CHAPTER IV

STRUGGLING AGAINST 'THE RULERS':
POPULAR MOVEMENTS IN THE PRINCELY STATES,
1937-39

State Peoples' Movement remained a major issue for the political leadership in Orissa during the thirties and it provided a great deal of radical thrust for the national movement. There were 26 princely states in Orissa. These states shared a common culture, social usage, religious system and mode of living with their neighbours of British Orissa. Only in administration did they differ. The same literature inspired them and evoked common ideals and inspirations. These tracts were governed by the princely rules or chiefs under the direct advice and guidance of British political officers. However, the social and political structures of these princely states were dominantly characterised by galling feudal oppression by rulers, officials and police.

The Enquiry Committee, instituted by the Orissa State Peoples' Conference, 1937 to probe into the exploitation in the states held severity of bethi, requisitioning of goats and buffaloes for sacrificial purposes, fees for killing wild beasts which damaged crops in the fields, grazing fees and enhancement of land rent as some of the major causes of popular discontent. The system of taxation was unbearable and did not consider the peasant's capacity to pay defying all canons of sound finance. Land revenue was pitched higher than that of British Orissa. The rate of rents prevailing in different states stood as follows:

2. Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the States</th>
<th>Rates of rent per acre</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tigiria</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narsinghpur</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Keonjhar</td>
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<td>Gangpur</td>
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<td>Daspalla</td>
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<td>Baramba</td>
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<td>Mayurbhanja</td>
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<td>Kalahandi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pallahara</td>
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<td>Nilagiri</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Kharaswan</td>
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<td>Nayagarh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bonai</td>
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<tr>
<td>Athagarh</td>
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<td>Patna</td>
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<td>Sareikala</td>
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<td>Khandapara</td>
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<td>Hindol</td>
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<td>Boud</td>
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<td>Bamra</td>
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<td>Athamalik</td>
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<td>Dhenkanal</td>
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<td>Talcher</td>
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<td>Ranpur</td>
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It is worth noting that when the highest rate of rent in Singhbhum (Kalahandi) in the British Orissa area stood at Rs.1.1.0, the same in the neighbouring state of Kharaswan was Rs.4/-. In addition to this, almost all the states levied special fees for permitting use of double plank doors, use of any head dress and use of planquins. There was also a tax on ploughs. The prevalence of the system of bethi wherein a peasant spent over hundred days of the year in doing forced labour, caused great hardship. In case of refusal of bethi, the person in question was be beaten, fined and even imprisoned. Other obnoxious systems like rasad and magan also prevailed. Rasad was a sort of forced requisition of provisions and failure to supply rasad would result in ejection of the tenant from his holding.
was the forced requisition of money on ceremonial occasions. The tenants had to pay 1/4 of the annual land rent for the marriage, thread and ear-piercing ceremonies of the Raja or his heir-apparent or the Rajkumari. Then there was suniya bheti which was the New Year's gift and was Rs.0-0-6 in the rupee of rent. Economic exploitation apart, the existence of civil liberties was marginal as the state authorities prohibited holding of any meeting and did not recognise the Prajamandal. Along with absence of the freedom of speech and association, newspapers were banned so as to prevent people from getting in touch with political ideas developing beyond the border. Any attempt to raise protest over any of the illegalities was ruthlessly suppressed by the oppressive state machinery. The state officials as well as the police were instruments of terror for the reign of the ruler.

However these restrictions led over a period, to the emergence of popular protest; and ultimately powerful anti-feudal movements. The spur for such movements came in the wake of CDM - indicating the deep inroads of national movement into the 'dark zones' of princely states. We come across several instances of popular protest in the princely states in Orissa in the context of national movement. Let

3. The above data on rates and kinds of taxation are taken from the Enquiry Committee Report of Orissa States, 1939. Also refer, B.C. Rath, Unrest in Princely States of Orissa (1938-47), Cuttack, 1993, for a detailed discussion on social and agrarian structure of the states.

4. Though it is not possible here to have a detailed discussion on the aspect of the nature and extent of the mobilisation occurring in the princely states, it is worth noting that the initial attempts for organising state subjects were undertaken by the nationalist leadership after Gandhi-Irwin Pact. For reference see, The Samaja, 6.9.31; The Prajatantra, 30.5.31, 27.3.31; HPD, Letter to Political Agent and Commissioner, Orissa Feudatory States, Sambalpur; HPD, Order issued by 'Raja' of Dhenkanal, 13.4.40; HPD, Report of S.P., Cuttack, 2.5.32; HPD, D.M.'s letter to C.S., 6.7.31; HPD, Report of Chief Secy, 6.7.31; HPD, Letter from Political Agent and Commissioner Orissa Feudatory States to Chief Secy, 26.4.31; Desakatha, 4.5.31.
us have a look at them briefly here.

Around June 1930, a new settlement came into operation in Boud and there was a hike in the land revenue from 100% to 400%. This resulted in a gathering of 2,000 people who attempted to meet the ruler for seeking redress. They were refused any meeting by the ruler. So a group of 27 Khonds approached the political agent of Sambalpur. On the way back, they were beaten and imprisoned.\(^5\) Much before that, in Nilagiri during the course of an agitation against bethi and magan nearly 2,000 people left the state for Balasore in 1928. Ultimately with the intervention of the paramount power a settlement was arrived at.\(^6\) It seems obvious that the heat of CDM had its natural repercussion in the neighbouring state pocket of Balasore. In 1932, an association named Yubak Sabha Samiti was organised in Ayodhya with the object of carrying on constructive activities. The local leadership that took up such an initiative consisted of Pranabandhu Agasti and Balram Raj. But they were arrested on 2nd May 1932.\(^7\) As a mark of protest and to commemorate the incident, the youth of Ayodhya village continued to hold meetings on 2nd May and every year since then. In Talcher also, a movement against miscellaneous cesses took place in 1932.\(^8\) In Dhenkanal too, resentment against new forest laws

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and revision of rent existed. 9

A conference was organised at Cuttack in August 1931 with the object of discussing the problems of princely states. 10 The public activists who organized the effort included Radhanath Rath, Balukenswar Acharya, Madhusudan Patnaik, Govinda Chandra Mishra, the PCC activists. This initiative got a definite direction with the formation of State Peoples Conference in 1937. The second session of State Peoples Conference, which was held at Cuttack in 1937 (under Pattabhi Sitaramayya's presidency), proposed the setting up of an enquiry committee to probe into condition in Orissa states. 11 Thus the popular protest in the states came to be effectively organised only with the formation of States Peoples Conference in 1937. The installation of Congress ministry and the distinct intervention of Congress leadership in the affairs of the princely states provided powerful push to such popular movements. We have traced the nature of relationship between the movement and Congress ministry in a separate section. It was now that the restlessness that swayed the states became powerful and involved the participation of a new band of radical leadership both through the Congress and the Congress Socialist Party.

Thus, the feudal oppression underlying the social structure of the princely states 12 came under the attack of

9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.

12. Interestingly, Sarangadhar Das, the prominent leader of State Peoples movement, in the course of a speech revealed that he found a map of Orissa (in a garden party of the Rajas) in which the feudatory states were painted in black, when he enquired about the reasons for it, asking the Raja whether it meant to show that princely states were the darkest zones of Orissa. The latter, in turn, requested him to make it all red. (HPD, S.P. Report on Cuttack Town Hall Meeting, 29.10.38, ACC-1005).

