well as Sections 124-A and 153-A Indian Penal Code, for the purpose. In some districts there have been wholesale arrests and detention of our workers.

We here have been informing the local authorities as well as the local Government of the attitude of the various district officials; but the answers are mostly denials on most flimsy and technical grounds.

The situation demands an early decision and unfortunately the meeting of the Provincial Congress Committee takes place after the meeting of the Working Committee. My difficulty therefore is that I have not had the occasion to discuss the matter with the workers of the other districts. I feel that the campaign in Allahabad will not leave

¹ See Appendix B

other districts, especially the surrounding districts, unaffected. As regards Allahabad we are holding a conference of the tenants on the 23rd of this month, and I will be in a better position to intimate to you about the position of the district after the conference. However the question will remain whether Allahabad alone will be able to bear the miseries and hardships which the fight would entail and I will only be able to judge the position after the meeting of the Provincial Congress Committee. But if we are to start we must begin it soon because the time of collection has already come.

Under the circumstances I would request you and the Working Committee to authorise our Provincial Congress Committee Council to take action in Allahabad or in other place or places if it thinks necessary.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) T. A. K. SHERWANI

President
U. P. Provincial Congress Committee

7

Cable from Mahatma Gandhi in reply to the cable of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, dated, London, October 19, 1931

Your cable you should unhesitatingly take necessary steps meet every situation expect nothing here.

8

Letter from Mr. E. C. Melville to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, dated, Simla, October 19, 1931

DEAR PANDITJI,

His Excellency wishes me to thank you for your letter No. G7/2655 of October 16, and for the information which it contains. Acting on His Excellency's instructions, I have requested the Home Department to ascertain from the Local Government the facts as mentioned in your letter under reference.

His Excellency wishes me to add that he is sure that Sir Malcolm Hailey is taking the keenest personal interest

in the agrarian situation in the United Provinces and knows that he will do his best to keep the balance between the landlord and the tenant.

I am glad to be able to tell you that His Excellency is quite well again.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) E. C. MELVILLE

9

Letter from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Kunwar Jagdish Prasad, dated October 26, 1931

DEAR KUNWAR JAGDISH PRASAD,

As I told you on the telephone yesterday we shall gladly meet the Settlement Commissioner and the Allahabad officials. I should have liked this meeting to take place before the Working Committee meets but that I am afraid is impossible. I am leaving shortly for Delhi as the Working Committee meets from tomorrow onwards. Soon after the Provincial Congress Committee will meet at Lucknow. As both these Committees will have to consider the agrarian situation in the U. P. and specially in the Allahabad district it would have been desirable if we had met the Settlement Commissioner and the other officials before the Committee meetings took place. Unfortunately that cannot be arranged now.

I cannot definitely suggest a date for our informal conference now. It will have to be sometime early in November—probably the 3rd November, Saturday, at Allahabad, may be provisionally fixed. Unfortunately Purushotamdas Tandon has gone to Lahore. I shall get into touch with him and inform him of the date. If no hitch occurs and you do not hear from me to the contrary, we shall adhere to November 3rd.

So far as Allahabad is concerned the presence of Purushotamdas Tandon, Venkatesh Narayan Tewari, Lal Bahadur, the Secretary of our District Congress Committee and myself will be necessary. I feel, however, that the questions to be discussed will raise wider issues and it will be desirable if some of our provincial representatives are also present. In

particular our president, Tasadduk A. K. Sherwani and Govind Ballabh Pant should be present. As the Provincial Congress Committee is meeting soon they will probably decide on a course of action or authorise their Council to take the necessary steps. It is difficult for me to commit them without consulting them.

Another difficulty that faces us is this. An important point at issue between the Allahabad District Congress Committee and the local officials has been the manner of calculation of the remissions and particularly the date from which such calculations should be made. But there are other important matters also. For instance the principle underlying the policy of Government in regard to these remissions is itself objected to. Further there is the question of arrears. It is difficult for us to understand how any arrears can be rightly demanded when it is admitted that the full current demand itself cannot be paid. Then there is the question of ejections about which I have written to you so often. The date of payment is also important in view of the notices issued in many districts that the remissions might be withdrawn if payment is not made within a certain date. There are some other points also but I need not refer to all of these here. One matter however I must mention. This is the loss caused by local calamities. It is well known that the recent rains have ruined the crops in many areas. This has to be taken into consideration in assessing the current rent.

I might add that we continue to receive reports from districts which show that the repressive policy of Government in regard to rent collections and the like continues. In Bulandshahr we are informed that the police and kurkamins have been going about attaching property. In Barabanki quite a large number of Section 107 notices have been issued. In Sultanpur district a notice, dated October 19, under Section 144 Criminal Procedure was issued to Syt. Sitla Sahai last week forbidding him from speaking on the ground that he had been "wandering over the countryside and instructing tenants to withhold payment of rent full or partial." This is a totally wrong statement. He has only been once before in Sultanpur some weeks or months ago and he said nothing about withholding pay-

ment of rent.

I hope you will get over your indisposition soon.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

After writing the above I telephoned to you and immediately after I telephoned to Mr. V. N. Mehta and informed him that November 3, might be fixed provisionally for the Conference. He suggested to me that meanwhile it would be desirable that no aggressive propaganda was carried on on our behalf. I would gladly agree to anything that would avoid friction and make it easier to arrive at an understanding. But certain steps have been taken by us, for instance, the tenants' conference held on the 23rd which came to certain conclusions. A number of meetings in rural areas have also been fixed up and it was proposed to issue some leaflets. I shall suggest that propagandist leaflets be not issued for the time being but it is hardly possible or desirable to stop the meetings which have already been arranged. These meetings are held regularly by our workers and they need not be interpreted as constituting any special aggressive campaign.

10

**Resolution of Working Committee passed at Delhi on
October 29, 1931**

This Committee has considered the statements of the Presidents of the U. P. Provincial Congress Committee and the Allahabad District Congress Committee about the agrarian situation in the U. P. and the resolutions of the Allahabad District Congress Committee asking for permission to offer Satyagraha as against the present agrarian policy of the U. P. Government and, in particular, the oppressive collection of rent and revenue at a time when the agriculturists are unable to pay on account of acute economic depression.

The Committee realises that the agriculturists of the U. P. have been subjected to a great deal of hardship and oppression, particularly in the course of the past five months, and that they have now to face a grave crisis. The Com-

mittee feels that it is the duty of the Congress to assist them in every possible way in removing the economic hardships they suffer from. In the opinion of the Committee however the question of defensive action should first be considered by the Provincial Congress Committee. The Committee therefore refers the application to the U. P. Provincial Congress Committee and in the event of the Provincial Congress Committee being of opinion that it is a fit case for defensive satyagraha on the part of the agriculturists, in terms of the Simla Agreement dated August 27, this Committee authorises the President to consider the application and to give such decision on it as he may consider necessary.