The Raja's comment, however, points to a close nexus between princely states and imperialism, i.e., the dark zones of the princely states being sustained by the 'Red' imperialism.
the national movement which swept the pockets of British India beyond the borders of the states. A contemporary status quoist newspaper, the New Orissa, made the above point sharply clear when it observed:

"Living so close as they do with the people in British Orissa the states people could not but be profoundly influenced by the rapid march of political events across their frontiers. Unfortunately, the political awakening of the states peoples has been rather rude, for which both the Rulers and their political gurus in British India are equally responsible."

It further went on to maintain that "though the Congress as organisation has refused to lend its countenance to the peoples movement in the state, .... Yet the states have been undoubtedly set in motion by Congressmen in Orissa at the instance of a few disgruntled states' subjects like Sarangadhar Das". We have taken up Nilgiri, Dhenkanal and Talcher to examine and locate the pattern of popular struggle in princely states of Orissa during 1937-39.

I. NILAGIRI

The initial impulse for peoples organisation against the autocratic feudal chief of Nilagiri dates back to 1928 when over one thousand tenants left the state for Balasore protesting against the systems of sikar and bethi of the State. They were however, persuaded to return to the state with the intervention of the noted Gandhian C.F. Andrews and an assurance was obtained from the ruler to follower a policy of restraint regarding the above systems.

Afterwards, under the heat of civil disobedience movement, a Yuvak Sangha was formed in 1931. The activities of

In an article titled "Unrest in Orissa States", it observed that the movement in the states was not of spontaneous growth but engineered, controlled and carried on by the so-called leaders from British Orissa.


15. HPD, C.I.D. Report, 10.6.38 - C.F. Andrews had met the Governor and Viceroy over the issue. The Raja, under pressure, had to 'prohibit' the system, ACC-957.
the Sangha angered the ruler, who convicted a few of its activists. Under the banner of this Sangha, a virtual 'underground' movement co-existed with CDM. The Yuvak Sangha had taken up programmes like Harijan uplift and literacy campaign, which points to the impact of Gandhian constructive and reform activities. The Sangha also used to organise a common dinner during which both high and low castes ate together and the ration for the common dinner was contributed by the villagers. This feast naturally ensured a gathering and attendant discussion on different themes ranging from the national movement to the ruler's administration. The political orientation of this practice became overt with Congress activists openly sharing the feast around 1937; and the ruler proceeded against Hadibandhu Raj and others for spreading the Harijan uplift movement on the ground of "violation of ancient customs and usages" (which was punishable by the State!). The Sangha was revived in May, 1938, fired by the imagination of some of the activists, who had gone to attend the States Peoples Conference (held in Cuttack in February 1938). Further, the installation of Congress Ministry had really inflated their hope of a similar change in the State itself. In a meeting at Ajodhya (1 May 1938) a group of leaders like Hadibandhu Raj, Maheswar Pradahan, Pranabandhu Agasti and Banamali Das (the first three being involved earlier in the Sangha right since CDM and thus convicted; the 4th, a student activist, doing his matriculation) spoke to a gathering of 200 and announced


the formation of Yuvak Sangha. The meeting essentially preached the cult of the Congress and resolved to send out volunteers to villages in the state to carry on propaganda. The demands it stressed were, mainly, (1) popular control of state budget, (2) reduction of land revenue, (3) right to cut timber from the state forests, (4) introduction of prohibition in the state.

In fact, behind the reorganisation of the Sangha, the moral and ideological support of the local intelligentsia and the rural rich, apart from the support of the Congress activists of the Orissa Province and particularly Balasore district (being the border district of Nilagiri State), was crucial. For instance, the leading sympathisers of the Sangha at the initial stage were Kailash Chandra Mohanty, (B.A.B.L., a pleader) and his brother Sarat Mohanty, (a Mukhtear of Balasore), U.N. Birbar (Matriculate, a Zamindar, relative of the ruler), Sadhuprasad Bidyadhar Mohapatra (Sarbarakar of Patapur village), Surendra Chaudhury (Sarbarakar) Chintamani Behera (Sarbarakar of Alsuan village) etc. The very nature of leadership at least suggests that it was the petty landlord, village headmen, and Ruler's officials, who volunteered to lead popular mobilisation against the ruler. In response to the developments, the ruler served an order enjoining prior approval of the administration for organising a meeting or demonstration to be sought through an application on stamped paper; and banned the hawking of Krushak newspaper in the state (considered to

18. *Ibid.*, Village Ayodhya was 3 miles away from the then Nilagiri State border.

The other prominent members of the Sangha comprised Ram Chandra Mohapatra, Purusrotam Raj, Balram Raj, Pranabandhu Parida, Lakshmidhar Mishra, Shyam Chandra Choudhury, and Agani Mishra (all convicted in Political cases earlier).


be the ideological inspiration for popular organisation). 21 The move only redoubled the popular resolve to defy the Ruler's promulgation. The headquarters of the Sangha was shifted to Alasuan (in Sora P.S.). In an apparent move to curb popular mobilisation, Pranabandhu Agasti, Giridhari Panda (Cuttack) and Chaitan Misra (Daspalla) were arrested for delivering "seditious" speeches vis-a-vis the state on 23 May. 22 This was followed by the incident when nearly 200 people joined a procession and marched to the jail to congratulate the arrested leaders for their bold stand against the Ruler. The processionists carried both national and "red" flags and sang revolutionary songs. 23 The Ruler again resorted to the arrest of some of the organisers of the procession. The arrested leaders kept in the jail went on a hunger strike, protesting against the shabby treatment meted out to them in the jail, and demanded reform of jail rules. 24

The sequence of events had pushed popular excitement to new heights by June. And by then, Mahatab and the leadership of the PCC had firmly committed themselves to the cause of Nilagiri people. A meeting organised in Cuttack on 9 June, known as 'Nilagiri Protest Meeting', sympathised with the hunger strike and observed that the "movement in the states should never stand in the name of Congress but Congress should always welcome it and extend it the required assistance". The meeting passed a resolution extending total support to the Nilagiri Movement in its fight for civil liberty and hoped the Durbar would ensure "its early

By June, a full-fledged organisation called *Praja Mangal Samilani* started functioning with its headquarters at Alasuan. Kailash Chandra Mohanty remained its President. Alasuan more or less projected as a Congress Ashram, housed the refugees who sneaked into this place to avoid arrest by the state police. In fact, Chintamani Behera (*Sarbarakar* of Nilagiri State) and Sadhu Prasad Bidyadhar Mohapatra (rich merchant of Balasore) came out with financial support for the organisation. The house of Chintamani Behera was used as the Office of Prajamandal and he arranged food for the activists staying there. Besides, the wife of Kumar Uday Nath Birbar (a Zamindar of Cuttack and the relative of Nilagiri ruler) was appointed as the treasurer of the association and undertook to meet the expenses of the association. Contributions for the association were also collected from the villages. The association established rapport with the Congress leadership of Orissa and co-ordinated contacts with OSPC. The Congress leaders of Orissa and Balasore DCC frequented the place including Mahatab and Sarangadhar Das (Secretary, OSPC).