11

Resolution of United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee passed at Lucknow on November 2, 1931

The Provincial Congress Committee has considered the application of the Allahabad District Congress Committee for permission to start Satyagraha against the agrarian policy of the Government by recommending that the payment of rent and revenue should be withheld till such time as adequate relief is given to the agriculturists, and the resolution of the Working Committee passed on this application being forwarded to them by the president of this Committee. The Committee has also considered reports from various districts which show that the remissions announced by Government for the current Fasli year are wholly unsatisfactory and inadequate in principle; that the method according to which they have been worked out, and the limitations to which they are subject have made them still more ineffective and unacceptable; that no provision is made for the restoration of land to the ejected tenants or in regard to the arrears of rents and revenue and other debts which weigh down the agricultural classes; that no allowance has so far been made for the local calamities which have afflicted numerous districts in the province. The Committee has further been informed that coercive processes for the realisation of rent continue and tenants are still being harassed, and many zamindars have been subjected to hard-

ship and indignity to compel them to pay the full revenue demand. The Provincial Committee as well as many district committees have made continuous efforts to seek relief from provincial and local authorities, but the policy followed by the Government during the last six months has resulted in the progressive deterioration of agrarian conditions in the Province and has caused great suffering to the peasantry. The Committee is of opinion that unless immediate relief is given the Allahabad district and many other districts will be justified in resorting to Satyagraha in terms of the Simla agreement dated August 27, 1931, referred to in the Working Committee resolution. The Committee however is of opinion that another effort should be made to obtain adequate relief and authorises its Council in this behalf. In the event of such relief not forthcoming the Council is given authority to take the necessary permission from the President of the All-India Congress Committee to allow the Allahabad District Congress Committee as well as other districts similarly situated to take such defensive action as may be considered necessary.

The Council is further authorised to appoint, should necessity arise, a smaller committee to deal with agrarian matters and to give effect to this resolution of the Committee.

12

Letter from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Kunwar Jagdish Prasad, dated Allahabad, November 3, 1931

DEAR KUNWAR JAGDISH PRASAD,

The informal conference with the district officials and Mr. K. N. Knox, that was arranged at your suggestion took place today. I am afraid it did not yield any useful result. We were told that we could not consider the basis of remissions, nor could we discuss arrears or debts or ejections or local calamities or similar matters. The interpretations put on the Rent and Revenue Committee's report and on the Government order defining Government policy were also novel and extraordinary. It is not quite clear what

the purpose of the conference was if no single important matter even relating to Allahabad district could be discussed. The result of lengthy discussions was that perhaps an additional Rs.25,000 or so might be added to the remissions for Allahabad district.

I have written to you so frequently on this subject that it is not necessary to trouble you again with a repetition of what I have previously said. I would only add that, so far as we are concerned, the situation is very grave and no relief seems to be in sight. The matter has been considered by the All India Working Committee of the Congress and the Provincial Congress Committee. The Provincial Committee has directed us to make a further effort to obtain relief from the Local Government. They have also appointed a special committee for the purpose of meeting representatives of the Local Government, if the Government is agreeable to having such a conference. Our president, T. A. K. Sherwani, will write to you separately about this.

I am a member of this committee but I have to go to Bombay on the 6th and I may not return till the 10th. If the proposed conference is held after the 10th I shall try to be present. But we are anxious that there should be no delay and even in my absence other members can meet you or others whom the Government may suggest.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

13

Letter from Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani to Kunwar Jagdish Prasad, dated Allahabad, November 3, 1931

DEAR KUNWAR JAGDISH PRASAD,

I enclose a copy of a resolution on the agrarian situation passed by the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee on November 2, at Lucknow. The Committee was of opinion that we should make another effort to obtain adequate relief from the Local Government before we gave up all hope and resorted to defensive action. I did not send this resolution to you immediately as I wanted to find out first the result of today's informal conference between some Con-

gressmen on the one hand and the Local Official of Allahabad and the Settlement Commissioner on the other. This conference has not helped in clearing up the situation in the least even in regard to Allahabad district.

The Council of our Provincial Committee has nominated six of us to confer with representatives of the Government in regard to the agrarian situation, should such a conference take place. These six are Messrs. Purshotam Das Tandon, Govind Ballabh Pant, Jawaharlal Nehru, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, V. N. Tiwari and myself. We shall be glad to place our difficulties before the Government's representatives and to confer with them regarding remedies. Any date, the earlier the better, will suit us. As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is not going to be here from November 6, to November 10, I would suggest November 11, or 12, at Lucknow. But we can meet you earlier without him if you so desire. I would not like the meeting to be delayed much beyond November 12.

I shall thank you for your early reply.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) T. A. K. SHERWANI

14

Letter from Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, President All India Congress Committee, dated Allahabad/5, 1931

MY DEAR VALLABHBHAI,

I herewith enclose a copy of a resolution passed by U. P. Provincial Congress Committee at Lucknow. At the meeting facts were disclosed about certain districts which show that condition in some of them was even worst than Allahabad. Yesterday we had a talk with Government officials. Nothing came out of it and we came away with the impression that the local Government is not prepared to give any substantial relief. However, I have sent a letter to the Chief Secretary of the local Government the copy of which I enclose herewith in pursuance of the resolution of the Provincial Congress Committee. Jawahar Lal will tell you the real state of things here.

The resolution was passed without a single dissenting voice.

Taking all the circumstances into consideration our's is a fit case for permission and I ask you for the same.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) T. A. K. SHERWANI

15

Letter from Kunwar Jagdish Prasad to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, dated Lucknow, November 10, 1931

DEAR PANDIT JAWAHARLAL NEHRU,

Thank you very much for your letter, dated November 3. I shall be glad to see you and Mr. Sherwani about the agrarian situation in the Province, but I think it is only fair that you should know what the present position is as regards some of the principal points mentioned in your letter.

2. You doubtless remember that on July 23, the Legislative Council passed a resolution that a Committee consisting of official and non-official members of the Council should be appointed to advise on the re-adjustment of rents and revenue in view of the fall in prices of agricultural produce. The Government accepted the resolution and a Committee consisting of three officials and twelve non-officials was accordingly appointed. The Committee met in Naini Tal on August 10, and unanimously decided to ask the Government to nominate a member from the Congress Party as it was not at present represented in the Council. They suggested for nomination the name of Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant. Government accepted the suggestion and invited Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant on August 10, to join the Committee. Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant replied, regretting that he could not serve without the permission of the United Provinces Congress Committee which it would take time to obtain as the members of the Congress Committee were scattered throughout the Province. The Rent and Revenue Committee considered the reply and decided that the work before them was too urgent to allow of any further postponement. A communique explaining this was issued on August 11 (Copy enclosed). The Committee completed their deliberations as regards rent remissions by August 15. The Government accepted in

substance the unanimous proposals made by the Committee for rent remissions, and orders were issued to district officers to take immediate steps to give effect to these proposals. A communique was also issued on August 26, explaining the formula on which rents were to be re-adjusted (Copy enclosed). Further communiqes were issued on September 10, and September 22, (Copies enclosed) showing the method by which the fall in the value of agricultural produce had been calculated and giving some indications of its results in various districts and also of the progress that had been made in tabulating the figures. Government were most anxious that each tenant should have in his hands a slip showing the amount by which his rent had been reduced before the rent demand for the present Kharif became due. By continuous effort the work of distributing several million such slips was completed by the end of October. You will readily understand that if this question were now to be reopened or if we were to make any substantial modifications of the lines on which we have proceeded, it would not merely delay the collection of Kharif rents, but would practically make it impossible to collect any rents at all.

3. As regards the cancellation of arrears of rent, it would not be possible to take any action until Government knew what these arrears amount to. Moreover, before action in this direction could be taken, it would require legislation and we could not decide whether any such action should be taken until we have had some experience of the effect of the reductions in rent now announced.

4. As regards the reinstatement of the ejected tenants, here again before a tenant who had acquired statutory rights on admission to a holding, could be removed from his holding to make way for ejected tenant legislation would be necessary. Government will, however, do its best, whenever possible, to persuade landlords to restore tenants to lands from which they have been evicted or which have been relinquished by them.

5. The above difficulties, however, while they stand in the way of discussing the wider question of a modification of the formula adopted for reductions of rent, or the points referred to in paragraphs 3 and 4 above, do not stand in the way of discussion of any results arising out of the application

of the formula in any particular area or in regard to any exceptional cases arising out of the application of that formula.

6. I am sending a copy of this letter to Mr. Sherwani.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) JAGDISH PRASAD

16

Letter from Shri Vallabhbhai Patel to Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani, dated Bardoli, November 10, 1931

MY DEAR SHERWANI,

I have received your letter of November 5, regarding permission for defensive action against the agrarian policy of Government in your province along with your Committee's resolution on the subject. I have carefully considered the resolution of your Committee and I am glad to note that no efforts are being spared to obtain relief by means of negotiations and representations. However, it seems almost certain that your efforts will not succeed in securing a fair measures of relief to which the tenants are entitled under the present conditions and in several districts they will be compelled to pay the amount of rent which in many cases it will not be possible for them to pay, even by selling their cattle and all their belongings. They have already passed through a period of terrible hardship during the previous year and this year if they are again subjected to the same conditions they are bound to break as they are not able to bear any more strain. I realise that it would be impossible for the Congress organisation in your province to merely stand by and do nothing to help them in this fearful crisis and although I would have liked to wait till Gandhiji's return yet since the instalment of collection begins on the 15th and as there is no time left, I see no alternative before your Committee but to take the only possible course of defensive action by advising the peasants to refuse voluntarily to pay any rent or revenue till adequate relief is secured. Under the circumstances in virtue of the powers conferred on me by the Working Committee at Delhi I hereby authorise the Council of the United Provinces Provincial Congress

Committee to take such defensive action as may be deemed necessary including the non-payment of rent or revenue by the peasants in the Allahabad District and such other areas of the United Provinces as may be selected by the said Council from time to time. I trust your Committee will take particular care to acquaint all the tenants and workers concerned with the sufferings and sacrifices they will have to undergo and the necessity of preserving a perfectly non-violent atmosphere during the struggle in spite of any provocation and hardship. Please keep me informed of the developments from time to time. I wish you all success.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) VALLABHBHAI

17

Letter from Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani to Kunwar Jagdish Prasad, dated Allahabad, November 12, 1931

DEAR KUNWAR JAGDISH PRASAD,

I am in receipt of your letter of November 10, together with the copy of the letter addressed to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and I thank you for them.

You have referred to the invitation issued to Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant to join the Rent and Revenue Committee and his inability to accept it without consulting his colleagues. The invitation, as you state, was conveyed to him on August 10, after the Committee had already started its sittings. Pandit Govind Ballabh immediately communicated by telegram with me and with some other colleagues and as a result it was decided that he should join the Committee. I believe that his acceptance was conveyed to you on August 14. He was then informed that the Committee had already come to certain decisions and indeed had practically finished its labour in so far as rents were concerned and there was little point left in his joining the Committee at that stage. The Provincial Congress Committee fully realise that the problem before the Rent and Revenue Committee was an urgent one. Indeed, for many months past we had been urging this on the attention of Government. But you will no doubt appreciate that, as

matters shaped themselves, it was hardly possibly for Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant to have acted otherwise than he did. Pandit Govind Ballabh is a member of an organisation and if he has to act on its behalf he had to abide by certain conventions and submit to its discipline. He took the earliest steps to get the necessary permission and within four days he communicated his consent to Government. But even then it was too late.

Although the Rent and Revenue Committee finished the principle part of its labours within four days the Government, it appears, took a considerable time to arrive at their conclusions and to publish them for public information. It would not have delayed matters if the Congress had been given an opportunity for discussion before these conclusions were arrived at. The Congress view-point had been placed before you and the local Government on many occasions as we were desirous of getting the relief for the tenantry which we felt was essential by private and informal contacts with Government. We felt that this was a method which would be more appreciated by Government than formal and official approach. But correspondence and formal contacts could not take the place of a discussion on new and important proposals which would determine official policy. We regretted therefore that we had no such opportunity before decisions were arrived at. We were thus compelled to place our views before Government and the public after your decisions came to be known.

It has not been the Congress policy after the Delhi settlement to do anything which would place the Government in a difficult position. We want adequate relief for the peasantry, not credit for ourselves and we would gladly welcome such relief by whatever process it is determined. But we do feel that the agrarian situation requires brave handling and the disease is serious enough to require an extraordinary remedy. It is because the proposals of the Government regarding remissions, etc., seemed to us to lag far behind the actual requirement of the situation that we are troubled and compelled to express ourselves somewhat forcibly.

The Provincial Congress Committee is convinced that the basis of the Government proposals is not adequate and should be revised. We are prepared to suggest methods of

doing this. But what we are concerned with are the results not the methods. I am sure that if the desire to bring about these results is there, the Government can easily find the way. That need not upset all that has happened or has been done in the past four months. Nor do I think that the difficulties you have mentioned need present an insuperable obstacle, even from your point of view. I need hardly point out to you the recent decision on vital and far reaching financial matters which Government has taken. When it was seen that something extraordinary had to be done, it was done within three days.

One method I might suggest for your consideration. Government can easily issue an order suspending collections of part of Kharif demand pending further consideration. Thus part would be collected and part would remain over to the next harvest. Meanwhile the question could be considered fully. This would not interfere with remission slips or with the other steps that have been taken.

As regards arrears, it should be easy enough for Government to take action. In fact such action has on some occasions been taken in the past. Even legislation is not difficult but action can be taken without legislation. The point which we would like the Government to consider is the absurdity of asking a man to pay arrears when admittedly he cannot pay the full current demand. If this is admitted, as it must be, then it naturally follows that arrears must at least be suspended. I would in this connection point out that suits for arrears for 1938 Fasli are being filed even at present.