The Prajamandal highlighted the popular demands like abolition of *bethi, salami*, unjustified fines, state monopoly on articles except excise items, and also abolition of wood rent. Besides, the scrapping of *Sarbarakari* system and its replacement by appointment of Tahasildars with salary, reduction of rent to half, reform of forest, judicial and jail laws and steps to check corruption in the state administration and "humanisation" of police administration were focused. In this way, the misrule and illegal exactions of the administration were sought to be removed.


With its longstanding contact with Gandhian reformist trend, the association also stressed welfare measures to be sponsored by the state in terms of provision of roads to villages, establishment of a registration office, hospitals, more primary and high schools, provisions for drinking water, employment of the youth, village industries, and stopping of gambling. As regards civil liberties, right to hold public meetings and the recognition of Prajamandal, etc., were emphasised. The Prajamandal met on 11 June and decided to press before the ruler the demands to recognise the Prajamandal as well as the right of citizenship, failing which, civil disobedience would begin. Sarangadhar Das also attended the meeting. On 22 June, States Peoples Committee reached Balasore to conduct the enquiry into the Nilagiri state. Nearly 200 people from the state appeared before the Committee. The committee included leaders like Balwant Rai Mehta, Mahatab, Sarangadhar Das, Lal Mohan Patnaik, Mukunda Prasad Das (speaker of Orissa Assembly) and other Prajamandal and local activists. The popular grievances discussed above were put before the committee. The enquiry was followed by a meeting preceded by a procession where the leaders addressed the audience. Sarangadhar Das, advised the people of Nilagiri to "violate the ordinances" of the ruler prohibiting the meeting and to "overcrowd" the jail. This had instant effect on the people. For their bid to disobey state laws by holding meetings, several people were arrested. The arrested included persons

30. HPD, FNR, Balasore, 10.7.38, ACC-870.
both from the state and Balasore district. 31 Few young participants also got arrested. Faced with the massive arrest of leaders, the Prajamandal further intensified its move for Satyagraha. On the day of the Rath Yatra (Car Festival of Lord Jagannath), nearly 4,000 people resisted the "collection of fines and attachment of property". The novel feature in this resistance was the participation of tribals with "bows and arrows" who had gathered in Nilagiri to celebrate the car festival. 32 This led to the arrest of 98 people. The number of arrests by 14 July reached 116. A few state officials like Purna Chandra Naik (a school Sub-Inspector of Nilagiri administration) were dismissed for their collaboration with the Prajamandal. The rent free tenures (lakhiraj) of certain Brahmins were taken away for siding with the movement. 33

At this point, the Congress leadership extended whole hearted support to the Prajamandal. On 21 July, Mahatab and Sarangadhar Das addressed a meeting at village Ambodia (near the border of Nilagiri). Duley received by the villagers under the leadership of Purna Chandra Naik, amidst chanting of Mahatma Ki Jai, Mahatab advised the gathering to lend all support to the Nilagiri movement. Importantly, he asked the people to form primary Congress committees which would ultimately help in redressing popular grievances. This

31. Ibid.
In fact the D.M. Balasore in his report observed: "It is a matter for serious consideration how far we should allow our people in the district and become especially the youth of our district to become involved in the political agitation in a neighbouring 'friendly' state.... Nilagiri Darbar finds that Balasore is becoming a centre of disaffection directed against its administration" - thus signifying massive popular support beyond the border and mainly from Congress activists.

32. HPD, Telegram to Governor's Secretary, 25.7.38, ACC-957.
The reason for the resistance was the attempt to defy the Ruler's imposition and collection of fines from the 'arrested' and 'prosecuted' leaders.

33. HPD, FNR, Balasore, 25.7.38, ACC-870.
advice was tendered apparently to hold back the Nilagiri Prajamandal's possible move to launch a no-rent campaign and violation of forest laws in case the attempt at compromise with the Nilagiri Darbar failed. The meeting was equally addressed by President of Prajamandal, Kailash Ch. Mohanty, and others. Yet in another meeting on the same day at Gariamal (in the British Orissa territory) mostly attended by Nilagiri subjects, Sarangadhar Das made an appeal for the enrolment of volunteers so as to stand by the tenants of Machuapatna village who were braving the state's repression. People, in response, were asked to 'stand together' in the meeting to condemn such repression on the poor tenants of the Patna village. In fact, the people of Machuapatna had resorted to non-payment of tax and in turn, the state administration had unleashed terror while undertaking attachment of household properties for default of tax payment. In this collective resistance at Machuapatna, more than a thousand villagers including tribals participated. The resistance continued for over five days, inviting massive repression by the state police. In view of this, Sarangadhar Das advised the tenants to remain firmly non-violent in their struggle against the Raj. He observed that the authorities were not likely to physically hurt the tenants so long as the tenants stuck to non-violent agitation against the oppression of the state authorities. Further, he pointed out that the tenants would get full support from the Congress if they abided by the Congress creed. The meeting also gave a call to observe Nilagiri Day on 27 July. Another Congress leader of DCC, Balasore, Gour Chandra Das, promised to regularly remain in touch with the "locality" to

34. HPD, FNR, Balasore, 25.7.38, ACC-870.
35. HPD, S.I. Report on Goraimal meeting, 22.7.38, ACC-957.
lend support to the non-violent fight launched by the tenants. He also said that he would equally shoulder the responsibility of forming a primary Congress committee in the area covering the villages of Patna, Chandipur and Gorimal. The leftwingers in the Prajamandal (mostly younger elements represented under the leadership of Banamali Das) had a tendency to base the movement in terms of violent resistance to the state. The collective resistance against the illegal fines imposed by the state administration drew sympathisers from the neighbouring villages; it also enlisted support of the tribals and the Prajamandal activists. These were the areas where communists had gained an effective hold. This strand of violent resistance co-existed with the broad Gandhian trend of non-violent movement vis-a-vis the state.

By the end of July, the broad pattern of popular mobilisation in the face of massive repression obtaining in the state revealed a very interesting dimension of the movement; almost all the political activities originated on the borders of the state. For instance:

(1) speakers of Balasore town inciting the people of Balasore district as well as those of state to break laws and regulations of the state; (2) people collecting on the border of the state to break forest laws of the state; (3) people collecting on the border of the state to march in processions without state's license to defy the state's regulations; (4) people collecting on the border of the state, using violence, attempting to cut forest timber of the state, damaging property and marching in a body to preach no-rent campaign; (5) ashrams in the border containing cyclostyled machines to bring out leaflets based on anti-raja sentiment and appeals to break state laws; (6) ashrams containing 'proscribed' literature to be smuggled into the state; (7) burning of effigy of the ruler and political agent; (8) staging of dramas or jatras (street plays) in which the ruling chief or political agent was mocked at; (9) assaults committed repeatedly on people who refused to subscribe to Nilagiri agitation; (10) persons carrying timber from Nilagiri forests to the railway station were harassed and even violence threatened against them.