The question of re-instatement of ejected tenants has been frequently placed before you. The Congress has laid great stress on this ever since the Delhi Settlement. The Congress, therefore, is not to blame if nothing has so far been done. You tell us that the Government will do its best to persuade landlords. May I remind you that we have been told this on many occasions, but so far no tangible results are visible.

You have not said anything in your letter about local calamities. This is a vital matter which must be decided before the question of payment arises. If a sufficient and adequate remission is given for local calamities it would go some way to relieve the present tension.

My colleagues and I are perfectly willing to see you and discuss these matters with you. We earnestly hope that some way may yet be found to give the minimum relief that is essential. We feel however that unless this minimum relief is given, whatever the method of arriving at it may be, there can be no solution of the present crisis.

Should you wish to meet us, kindly let me know soon.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) T. A. K. SHERWANI

18

**Resolution, passed by the Council of the U. P. Provincial
Congress Committee on November 15**

The Council having heard the statements of representatives of the Allahabad district regarding their Conference with Government officials and, having considered the correspondence with the local Government regarding the agrarian situation in the province, is of opinion that the attitude of Government has been thoroughly unsatisfactory and that, unless sufficient relief is forthcoming to alleviate the distress of the peasantry, they will have no alternative but to withhold the payment of rent and revenue. The Council also notes that pending the negotiations with Government, definite advice is being sought by the agriculturists in regard to the payments of the Kharif demand.

The Council, therefore, authorises the Allahabad district Congress Committee to advise the agriculturists to withhold the payment of rent and revenue during the pendency of the present negotiations. The Council also authorises the Sub-Committee appointed at Lucknow to issue such directions to the Allahabad district Congress Committee as the situation may, from time to time, demand.

“The Sub-Committee is further empowered to consider the agrarian situation in other districts and to give permission to take defensive action where and when necessary.”

Letter from Kunwar Jagdish Prasad to Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani, dated Allahabad, November 17, 1931

DEAR MR. SHERWANI,

Thank you very much for your letter, dated November 12. We have not been able to trace any letter from Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant accepting membership of the Rent and Revenue Committee. As far as I remember, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant telephoned me from Bhowali, after the Committee had submitted their report about rent remissions, that he had obtained permission to join the Committee. I told him on the telephone that the Committee had already made its recommendations as regards rent, and that they would next meet to consider the proposals regarding revenue. Mr. Pant, if I remember rightly, said that in the circumstances there was no point in his joining the further deliberations of the Committee, as he was not very much concerned about revenue remissions. The matter ended there. You suggest in your letter that no great delay would have been involved if the Congress representatives had been given an opportunity for discussion before Government had arrived at its decision. The conclusions of the Government were based on unanimous recommendations of a committee of the Legislative Council. After these recommendations had been submitted and the members had already dispersed from Naini Tal, the only possible way of reopening the matter would have been to reassemble the Committee and to go over with them the whole ground which would have involved very considerable delay.

2. The Committee's recommendations were arrived at after detailed discussions and after a very careful consideration of all relevant factors, and were in their unanimous view adequate to meet the situation. The total rent remissions, according to the formula suggested by the Committee, amount to considerably more than Rs.4 crores.

3. I have explained in my previous letter the practical difficulties that stand in the way of re-opening the question of the formula for rent remissions already accepted by the Government. You suggest that method would be to suspend

part of Kharif rents pending further discussion. But assuming for the moment that further relief is required it must be obvious that the very first question that would arise would be how much of the rent is to be suspended, and before this could be answered the whole scheme of rent reductions would have to be re-examined. You will agree that a suspension of rent cannot be ordered without first ascertaining, after careful examination, as to how much should be suspended, and such an examination involves going once more over the whole ground of rent reductions.

4. As regards the arrears, the matter does not appear to us to be quite as free from difficulty as you are perhaps inclined to think. It would be possible to collect a number of cases in which no rent have been paid at all for the last three years, is the landlord or, in the case of sub-tenants, the tenant-in-chief to be told that he cannot be allowed to collect any of these arrears? You will agree that this would in many cases be putting a premium on recusancy and dishonesty. The subject is a very difficult one, but the Government is considering with some of its officers a suggested scheme which may afford some solution of it.

5. As regards relief on the score of damage of crops by the local calamities, enquiries are already afoot and relief will be given where necessary according to well recognized principles

6. I would again repeat what I said in my previous letter that while there are difficulties in the way of discussing the wider question of a modification of the formula adopted for reduction of rent, or as regards the cancellation of arrears and the reinstatement of ejected tenants, the same difficulties do not stand in the way of discussion of any results arising out of the application of the formula in any particular area or in regard to any exceptional cases arising out of the application of that formula.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) JAGDISH PRASAD

Letter from Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani to Kunwar Jagdish Prasad, dated Allahabad, November 20, 1931

DEAR KUNWAR JAGDISH PRASAD,

I thank you for your letter of November 7. I am sorry for the slight delay in answering it. I have been unwell and bed-ridden and for some time I was under high fever.

2. I have read your letter carefully and have also consulted my colleagues about it. We have noted with great regret that you have been unable to agree to any of the suggestions we have made and the position remains unchanged. Indeed, as you must know, circumstances have compelled us to take some action already in the matter. The crisis which the peasantry have to face is coming to a head with the beginning of collections and we were repeatedly asked for advice as to what should be done. After the most careful consideration, and not without hesitation, the Council of the Provincial Congress Committee decided that, pending any negotiations with Government, the peasantry should be advised to withhold payment of rent and revenue. For the present this advice has been confined to Allahabad district. You will appreciate that no other course was or is open to us or to the peasantry. If their contention is correct, as we believe it is, that the remissions are wholly inadequate and that no arrangements have been made for arrears or for local calamities or for the ejections already made, then any partial payment made by them now, and before any satisfactory compromise is arrived, would only land them in greater difficulties. You will remember that this was the course adopted by them last summer, on our advice, and as a result they suffered tremendously and large numbers lost their lands and cattle in spite of the fact that they had made partial payments. This treatment meted out to them after they had made an effort to pay up what they could, not only reduced them to dire straits, but made them despair of the future. It would be too much to expect them to repeat this procedure after their unhappy experience.

3. Our Council therefore felt that advice to withhold rent and revenue temporarily should be given. We realised that this might make the situation a little more difficult but

there seemed to be no other way out. I should like to assure you, however, that even now we shall gladly welcome any solution of the problem which will bring sufficient relief to the suffering peasantry, and I need not assure you that a solution would immediately be followed by our advice not to withhold payment of rent or revenue.

4. In my last letter I had again suggested that our representatives might meet the representatives of Government to discuss and explore the whole problem in order to find a way out. I regret that this suggestion is not acceptable to Government and that all the basic questions which affect the root of the problem are supposed to be beyond the scope of discussion. We are prepared, now and always, to discuss any matter, big or small, but it seems to us that if the difficulties that face us and Government are to be removed they have to be faced fairly and squarely and without any limitations or restrictions.