The trend of mobilisation, as depicted above, bring out a few important implications. One, on the borders of the state ashrams existed. These ashrams though, planned ini-

37. HPD, S.P. to D.M., Balasore, 25.7.38, ACC-957.
The points were posed as queries by the S.P., Balasore seeking guidance of superior authority, to handle such 'law and order' problems in the Balasore district itself. The D.M. in turn, expressed his helplessness to ensure police intervention in regard to the points 1 to 8 as laws under Indian states (protection) Act did not permit such intervention.
tially as Congress and Gandhian training centres in terms of ideology and activities, came to accommodate the trend towards violence - indicating the weight of left wingers in the movement. So equally with the declared policy of non-violence; use of force, assault and violence were undertaken for sustaining the movement. Importantly, the above trends also reflect a picture of mobilisation wherein political activities originated in the borders of the state and got ultimately concentrated on the Nilagiri centre, representing the Durbar. It meant a challenge from the periphery all round the state to the centre. One must equally emphasise the fact that the left wingers could promote their activities under the broad Congress banner. For instance, the state administration was placed in a peculiar situation. As the entire district of Balasore, its Congress leaders, Mahatab and Congress Ministry were firmly behind the Praja-mandal struggle of Nilagiri, the relation of the state with the Balasore district administration got strained. This broad support of the Congress to the movement often led to poor coordination of the state administration with the police of the British territory, under the impression that the police of British district were under the control of the Congress Ministry. Besides, the Ministry's refusal to provide police assistance to the state also strengthened such thinking on the part of administration. As a result the state police often suspected the district police of being spies, and thus kept aloof from them in providing information or planning joint strategy against the struggle. 38

In the context of these developments, the state administration was under pressure to explore the possibility of a settlement. Thus the Political Agent on 25 July volunteered

38. *HPD, S.P. to D.M., Balasore, 4.8.38, ACC-957.*

The above point is candidly detailed in the S.P.'s (Balasore) report.
to sign an agreement with the Prajamandal leaders. According to the agreement, it was decided to allow the formation of an elected Prajamandal for redressal of popular grievances and the staying of fines imposed on the leaders till their cases were heard. Simultaneously an assurance was sought from the leaders that a mass movement would not be adopted to resist the collection of state dues. Accordingly, the ruler recognised the Prajamandal on 29 July. This ensured a short-lived lull to the movement against the state administration; yet the popular feeling was buoyant as in mood to score a victory against the ruler. For instance, the D.M. Balasore was critical of the permanence of the lull brought in through the agreement observing that:

"indeed if the agitators insist on all their demands (which incidentally have been given the widest publicity by means of cyclostyled leaflets issued from Balasore district), it is difficult to say that a speedy solution of the trouble is at hand, unless the Durbar is willing to face with equanimity the prospect of a complete surrender. In the event of the Darbar's holding out (and upto the present apart from 'recognising' the Prajamandal the other demands of the agitators to do appear to have been conceded), the agitation, in my opinion, is bound to be intensified unless, as appears unlikely, more moderate counsels prevail among the leaders, who at the moment appear to be in a somewhat exultant mood." 40

The D.M.'s view of 'exultant mood' at least points to the sense of victory existing at popular levels. This mood must equally have been shaped by the Ruler's promise of giving the right to the people to elect their representative to the state assembly - a status at par with the neighbouring British territory. The idea of assembly was of course, immediately withdrawn and the promise restricted to only the recognition of the Prajamandal. 41 It is in fact, interesting to look into the conditions offered by the Prajamandal (after it was recognised by the Ruler on 29 July) to the Ruler to enable it to participate in the discussion to


40. HPD, D.M. to Secy on Political Agitation in Nilagiri, 5.8.38, ACC-957.

41. HPD, Detective Sub-Inspector's Report (Balasore), 2.8.38, ACC-957.
effect a compromise with the Ruler. The conditions were unconditional release of all Satyagrahis, cancellation of fines imposed on Satyagrahis, return of the property attached by the Ruler, reinstatement of officials dismissed by the Ruler in connection with the movement, allowing the entry of the Krushak paper, scrapping of Section 144 Cr. P.C., allowing the people expelled by the Ruler to return to their villages, and finally stopping of state violence. These conditions point to the fact that Prajamandal was assertive, fired as it was by a sense of victory.

The prospect of Satyagraha including violation of forest laws by the end of 1st week of August remained the alternative in case the Ruler did not concede the demands put forward by Prajamandal to facilitate the compromise. As against this, the Ruler's only concessions was in terms of recognising the Prajamandal. At this juncture Congress leaders including Mahatab and Sarangadhar Das, addressed a meeting at Garaimal Ashram, on 1 August. The meeting was largely attended by people of Nilagiri state as well as the bordering villages of Balasore district. The attendance of a sizeable section of Santhal tribals (nearly 500) out of a total of more than 2,000 is a broad pointer to the increasing participation of tribals in the movement. The meeting began with the chanting of songs composed by the tenants of Nilagiri detailing the Raja's oppression and the hoisting of the national flag. Kailash Ch. Mohanty, (President Prajamandal) spoke at length tracing the history and prospects of the Nilagiri movement. Talking about the objective of the movement, he observed: "If the people will have a voice on the budget of the state when the Assembly will be formed, then and then only they can have some relief". Besides, he

42. *Ibid.*

appealed to the Santhals and other tribals to join in large numbers so that the Prajamandal got strengthened and the ruling Chief forced to come to terms. Thus an effort was being made to broaden the base of the movement by ensuring larger participation of tribals in the struggle. However, he advised the audience not to resort to any kind of movement against the Ruler till a decision was evolved through talks with the Ruler. Finally, he appealed for funds to carry on the struggle.

Sarangadhar Das, in his speech, appealed to maintain unity and "faithfulness to Prajamandal". He cited the instance of Satyagrahis in Machuapatna who behaved in an "orderly fashion", when the political agent visited the village to conduct the enquiry. It may be noted here that, Bazellgate, the political agent as part of his efforts to explore a negotiation with Prajamandal and the Ruler, visited Machuapatna village around July end, to conduct an enquiry into people's resistance to the collection of fines and attachment of property by the state. During his visit the people, under the advice of the Prajamandal, sang Ramdun and remained peaceful. Mahatab, in his speech, held the British imperialism responsible and at the root of all the problems and exhorted the audience to remove the root cause. Simultaneously he appealed to the people to support the Congress for the Congress alone was able to relieve the distress of the masses. In fact, it was under his initiative that a primary Congress committee came to function at Gariamal, headed by Purna Ch. Naik.44 Karunakar Panigrahi who presided over the meeting advised the people not to fear the police and state officials but to carry on the struggle. The ruler was also condemned for requisitioning a police force from Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, and Dhenkanal states. The meeting was attended by many leaders from Balasore D.C.C.

44. NPARI, op. cit., pp.75-77.
THE ASHRAMS

At this stage, we should have a look at the organisation of Ashrams and training of volunteers as part of the overall movement against the state. As noted earlier, the headquarters of Prajamandal came to function in Alasuan (in Sora, bordering the state) right since May. But around July, the centre of activities shifted to Gariamal (near Ambodia and Chandipur villages) and it became the official headquarters of the Prajamandal. As observed earlier, the Congress leaders visited the place and meetings were organised in this pocket. The initiative for opening up this Ashram at Gariamal came from some local activists. Most prominent among them were Purna Chandra Naik, who had been dismissed from the post of school sub-inspector due to his involvement in the Nilagiri movement; Udaynath Birbar (Zamindar of Cuttack and cousin of Nilagiri Raja), who most often financed the Prajamandal's expenditure by providing ration and money. Banamali Das used to reside in the Ashram. Das (Secretary of Prajamandal) had just completed his matriculation and represented the younger elements of the Prajamandal movement and was known for his communistic orientation. He held the post of Secretary, Students' League (Balasore branch) and was thus active in the youth movement. He was camping there along with 60 volunteers (by August) for offering Satyagraha in the state. The number of volunteers went up to 200 on certain occasions. For example, during the visit of political agent to Nilagiri the numbers swelled requiring special arrangement for their food. The rise in numbers can perhaps be explained by the fact that Prajamandal issued calls at times to get ready for any kind of eventuality. For instance, the visit of the political agent, Bazellgette, led to the decision to keep

45. HPD, Detective Sub-Inspector (Balasore) Report, 2.8.38, ACC-957; and S.P. Report, Balasore, 10.8.38.
the volunteers in readiness for any sort of eventual action.