5. You have referred in your letter to the circumstances under which Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant was invited to join the Rent and Revenue Committee. It is hardly necessary for me to go into these in any detail at this stage. The question is one of academic interest only. But if it is sought to demonstrate that every opportunity was given to the Congress for consultation, I think there must be misapprehension somewhere. As I have already pointed out, it was almost impossible for Pandit Govind Ballabh to join the Committee. The invitation came too late and the Committee finished its labours soon after.

6. From the first days of the Delhi Settlement the Provincial Congress Committee has endeavoured to keep in touch with the Government and to bring to its notice the grievances of the peasantry. Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant was specially appointed in this behalf and he wrote numerous letters to Government. Mahatma Gandhi also interested himself in the United Provinces agrarian situation and discussed the matter with the head of the local Government as well as the officers of the Government of India. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has written to you on the subject on many occasions. The questions affecting the remissions for 1338 Fasli, arrears and ejections, have been placed repeatedly before the Government by Congress representatives. It

was patent enough that the Government's policy regarding 1339 Fasli would be a matter of the deepest interest to Congressmen. This policy was determined without any reference to the peasantry or the Congress, and by a committee which had representatives only of the Government and the zamindars.

7. You mention in your letter that rental remissions amounting to over 4 crores have been sanctioned. This sum is a considerable one but it is only 21 per cent of the total rental (and sewai) demand of $19\frac{1}{2}$ crores. It should be remembered that rents have gone up by over 56 per cent since 1899. Thus while prices have fallen by 54 per cent as compared to 1928-29, and rents have gone up tremendously, the remissions sanctioned are only 21 per cent. Even this figure is likely to go down in practice, as we know by past experience. In Allahabad district the amount sanctioned for remissions for 1338 Fasli was not actually distributed.

8. I have little to add to what I wrote about arrears in my last letter. I fail to appreciate how a man who cannot admittedly pay the full current demand can be asked to pay any arrears much less full arrears. If the law does not help in putting matters right then the law is out of joint and not in touch with life and existing conditions, and the sooner it is changed the better. But as I pointed out, it is quite possible to take immediate action within the limits of the law. The main objection to this, on the part of Government, seems to be that any general suspension of arrears may give relief to the dishonest and recusant tenant. It is hardly a safe or a desirable policy to punish a large number of innocent persons because a guilty person may get off. But who are the guilty or the recusant tenants and why are there such heavy arrears? It is not usual for a zamindar to allow arrears to accumulate unless he knows that it is not possible to realise them. Large and persistent arrears are generally a sure indication of the fact that rents are too high and beyond the capacity of the average tenant. Many of these arrears are probably for 1338 Fasli, when we pointed out to you repeatedly that remissions were inadequate.

9. The re-instatement of ejected tenants has been a subject of frequent correspondence with you and I cannot add any thing to what has already been said on the subject.

I would only say that from the very beginning we have laid stress on this and sought relief. But no relief has come and now it is stated that the matter is not open to discussion. We would be false to our trust and to our previous declarations if we accepted the present condition of the unhappy persons who have been ejected without any sufficient reason.

10. I am glad that Government is enquiring into the nature and extent of local calamities. But this enquiry will have little value if the result of it is not applied towards the reduction of the present kharif demand. If a man cannot pay now and is sold up or ejected, what will it profit him to be told later that some relief might have been given to him on account of damage to crops by local calamities?

11. My colleagues and I feel that there is no insuperable difficulty in the way of some immediate suspension of rent or some other immediate action which will bring relief to the peasantry and remove the fear of being sold up and ejected which oppresses them so terribly. If this immediate fear is removed and some time gained for consultation and consideration, a way out of the present impasse should not be difficult.

12. My colleagues and I regret greatly that we have to adopt a course which might lead to friction and conflict. But we have tried every method to avoid it and to the last we shall be willing to explore any new avenue leading to a satisfactory settlement. If, inspite of us, no such settlement is reached, we have to stand by the peasantry of these provinces and to take the consequences and to share with them the trials and sufferings that may be in store for them.

I should like to express to you personally, on behalf of my colleagues and myself, our gratitude for the uniform courtesy which you have extended to us during the difficult months which have followed the Delhi Settlement.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) T. A. K. SHERWANI

Letter from Shri Vallabhbhai Patel to Mr. H. W. Emerson,
Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department,
dated Camp Bombay, November 21, 1931

DEAR MR. EMERSON,

I had hoped to hear from you in reply to my letter of September 15, dealing with the agrarian situation in the United Provinces. As you know, on the day of his departure for London, Mahatma Gandhi had written a personal letter to His Excellency Sir Malcolm Hailey suggesting among other things that he may ask Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to come and see him in regard to the United Provinces question. Mahatmaji had hoped that the personal discussion would lead to satisfactory results. But it has been my regret that His Excellency could not act up to the suggestion of Mahatmaji. I endeavoured to seek your assistance for easing the increasingly grave situation in the United Provinces but there was no response from you to my letter of September 15. The situation became difficult and intolerable. While the peasants were utterly unable to pay even the past year's arrears, the remissions sanctioned for the new year were so meagre that they found themselves in a hopeless position to pay the heavy demands made. In this emergency Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru sought the intervention of His Excellency the Viceroy. But that too brought no immediate relief. The United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee explored all avenues of negotiation to secure relief but the negotiations did not improve the prospects for any substantial remissions. The date for collection, November 15, was approaching. There seemed to be no alternative left with the people except to take defensive action. I had therefore most reluctantly to give my assent to the insistent demand of the United Provinces Congress Committee for permission to adopt defensive Satyagraha in the event of failure to get adequate relief. I understand that the Committee is still carrying on negotiations with the local officials and is anxious to avoid a conflict which though purely economic and local in its inception is bound to have far reaching consequences in time and I am writing this to you because

I still hope that an eleventh hour intervention by you may save the situation and secure to the peasantry, hit hard during the last year, the relief so badly needed by them in the current year.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) VALLABHBHAI PATEL

22

Letter from Kunwar Jagdish Prasad to Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani, dated Lucknow, November 22, 1931

DEAR MR. SHERWANI,

Thank you very much for your letter, dated November 20. I am desirous to say that the following resolution, purporting to have been passed by the United Provinces Provincial Congress Committee on November 16, appeared in the press on November 18:—

“The Council having heard the statements of representatives of the Allahabad district regarding their Conference with Government officials and, having considered the correspondence with the Local Government regarding the agrarian situation in the province, is of opinion that the attitude of Government has been thoroughly unsatisfactory and that, unless sufficient relief is forthcoming to alleviate the distress of the peasantry, they will have no alternative but to withhold the payment of rent and revenue. The Council also notes that pending the negotiations with Government, definite advice is being sought by the agriculturists in regard to the payments of the Kharif demand.

“The Council, therefore, authorises the Allahabad district Congress Committee to advise the agriculturists to withhold the payment of rent and revenue during the pendency of the present negotiations. The Council also authorises the Sub-committee appointed at Lucknow to issue such directions to the Allahabad District Congress Committee as the situation may, from time to time, demand.

“The Sub-committee is further empowered to consider the agrarian situation in other districts and to give permission to take defensive action where and when necessary.”

2. In pursuance of this resolution the Allahabad District Congress Committee have issued printed Hindi instructions to tenants asking them to withhold the payment of rent pending negotiations with Government. I am desired to say that unless a definite assurance is given that these instructions will be cancelled, and the resolution of November 15, suspended, Government are not prepared to engage further in the discussions referred to in my letter of November 17.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) JAGDISH PRASAD

23

Letter from Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani to Kunwar Jagdish Prasad, dated Allahabad, November 25, 1931

DEAR KUNWAR JAGDISH PRASAD,

I am in receipt of your letter of November 22, for which I thank you. You have referred in this letter to the resolution of our Council passed on November 15. In my letter to you of November 20, I referred to this resolution and pointed out how the beginning of collections had compelled us to give some advice to the peasantry. I would refer you in this connection to paragraphs 2 and 3 of my letter. Our Council had no desire to take the initiative in the matter by giving special advice during negotiations. But when aggressive steps to collect the amounts fixed are imminent, and these collections are bound to result, as they have done so frequently in great distress to the peasantry, then some advice has to be given to the distracted peasantry. Our Council was repeatedly asked to advise and felt bound to do so. You will also remember that notices were distributed in many districts threatening a cancellation of remissions if payment was not made within a month. Under these circumstances the only advice the Council could give was to suspend payment of rent and revenue temporarily pending negotiations.

I might add that in your previous letters you made it clear that in no event would a discussion take place between the Government and the Congress on the basic points in issue, such as the formula regarding remissions, and the questions of arrears and ejections. You wrote that a discus-

sion would have to be confined to particular applications of the formula. Such a discussion would have served little purpose, although we were and are prepared to discuss all the different aspects of the agrarian trouble in order to discover suitable remedies. The difficulties and the distress of the peasantry will not be removed till the problem is tackled at the root and relief is given in regard to remissions for this season as well as arrears and local calamities and some satisfactory provision is made for the re-instatement of ejected tenants. We have ventured to urge this upon you and Government on numerous occasions and we still do so. We have even suggested to you that the relief may take any shape to suit Government provided that ultimately sufficient relief was forthcoming.

The advice which our Council has given and the resolution and notices containing it, will be withdrawn immediately collections are stopped or suspended for a while. In the event of collections continuing and no sufficient relief being granted to the peasantry the Council has no alternative but to adhere to its advice.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) T. A. K. SHERWANI

24

Letter from Mr. H. W. Emerson to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, dated November 25, 1931

DEAR MR. VALLABHBHAI PATEL,

I write to thank you for your letter of November 21, regarding the agrarian situation in the United Provinces. The facts are that the Government of the United Provinces have been in correspondence with pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and other members of the Congress for sometime and that the latter have also had discussions with local officers and with the Chief Secretary. While these discussions were in progress the Council of the United Provinces Congress Committee authorised the Allahabad District Congress Committee to advise agriculturists to withhold the payment of rent and revenue during the pendency of negotiations. The

Allahabad District Congress Committee have acted on this authority, and have distributed printed notices to the peasants of that district. In these circumstances the Government of the United Provinces, with the previous knowledge and approval of the Government of India, have informed the President of the Provincial Congress Committee that unless a definite assurance is given that the resolution of the Provincial Congress Committee of November 15, will be suspended and the instructions issued by the Allahabad District Committee cancelled, Government are not prepared to engage further in the discussions referred to in the letter of the Chief Secretary, dated November 17, to Mr. Sherwani. I enclose a copy of the recent correspondence which fully explains the position.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) H. W. EMERSON

25

**Letter from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to Mr. H. W. Emerson,
dated November 28, 1931**

DEAR MR. EMERSON,

I thank you for your letter of November 25. I am sorry to learn from it of the decision arrived at by the Government of the United Provinces in regard to their negotiations with the Congress workers. I am afraid the decision of the Government is based on a wrong interpretation of the action taken by the Congress authorities in the United Provinces. I have gone through the correspondence which you have kindly enclosed with your letter and it is clear to me that the resolution of the Council of the United Provinces Congress Committee and the notices issued by the Allahabad District Congress Committee were not at all intended as a hostile step. You will, I hope, realise that the recovery of the first instalment of rent having commenced from November 15, despite the continuance of negotiations and the peasants having asked the Congress workers as to their course of action, no alternative was left to the Congressmen except to advise the peasants to withhold the payment of rents temporarily until the termination of the pending negotiations made matters clear. I venture to state that the course which should have been fol-

lowed in view of the discussions which were being carried on was for Government to issue instructions for the postponement of collection of rents pending the result of the negotiations. The delay of a few weeks would not have affected the position of the Government and the landlords. All the remedies now available to them would still have been open to them. On the other hand if the peasants are made to pay up the rents pending the negotiations they would be placed in a very unfair position. I do not, of course, know why it was not possible for the representatives of the Government and of the peasants to arrive at some tentative arrangement under which the collection of rents could have been postponed for the short time required for completing discussions. Even now, at this stage, I would earnestly suggest that by mutual agreement the postponement of collection of rents and the suspension of the resolution of the Provincial Committee may be simultaneously arranged. This would not in any manner prejudice the position of the Government and the landlords. The Congress is anxious that peace should continue in the United Provinces and I would earnestly request you to consider my suggestion and see if a *via media* on these lines cannot even now be discovered.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) VALLABHBHAI PATEL

26

Letter from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to Mr. E. C. Melville,
dated November 28, 1931

DEAR MR. MELVILLE,

I am sorry to inform you that all our efforts to secure an honourable compromise for the unfortunate tenantry have failed to achieve any substantial result and we have been compelled to advise the peasantry in Allahabad district to withhold payment of rent and revenue till relief is obtained. I trust you will convey my deep regret to His Excellency that we should have had to adopt this course. But I can assure him that we tried our utmost to avoid it and to find a way out of the difficulty.

Under the circumstances my colleagues feel that we should publish the correspondence which we have had with the United Provinces Government on the subject so that the public may know what steps we took in the matter. If His Excellency has no objection I should like to add to these letters which are being published the letter I addressed to you dated October 16 and your reply to it.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

27

Letter from Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani to Kunwar Jagdish Prasad,
dated November 30, 1931

DEAR KUNWAR JAGDISH PRASAD,

I have not received any answer to my letter of 25th instant. I would have waited for some days more, but unfortunately you are handing over the charge of your office probably tomorrow.

Your silence indicates that Government is not prepared to do anything further in the matter. My colleagues here feel that we should publish the correspondence which Jawaharlal Nehru and myself had with you regarding the agrarian situation in the province.