The ashram was also used as stores for lathis and axes for the use of tenants for resisting state administration. It also acted as a centre for Nilagiri refugees who left the state to avoid Ruler's oppression. The Ashram also cyclostyled a daily newspaper titled Rana Dak (War-Cry), besides printing several pamphlets on behalf of Nilagiri Praja Mandal. The news-sheet was edited by Goura Chandra Das and subsequently by Purna Chandra Naik. Gour Chandra Das (Secretary, Balasore D.C.C.), in fact, frequented the Ashram and co-ordinated the affairs of Prajamandal with the Balasore D.C.C. and he had also supplied the cyclostyled machine. Rana Dak was sent secretly to different Ashram, as well as interiors of the state such as Machuapatna and Patpur (pockets of intense popular mobilisation) through volunteers. Everyday, a volunteer would go on a cycle to Khantapara post office to receive the Dak and post it. Usually, the Ashram received letters from Mahatab, Sarangadhara Das, editor of The Samaja, Radhanath Rath, and Prajamandal of other states. Similarly, letters of the Nilagiri Prajamandal officials were typed out and sent to the Press and different addresses (the typewriter was provided by Purna Chandra Naik!). The Ashram physically trained the Volunteers. Drills were conducted by the inmates along with lathi exercises under the guidance of "Commanders". They usually preferred evening hours to go in a procession, devoting the daytime for parade exercise. During processions, they carried lathis and axes along with Congress flags, and chanted nationalist and anti-Ruler slogans. The nature of activities suggests that Prajamandal sustained the movement by co-ordinating its developments with the leaders outside the state and through extended media coverage. Also the Rana Dak became an important means of popular mobilisation and boosting the popular morale in the face of strong repressive tactics often resorted to by the state.
Another interesting feature was that, tribals (mostly Santhals) also became the inmates of the Ashram. This is to be seen in the context of the leadership's effort at attracting tribals to join Prajamandal in order to broaden the movement. The tribals were also trained and recruited as Satyagrahis to offer civil resistance. The possibility of reduction of high rent charged from them compared to the fellow non-tribal tenants and the abolition of license fees on handia (Rice-liquor) and Puchwai (unprocessed liquor) - promises held out to them by the Prajamandal activists, spurred them to take to the Prajamandal movement.

Banamali Das, representing the communist strand of leadership, did a lot in mobilising the tribals. This strand of leadership often clashed with the typical Gandhian style of functioning within the principles of non-violence. But these clashing strands were often reconciled in the larger interest of the Prajamandal movement. Both of them helped in popular mobilisation and sustained the movement providing it fresh dimensions. By August, several ashram units sprung up in villages like Ayodhya and Iswarpur and a branch was opened in Nilagiri proper (around July end) under the initiative of the Prajamandal. More or less, the ashrams used to operate as rural level Congress units initially being affiliated to Prajamandal. Thus, the objective was to further the Congress organisation in the whole of Nilagiri state. In fact, under the initiative of Balasore DCC and Mahatab, a primary Congress Committee was inaugurated in Gariamal on 1 August 1938. As pointed out earlier, it is under the overall banner of the Congress ashrams that Communist like Banamali Das could carry forward their secret activities, usually not permissible. These Congress ashrams with their trained volunteers, including tribal recruits,

46. Ibid.
and the trend of inculcation of left ideology often lent militancy to the Prajamandal movement.

As expected, the possibility of a compromise between the Ruler and Prajamandal broke down as the Ruler did not accept the demands of Prajamandal submitted as a precondition for any negotiations. Consequently, the Prajamandal intensified its activities and stepped up the Satyagraha campaign. Gariamal *ashram* remained the hectic centre of the mass campaign and the source for sending regular batches of volunteers to offer *Satyagraha* in the state. The response of the Ruler was to take recourse to sheer repression. Banamali Das, considered as the potential force behind popular mobilisation with his *aashram* activities at Gariamal, was arrested on 4 August while urging the people not to join a meeting to be addressed by the Ruler. This only inflamed popular anger. The Ghariamal *ashram* undertook a massive preparation to organise a *Satyagraha* to protest the arrest. For example, on 8 August evening, volunteers led by Purna Chandra Naik marched to a nearby field (Ambodia ground - one mile away) shouting slogans like *Nilagiri Atyachar Dhwansa Hau* (Down with the oppression of Nilagiri), *Malati Dhwansa Hau* (Down with drunken Raja), *Biswaaghataka Dhwansa Hau* (Down with the traitor) along with chanting of slogans like victory to Gandhi and Independent India. Afterwards, drills were practised under the command of Bansidhar Behera. Batches of *Satyagrahis* were despatched to Nilagiri on the subsequent days of 9, 10, 11 August. The *Satyagrahis* were forced out of Nilagiri territory by the state administration by resorting to gun fire and even use of elephants. On 9 August, in the course of a lathi charge

47. HPD, FNR, Cuttack, 17.8.38 (ACC-1059).

48. HPD, FNR (Balasore), 13.8.38 (ACC-870); and HPD, Detective Sub-Inspector (Bls), Report 10.8.38 (ACC-957). The entire details on the 8, 9, 10 August are built on the basis of the above sources.
by the State police, Arjuna Jena, a Prajamandal activist who undertook the courier activities of Prajamandal was brutally assaulted and got injured along with many others. After this incident, he remained untraced. The rumour gained currency that Arjun Jena was dead, killed by Raja's hired Muhammadan goons of Cuttack, and was buried in the jungle of Nilagiri mountain. But when Arjun Jena appeared alive after a few days, another story of the death of some 'Singh' came to be be aired. In fact, after every round of suppression of the Satyagrahis, the state administration would be faced with a larger numbers of fearless Satyagrahis on the next day. Thus, for example, after the incident of 9th August, the state administration had to take recourse to firing and terror by letting loose elephants to chase the Satyagrahis on the subsequent days of 10 and 11 August.

Such incidents also tended to inspire the use of violence. The anti-Ruler slogans raised at the time smacked off intense hatred towards the Ruler. However, the Prajamandal leaders as well as other Congress leader of Balasore DCC, who were monitoring the developments, advised the people to remain non-violent. For instance, after the developments of 9 and 10 August, the selected number of Satyagrahis were flagged off to Nilagiri from Gariamal ashram. But, the processions was preceded by a mass meeting where more than a thousand people gathered and were told to carry on the struggle in a non-violent manner. The prevailing mood was best reflected in the D.M.'s report of 10 August. Advising the Raja to appoint an escort and seek for police protection while moving out in public, he went on to observe:

"as anticipated, the situation in Nilagiri has deteriorated... if the agitators were shouting in this district on the border 'Down with the drunken Raja' and 'Down with traitor' even before the clash (of 9/10 August), it is likely that after the clash, at which one person is thought to have been killed, their feelings will be further embittered."