I would therefore like to ask you whether you have got any objection in allowing us to publish the same.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) T. A. K. SHERWANI

28

Letter from Mr. E. C. Melville to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru,
dated November 30, 1931.

DEAR PANDITJI,

I am writing to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of November 28 and to say that His Excellency has no objection to your publishing the letter you addressed to me dated October 16, together with my reply.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) E. C. MELVILLE

29

Letter from Mr. J. M. Clay to Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani, dated
December 2, 1931.

DEAR MR. SHERWANI,

I am desired to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. 372, dated November 25, 1931, to Kunwar Jagdish Prasad. With reference to the last paragraph of that letter, I am to say that in view of the Provincial Council's refusal to suspend its resolution or to instruct the Allahabad District Congress Committee to cancel the notices issued by it, the Government of the United Provinces have now definitely withdrawn the offer of discussion made in paragraph 5 of Kunwar Jagdish Prasad's letter No. 1506-Z, dated November 17, 1931.

2. Government have no intention of stopping or suspending the collection of rents as now reduced in the Allahabad District, save that no measures will be taken to enforce collection of rents affected by the revised orders referred to in the Government communique, dated November 23, 1931, in regard to which steps will not be taken until the revised *parchas* have been handed to the tenants concerned.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) J. M. CLAY

30

Letter from Mr. T. A. K. Sherwani to Mr. J. M. Clay, Chief
Secretary to U. P. Government, dated, Allahabad,
December 3, 1931

DEAR MR. CLAY,

I thank you for your letter of December 2. You refer in this to the withdrawal of an offer which is said to have been made in paragraph 5 of Kunwar Jagdish Prasad's letter No. 1506 dated November 17, 1931. Paragraph 5 referred to deals with local calamities and there is no mention of any offer. Perhaps you meant to refer to paragraph 6 of this

letter or to some other letter. It is not clear even from this paragraph what definite offer was made which you are now withdrawing. In my letters I stated repeatedly that it would be desirable to have a conference between our representatives and the representatives of the Government. This offer was not accepted. Kunwar Jagdish Prasad stated that "while there were difficulties in the way of discussing the wider question of a modification of the formula adopted for reduction of rent, or as regards the cancellation of arrears and the re-instatement of ejected tenants, the same difficulties do not stand in the way of discussion of any results arising out of the application of the formula in any particular area or in regard to any exceptional cases arising out of the application of that formula." In this no offer was made but in reply we said that, while we felt that the problem could not be tackled if the major issues were ignored, we were prepared to discuss any matter, big or small. We were endeavouring to get sufficient relief for the peasantry and it did not matter to us how this relief was obtained. To this repeated request of ours there was no response. We further made it clear that we would willingly withdraw our advice to suspend payment of rent and revenue if collections were stopped pending negotiations. There was obviously little point in considering the question if collections continued to be made on the old basis which, according to us, was wholly wrong. From paragraph 2 of your letter under reply it appears that the Government realise that the old basis in Allahabad District was wrong.

Kunwar Jagdish Prasad in his letter quoted above refers to the cancellation of arrears. We did not lay stress on such cancellation. We pointed out that the question of arrears was very important and must be faced. A suspension of arrears for the present, and pending further enquiry, might have eased the situation.

I would add that we are even now prepared, as before, to discuss any matter which might help in producing a satisfactory solution of the problem.

I sent a letter on November 30, to Kunwar Jagdish Prasad enquiring if Government had any objection to our publishing the correspondence which has passed between him and the Congress representatives. We feel that it will be fair both

to Government and to us to place these letters before the public. The correspondence is voluminous and we only propose to publish the recent letters which have been exchanged during the last six weeks. As I have not heard from Kunwar Jagdish Prasad or you on the subject I presume you have no objection to the publication.

Yours sincerely
(Sd.) T. A. K. SHERWANI

APPENDIX A

Resolution passed by the Allahabad District Congress Committee on October 15, 1931

A—(1) The District Congress Committee made it clear in their resolution of September 22, 1931, that the principle which the Government have laid down for relieving the distress of the tenants caused by the fall in prices of agricultural produce is wrong and unsatisfactory. The Committee has further placed on record its opinion:

- (a) That the rents for 1339 Fasli should be remitted to such an extent that after deducting remissions they may be lower by 20 per cent, than the rents of 1898 A.D.;
- (b) That a further deduction of 10 per cent should be made in the amount of the reduced rents on account of the rise in the cost of cultivation;
- (c) That all arrears of rents should be written off; and
- (d) That all ejectments should be cancelled.

(2) The Committee have further learnt with profound dissatisfaction that remissions in the district have not been worked out even in accordance with the principles which the Government had announced; for instance,

- (a) In the case of occupancy tenants throughout the district remissions have generally been given so as to bring their rates to the level of 1328 Fasli (i.e., 1920 A.D.); and
- (b) Non-occupancy tenants have been given remissions on the following lines:—
 - (i) The Non-occupancy tenants of Bara, Kar-chhna and Mcja have been given remissions on the basis of the fair rents fixed at the settlements of 1312 Fasli (i.e., 1904 A.D.); while

(ii) The Non-occupancy tenants of the remaining six tahsils have been allowed remissions in the enhancements made after the settlement of the Gangapar and Doaba tract, commencing from 1320 Fasli (i.e., 1912 A.D.) and ending in 1324 Fasli (i.e., 1916 A.D.).

(3) The statement made by the Collector in his first communique that the fair rate of rents accepted by the Settlement Officer at the last settlement of Gangapar and Doaba Tahsils were the same as those prevailing just before 1900 A.D. is wrong. The Committee have in their possession a large volume of very strong evidence to prove that from 1900 A.D. to the completion of the last settlement the rents of both occupancy and non-occupancy tenants were continually being enhanced, which enhancement should have been remitted under the Government scheme.

The Committee wishes to draw attention to the fact that the Collector has remitted $9\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs out of the rental demand of 57 lakhs or a little less than 17 per cent of rents have been remitted; although the prices of cereals have fallen by 55 per cent.

(4) The Committee are definitely of opinion that in this hour of distress the Government should discard their present policy and show courage in giving remissions of rents and revenue on a generous scale.

(5) The Committee desire to give clear expression to their decision that if the Government do not change their policy towards the tenants, then in order to protect them the Committee will have to oppose the Government.

B—The Committee request the Provincial Congress Committee that having regard to the policy of Government towards the tenants of this district they should authorise this Committee to start Satyagraha in the form of non-payment of rent and revenue whenever it may deem it necessary to do so.

APPENDIX B

Report of the Sub-committee regarding the inadequacy of
the Government scheme of remissions

To

The President
District Congress Committee
Allahabad

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

The Council of your Committee appointed at its meeting held on September 19, 1931, a Sub-committee consisting of the undersigned to inquire into and report on the adequacy or otherwise of the relief to the tenants under the Government scheme of remissions for the year 1339 Fasli. We met on the 20th instant, and examined the question in its various aspects. Our unanimous conclusions are embodied in this report which we beg to submit to you for consideration.