That an intense atmosphere of deep seated anger and violent retaliation (to the extent of attempt on the life of Raja) backed by rumours of the death of Satyagrahis prevailed before and following the brutal repression of people by the ruler is a strong pointer to the intense popular mobilisation by the Prajamandal. The role of ashrams in this regard was crucially significant, as also the impact of left wing ideology.

At this stage, a fresh initiative for opening negotiations between Prajamandal and Durbar was taken up with the intervention of Mahatab. A comprehensive list of 31 demands of Prajamandal was submitted by Mahatab. The negotiation began on 19 August with the tendering of a 'guarded' regret by the Prajamandal to the Durbar (the Raja had taken the Prajamandal's slogans like "Down with drunken Raja" and "Down with the traitor" as ridiculously offensive). Out of 31 demands the Ruler agreed to immediately concede 24 demands; he however rejected 7 important demands of Prajamandal. This stance of the Durbar stiffened the position of Prajamandal and the negotiation faced the prospect of again breaking down. The Raja's proclamation highlighting the concessions was burnt by the people and a call for boycott was given. Prajamandal even advised the people to leave the state while intensifying the struggle against the Durbar. However, the crisis was averted with joint initiatives of the Congress leadership and the political agent (Bazellgette). The Raja was forced to concede most of the demands by 28 August. The 8 demands on which the Ruler expressed reservation were referred to the Resident, Eastern States, at Calcutta. By October however, the Ruler agreed to concede 6 out of the 8 demands. Some of these eight demands over which the Ruler showed his reserva-
tions concerned grant of general amnesty by the Ruler, discussion on the budget and a measure responsible Government. However, the demand on budget was also partly conceded. The agreement in fact, raised the prestige of the Congress in the eyes of state subjects.\(^{51}\)

Some of the demands conceded by the Ruler focused on\(^{52}\)

(a) abolition of bethi and magan (contribution to the Ruler on the days of his joy and sorrow); (b) abolition of bethi used in shikar (hunting); (c) abolition of the system of permission to be taken before transfer of land, except transfer of land from aboriginals to non-aboriginals, in which case too there should be no fees; (d) mutation fees to be paid at the rate of 3 times the rental in case of sales and gifts only; in court sale, mutation fee of Rs.8/- per month to be paid; (e) the commuted cash rent of bethia jagir land to be reduced by 25%; (f) abolition of salami; (g) killing/wounding of elephants to be penalised but other animals damaging crops might be killed on the spot; (h) no state machinery to be used in social matters, only moral impact of the Ruler to be exercised in this regard; (i) ban on the Krushak to be lifted; (j) permission to use the forest; (k) abolition of taxes on the sale of bamboo by Doms (low castes) brewing liquor for home consumption.

While recognising Prajamandal the Ruler's proclamation pointed out:\(^{53}\)

"I can't take any action irrespective of what my brother princes think about it. Surely, Nilagiri is not the state to begin experiments with. I may assure the subjects that Nilagiri will not lag behind when other states in the agency takes steps in this direction.... I have recognised the Prajamandal for the purpose of representing the grievances of the people in a regular manner to the Durbar, as I want the administration to be popular."

Thus, people came to score a victory over the Ruler by forcing the Ruler to concede certain fundamental democratic demands. The prophecy of Sarangadhar Das that "Nilagiri is destined to be the torch-bearer for the suffering millions of Orissa states"\(^{54}\) had come true. The agreement was repudiated by the Ruler again around November. In response, the PCC reaction was sharp. Fully sympathising with the consistent struggle of Prajamandal, it roundly condemned the ruler's highhandedness in banning Prajamandal and obstructing meetings and processions.\(^{55}\) Thus the Ruler had to draft

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51. HPD, FNR, Cuttack, 17.12.38 (ACC-1059).
53. Ibid.
55. AICC Papers, F.No.21, Secy PCC to Secy, AICC, 14.12.38.
a rejoinder assuring that concessions already granted would not be cancelled and that the princes of Orissa States would meet to discuss the initiative for the examination of the scheme for introduction of representative institutions in future.\textsuperscript{56} Congress leadership reacted strongly and the PCC warned:

"If a pact by political department can be treated like a scrap of paper in this way, then we have to give up all hopes of ever influencing the British administration... it will be impossible for us to continue as a part and parcel of British administration where such a breach of pact is countenanced".

Clearly stating that the option of Ministry's resignation was open in that eventuality, PCC observed: "If this mighty force of British administration is used to subdue the claims of people for elementary rights of human beings... we would be left with no option but to resign."\textsuperscript{57} Unfortunately, the murder of Bazelgette in 1939 (in Ranpur) slowed down the pace of movement here as elsewhere.

II. DHENKANAL

The impulse for the organisation of the states' subjects of Dhenkanal, Talcher and Hindol date back to 1938 when Girija Bhusan Dutta (Congress MLA) and Sarangadhar Das convened the Garjat Praja Sammilani and enthused near about 400 subjects to resist the oppression of the state and secure their ‘rights’ by focusing on the comparison of their condition with that of the tenants of British India.\textsuperscript{58} The preliminary steps towards the organisations of Prajamandal in Dhenkanal state were taken in the context of the visit of the enquiry committee appointed by the states' peoples' organisations to probe into the conditions of the states. When the enquiry committee visited Dhenkanal state and camped in Anugul (26 and 27 June, 1938) to compile information by

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{58} HPD, FNR, Cuttack, 26.6.38 (ACC-1058), DKL.
interviewing the people of the state, the move to form the Prajamandal was formalised. A 13 member working committee headed by local activists like Artatrina Patra (President), Krutibas Subudhi and Shyam Sunder Sahu (Vice Presidents), Purna Ch. Mohapatra (Secretary), etc., was floated.\(^5^9\) Behind this effort at the organisation of Prajamandal, Maheswar Subahu Singh and Purna Chandra Mahapatra (who had organised popular protest against rent enhancement in Parjang, Kanti and Kantanali way back in 1920)\(^6^0\) took the crucial lead. In fact, it was basically from Parjang, Palasuni and Upardesh bisos\(^6^1\) (Parganas) that people volunteered before the enquiry committee to present their grievances regarding state's rule. These pockets had experienced popular resentment and political mobilisation earlier right since the 1920s against state's oppression. It is equally important to note that the state had come under the impact of Gandhian nationalism since the days of the non-cooperation movement. The students of Dhenkanal High School had boycotted classes during this movement and afterwards progressively sought links with Congress activists of the British Indian territory. The youth leadership comprising prominently Harmohan Patnaik, Laxmidhar Sahu, Baisnab Ch. Patnaik and Dayanidhi Patnaik which had steeled itself in such activities, afterwards became the substantial force of the state's struggle.\(^6^2\)


61. AICC Papers, F.No.9-35/1938.

62. Harmohan Patnaik, *Dhenkanal Andolan*, pp.1-10, Dhenkanal, 1983. As the author (an ex-student of this school) nostalgically recalls, every Saturday students organised meetings and critiqued British Imperialism as well as the state administration. This encouraged the students to establish secret links with Congress activists beyond the borders of the state. They also secretly associated with officials of the rulers who were hostile to the rulers. The school itself had the teachers, some of whom had 'graduated' from Satyabadi Centre (an
After the formalisation of the provisional Prajamandal, mass meetings were organised in different parts of the state and primary units of the Prajamandal were organised at village level. Also membership and fund collection drive for Prajamandal was stepped up. Strict loyalty to Prajamandal was enjoined upon and any deviation from it was considered as betrayal inviting expulsion and ostracism. For example, anyone hobnobbing with state authorities was considered a traitor. Payment of fines as well as admission of the fault in open meetings at villages were the preconditions for seeking readmission to the membership of the Prajamandal. The youth of the villages acted as volunteer groups who did the job of organising meetings and processions and also guarded the villages. 63

With the formation of Prajamandal, the protest against the State's misrule surfaced in an organised manner. For instance, the issue of Pan (betel) monopoly 64 of the state came to be opposed seriously (around July, 1938). The meeting organised at village levels resolved to boycott pan chewing. People were mobilised on this issue by Kirtan parties which moved around the village singing songs of pan boycott. The success of the pan boycott was near-total; the daily import of betel leaves went down by 95%. Here again, 

...Continued...

...Continued...

...Continued...

63. B.S. Das (Publisher), Dhenkanal Unrest: A Review, Cuttack, 1938, p.9, which describes how the blowing of conch-shells in one village came to be immediately responded by counter blowing from other villages resulting in the congregation of people at a particular place.

64. AICC, F.No.9-35/1938.
The Pan sold in the state at prices 3 to 4 times higher than in the neighbouring Anugul Market.
the Parjang and Palasuni bisos took the lead. The mass meetings organised in villages were primarily intended to instill confidence in the people by discussing and criticizing the state authorities and thus shaking off their fear of the repressive organs of the state. To contemplate raising voice against the state authorities in the contemporary context was incredible and to hold open meetings for the purpose meant offering a real challenge. These meetings also legitimised and popularised the existence of Prajamandal by declaring it as the sole representative of Dhenkanal people. In the process, the imparting of political education at popular levels began. For instance, when Sarangadhar Das and Lal Mohan Patnaik conducted the enquiry (on behalf of state peoples' enquiry committee) regarding bribery, torture, oppression committed by state police and forest officials, people complained to them regarding police harassment through house searches and bribery, as also regarding forest tax, road cess, bethi, school tax, etc. The speakers while listening to popular grievances, asked people to shed their fear of the ruling chief and organise Prajamandal and contribute one anna each to strengthen the organisation. Interestingly, this meeting was held in Banrpal within Anugul police station (within British India) limit to escape any prohibition by the state authorities. By August, the Prajamandal put forward the grant of civil liberties and 'complete responsible Government' based on the rule of law as the twin major demands. Besides, its other notable demands were the abolition of bethi and magan,

65. Ibid.

Meetings were held simply to satisfy the people's feelings that they were free to hold meetings.

66. HPD, DM to Chief Secretary, D.O.No.327, 9.9.38 (ACC-916).

67. Ibid.
export-import restriction, enactment of tenancy laws in the states in the light of Orissa Tenancy Act, and the overhauling of forest laws to the benefit of the tenants, abolition of monopoly on necessities of life like betel leaf, and the grant of the right to protect crops from the ravages of wild animals - indicating a protest against Raja's feudal privilege of indulging in Shikar sprees.

In response to the Prajamandal's demands the ruler adopted a conciliatory approach by promising a few concessions,68 and also floated a counter association called Prajamandal Samiti allegedly to look after the welfare of the people. However, these steps hardly helped to weaken peoples' enthusiasm for the Prajamandal; and it was increasingly accepted as the organ of popular representation.69

Along with the formulation of its demands, an organisational revamping of the Prajamandal took place around August with the more youthful radical elements taking over. For instance, Harmohan Patnaik was appointed as President with Laxmidhar Sahu and Baisnab Charan Patnaik as Secretaries.70 Another student leader, Srikanta Rout, was selected as the captain of the volunteer corps. This kind of leadership offered Prajamandal a new dynamism and great deal of radical thrust. Under this new leadership, mass meeting were organised in the interior of the state. The usual themes of the speeches harped on village reconstruction, organisation of the Prajamandal and the necessity to accept and join Prajamandal by the people. The audience in the meetings were

68. The Krushak, 27 Aug. 1938. Also HPD, Dhenkanal State Gazette, 29.8.38, mentions that Brahmin were asked to dissociate themselves from the movement on the threat of losing their Lakhiraj (rent free) tenure. Besides, Brahman Samitis were given powers to decide cases of ex-communication from the society. This pointed to Ruler's effort to marginalise the Prajamandal by creating division on caste lines.


70. The Krushak, 13 Aug. 1938.
also warned about the divisive tactics of the ruler to weaken the Prajamandal by winning over the Brahmins through concessions to the Ruler's side. Women participation in the meeting was another noteworthy feature. On the occasion of the All India Kisan Day celebration (1 September 1938) under the initiative of Cuttack district Kisan Sangha, a Kisan Conference was organised in Jenapur. Nearly 6 thousand peasants, including women, marched to attend the Conference from Dhenkanal, carrying national and red flags. The second day of the Conference specifically devoted to developments in Dhenkanal was declared as the 'Dhenkanal Day' to demonstrate solidarity with the oppressed subjects of the state. Resolutions supporting the Dhenakanl Prajamandal and its demands were passed. Maheswar Subahu Singh was appointed as the Vice-President of the Prajamandal, as he was a leader with tremendous mass appeal. As noted earlier, under his initiative, Parjang bISO had remained at the forefront of popular protest in Dhenkanal state right since 1920. In his message on the occasion of 'Kisan Day', Sarangadhar Das advised the peasants to unite and carry on agitation, ["be they Brahmins, or be Hadis and Pans (low castes)"] by recognising the Prajamandal as their head and to achieve freedom, through the policy of non-violence. Referring to the developments in states in general and Dhenkanal in particular as well as to the conditions of the peasantry, Naba Krushna Choudhury, on the opening day of the


Conference observed: 74

"the Raja of Dhenkanal has no right. We are the Rajas of the country. The country is of
the subjects. For this, we are ready to be assaulted. We are now prepared to invite
assaults, so that these illegal assaults, would be extinct for good. No party wins a
battle without death. The peasants/workers are dying like insects through oppression.
These things should not recur. Now we shall fight unitedly. We shall not fear if our
enemies are armed with guns... Lakhs of us would say with tight grips 'who has the power,
come and assault us and let's see how powerful is the British Government that he would kill
us'... the real meaning of 'Inquilab Zindabad' is that whether a sweeper, Pan or Brahmin,
we shall be united. If you can shout this properly, then it will spread like fire, and all
these oppressions would be burnt into ashes'.

This fiery sought to instill in the Dhenkanal participants a
distinct confidence and determination to transform the
existing state of affairs. In the Conference, subjects of
Dhenkanal were asked to contribute one anna each towards the
Dhenkanal fund. The other significant features of the
Conference were that caste taboos disappeared and both high
and low caste subjects interacted freely and the hitherto
politically indifferent villagers discussed the issue of
responsible government and the right to vote.