The scheme of remissions sanctioned by the Government for the current Fasli year is, in our opinion, wrong in principle and utterly inadequate for the needs of the situation created by the catastrophic fall in prices. The reason for the unsatisfactory character of these proposals is obvious. They are based on the recommendations of a committee which was packed with zamindar members. There was not a single representative of the kisan interests on it. In these circumstances it is but natural that both the Government and the members of the committee should have been mainly swayed by the consideration of how the loss to the Government and the landholders, respectively, on account of the remissions in rent could be reduced to the minimum limits. The real question, however, is not what is the least amount of relief which the above two parties are prepared to give to the tenants, but how much the latter can be fairly called upon to pay in the existing state of economic depression.

As regards this aspect of the matter, we beg to draw attention to an exhaustive discussion in Part II of the report of the Pant-committee on the agrarian distress in the United Provinces. Judged from that standard the remissions an-

nounced are hopelessly inadequate. An enquiry on the lines suggested by the Pant-committee in their report is likely to take sometime, while the present situation demands immediate measures of relief. Even from that point of view, the relief proposed under the Government scheme is far too little.

Under their scheme the Government has set up rent-rates of 1308 Fasli as the standard rates to which the existing rents should be reduced, with liberty to add thereto 20 or 25 per cent on account of improvements, etc. It has been further decided that in no case should the remission exceed 8 As. of the existing rent. The result of these provisions will be that of the two minima, whichever is the higher in any particular case is to be accepted. In framing their proposals the department have altogether lost sight of the following two factors:—

- (1) The great possibility of those rents being also rackrents. There is no justification for treating all rents of 1308 Fasli as fair and equitable. It would be remembered that the plight of the tenants in the last decade of the 19th century was so bad that the Government was induced to undertake rent legislation and pass the Tenancy Act of 1901 in order to better the condition of the tenants.
- (2) The Government has overlooked the rise in the cost of production since 1901. In this cost of production we do not include the rent but the actual out of pocket expenses of the tenants in order to raise their crops. During the last 30 years, wages and cost of material have gone up tremendously. No allowance has been made for this item, while the amount to be remitted can be materially reduced on account of improvements. Failure to consider the rise in the cost of production is very significant; and shows the one-sided character of the Government scheme.

So far as the Allahabad district along with the rest of the division, is concerned, we find from the figures recently published that the average fall in prices of 1931, as compared with

the prices of 1928, was 55 per cent. (We append to this report the prices of the different food grains). Therefore in our opinion the least that a tenant was entitled to was a relief to the extent of 55 per cent. It might be said that in many cases, rents have not kept pace with the rise in prices, and that there was no justification for granting remission in proportion to the fall in prices. It may be so in some cases, but under the scheme, a zamindar who has been the worst rack-renter and may have raised his rents by as much as, say, 50 per cent now stands to gain substantially, inasmuch as his rental demand cannot be reduced below 50 per cent.

In this connection it is interesting to note that under the Government scheme of remissions, the gross rental demand of the whole province will be reduced from 19.4 crores by about 4 crores to 15.4 crores, which was also the rental demand for 1914-15. Or, in other words, the rents for 1339 Fasli will not be reduced to the level of 1901 but only to that of 1914-15. If, however, the Government had been anxious to bring down the existing rents to what they were 30 years ago, they should have remitted on an average nearly 7 crores and not merely 4 crores. On these grounds we regret we are unable to commend the scheme of remissions sanctioned by the Government. It is illiberal in character and betrays a woeful lack of appreciation of the seriousness of the problem.

We are convinced that the situation is so grave that relief, to be effective and adequate, must be on a far larger scale than that adopted by the Government. It is essential to take steps to restore equilibrium between rents and prices, if tenantry is to be saved and the danger of social upheaval in rural areas altogether removed. We have given our best consideration to the problem from this point of view; and feel satisfied that if the action is taken on the lines suggested below, agrarian unrest will be allayed and tenant able to pass through the crisis almost unscathed.

Taking the index number of prices, we find that in the year 1896-1900 prices, as compared with 1930-31, were below 20 per cent. We accordingly suggest that the Government should go back to the year 1898-99 and reduce those rents by 20 per cent straight off on accounts of the difference in prices. If in some cases the rents of 1898-99 were

too low, we have no doubt that in many others they were not fair rents but were much too high. We think that from this standard rent the tenant should be allowed an allowance of at least Rs.10 per cent on account of the rise in the cost of production. This allowance may be set off in exceptional cases where the land has been improved by irrigation, or by some other means at the zamindar's expense. On the basis stated above, a zamindar who has not enhanced his rents from 1898 onwards would suffer relatively far less than the rack-renter who of course deserves no sympathy. The recorded rental of 1898 was 12.11 crores as against 19.40 crores for 1930-31. Inasmuch as the prices of 1898 were 20 per cent higher than the prices of 1930-31 the rents of 1898 should be brought down by 20 per cent. That would give us a figure of 9.65 crores. From this, again, there should be a deduction of 10 per cent on account of the rise in the cost of production. Those proposals, if adopted, would give roughly an all round reduction of 9 as. to 10 as. in the rupee on the total rental demand for 1931-32. Of course the rack-rented tenants would be benefitted to a greater extent. This seems to us to be a fair and equitable basis.

One great advantage of our scheme would be the certainty of it. In the Government scheme too much is left to the subordinate establishment, leading to the possibility of enormous corruption. A check by the district officer or the sub-divisional officers is bound to be illusory.

As to the arrears of rent, we suggest that in view of the exceptional circumstances and the utter impossibility of the tenant being able to pay them, they should be wholly wiped out. A constant burden of indebtedness is not conducive to restoration of peace and harmony in the rural areas. In any case there should be a moratorium for at least one or two years and the re-valuation of all the rental arrears. We should like to add here that we are keenly alive to the disastrous effect on the agriculturist of his huge indebtedness to the money-lenders, nor are we blind to the vital character of the problem. But as it is outside our terms of reference, we have not dealt with it here.

As regards ejections we recommend that those tenants who are willing to pay on the revised scale should be restored to their holdings. Further ejections should be stopped.

In view of the widespread complaints, we suggest that the granting of receipts to the tenants should be rigorously enforced; and realisation of secret rents and nazranas is sternly put down.

We give below from a Government communique the comparative prices in the Allahabad division for the years 1928-29 and 1930-31.

	Wheat	Barley	Rice	Juar	Maize	Total
1928-29	5.8	4.7	4.2	5.9	4.8	25.4
1930-31	2.8	1.7	3.0	2.0	2.0	11.5
1928-29	5.08					
1930-31	2.3, or 45 per cent of 1928-29.					

Dated Allahabad
September 22, 1931

(Sd.) K. N. KATJU
(Sd.) V. N. TIWARI
(Sd.) SHEOMURTI