The state authorities, in the face of these develop­
ments, geared themselves for full-scale repression, at times
maintaining a conciliatory position on the surface. Around
August, the Prajamandal leaders were called by the rulers
for discussion. Maheswar Subahu Singh who proceeded to meet
the Ruler was followed by a huge gathering of 40 thousands
who shouted slogans, and against tyranny and serfdom and
demanded responsible government. Despite the Ruler's wish
to meet Subahu Singh alone, the people, who reached Dhenka­
nal along with him refused to go back, thereby forcing the
Ruler to convene a mass meeting at the nearby play ground.
In the meeting, however the Ruler justified the existing
tax-structure of the state which frustrated popular expecta­
tion. In the face of the popularisation of its demand by
the Prajamandal, the state authorities came out with a few
concessions on 29 August, but they were rejected by the

74. HPD, Peasants meeting at Jenapur, 1.9.38 (ACC-913).
Prajamandal. The popular confidence had touched new heights. The people virtually stopped the payment of sunia-veti. Besides, people also resorted to social boycott of corrupt and loyalist elements of the state administration. Contrary to the promise to meet the delegation of Prajamandal on 11 September the state police raided the Prajamandal office in Dhenkanal town and arrested 15 leaders including Harmohan Patnaik, Subahu Singh, and Laxmidhar Sahu. The people retorted by joining the 'arrested' leaders, garlanding and accompanying them to jail. Nearly one thousand people accompanied every single arrested leader to the jail gate. Despite the effort to terrorise the accompanying crowds by severe lathi charges, chasing by horses and elephants, people remained non-violent and people from the interiors of the state joined the crowd as a mark of fraternity. The leaders instructed the people to adopt social boycott of state police and officials. On 12 September, the authorities sealed the Dhenkanal town to prevent mass gatherings. But defying such prohibition, people from the deep interiors of the Dhenkanal state as well as the neighbouring states of Talcher, Athgarh, Baramba, Tigiria, Hindol and Narsinghapur, etc., assembled at the Alasuan Hat near the railway station to decide the

75. HPD, Dhenkanal State Gazettee, 29 August 1938 (ACC-946).
78. Ibid.
79. B.K. Dhal, Bhulibu Nahin (Oriya), BBSR, 1980, p.89
course of action following the arrest of leadership. People who congregated there were encouraged in the name of Gandhi and Prajamandal and fed by the sympathetic Dhenkanal town people. By evening, nearly 20 thousand people had gathered demanding the release of their leaders. The police fired thrice on the day to prevent people from entering the town and to dissuade them from gathering in the hat, injuring at least 100 people seriously. The people fought the police through pelting of stones, brickbats, collected from the railway tracks. In the clash with the police, the state officials were also assaulted. But on the whole the people remained non-violent.

Malati Choudhury on her way back to Cuttack on the evening of 12 September from her meeting at Parjang biso, carried with her 8 seriously injured persons and admitted them in Cuttack hospital. At the Dhenkanal railway station, she advised the irate crowd to remain non-violent in the face of provocation. The crowd protested that, as they remained essentially non-violent, the state had unleashed repression on them. As the number of people who gathered in the Dhenkanal town, demanding the release of arrested leaders swelled, the authorities gauging the popular mood and to avoid any further untoward incident (in terms of forcible capturing of jail by the people) released the leaders at midnight on 12 September. On 13 September, Naba Krushna Choudhury (MLA) accompanied by Sarangadhar Das

82. B.K. Dhal, op. cit., p.112; and HPD, Weekly Diary of S.P. Cuttack, 15 Sept. 1938 (ACC-916).
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid., F.No.237/1938.
reached Dhenkanal and addressed a huge gathering. While congratulating people for their determination and unity asked them to disperse to their own villages and wait for further instructions by Prajamandal for any further participation. 86 Sarangadhar Das in his fiery address, advised the gathering to open volunteer training centres in villages to train the youth in the art of lathi exercise, to boycott the state officials as well as their families in the interiors. He said state administration would collapse if officials left their posts for fear of torture and social boycott. He also advised them to encroach on reserved forests for fuel to boycott the collection of excise revenue of the state as well as to boycott licensed hats of the state. Instead, he advised people to sell their articles in any place they liked. He said:

"We must make the Raja shed tears and surrender his Government to our hands.... Be bold and don't be afraid.... Have no fear for jail and handcuff.... Think of the mighty Congress party of British India. How it has obtained self-government. Think of their great feats and sacrifices. The Congress has obtained the release of political murderers from British prisons. If they were capable of obtaining independence from the powerful British, can't we obtain liberty from the Raja earlier than the British Indian Congress brothers?"

No wonder, people dispersed with a great sense of victory.

The popular assertion expressed itself in certain cases of harassment inflicted on State police and other officials by the people, even though the Prajamandal issued instructions to the contrary. 87 The movement was guided apparently from British Orissa areas bordering the state, especially Anugul. Anugul became the centre for Dhenkanal refugees and a hotbed of anti-Raja politics. Pamphlets, literature and all kinds of propaganda made their way to the state from this centre. Besides, railway areas which were not under the jurisdiction of the state were equally used as places


87. Ibid.
for political meeting and popular mobilisation. A contractor, named Dhamjee who was a resident within the railway land of Dhenkanal, even possessed gunpowder, swords and arms. Thus such areas also came to be used by hardcore militants as places for smuggling arms to the state.

In the meanwhile, the Ruler recognised the Prajamandal and offered to consider the popular grievances. Besides, he offered to set up a committee involving Mahatab, to enquire into the firing of 12 September. In a bid to seek a compromise, Mahatab held talks with the Ruler as well as Prajamandal leaders. Prajamandal in turn lifted the boycott of state officials to help the negotiations. In the negotiations, the Prajamandal insisted on the acceptance of the twin demands of the grant of civil liberty and responsible Government, conditions which the ruler could hardly accept. The Ruler alleged that violence was rampant in the interiors and asked the Prajamandal leaders to go back to these areas to quell it. The negotiation virtually broke down. This was followed by another spree of terror by the Ruler. The Prajamandal was declared unlawful. The state also gagged the pro-movement press. For instance, the Krushak, a socialist weekly which championed the cause of the people and acted as the philosophical guide for the movement was banned in the

88. HPD, Resident Eastern States to Chief Secy, 24.9.38 (ACC-923).
90. Ibid.
91. Ibid.
92. The A.B. Patrika, 21 September 1938.
Massive arrests of the Prajamandal activists were undertaken. The office bearers of Prajamandal sneaked into Cuttack to avoid arrest. Harmohan Patnaik was arrested in Cuttack on the strength of a warrant issued by the state. So also, Brajakishore Dhal. The whole of Dhenkanal interior was mercilessly swooped. Men, women and children were looted and assaulted indiscriminately. The house of Subahu Singh in Parjang was razed to the ground. Subahu Singh braved the State police by staying in Parjang. The state deployed elephants and horses and, apart from police local goons in its effort to terrorise the people. Even images of deities were broken and Bhagabat texts burnt as people used to take oaths of loyalty to Prajamandal in the temples. In contrast, the State authorities forced people to accept a ticket swearing loyalty to the ruler to qualify for state's pardon and to avoid torture. The stronghold of the Prajamandal, Parjang biso was the first victim of the state's terror followed by Bhuban, the biggest village of the state. In the face of merciless repression, inflicted on Parjang biso by the State-British troops' combine, the idea of hijrat (mass exodus) caught people's imagination - an idea also endorsed by the Prajamandal. Five bisos out of 24 were completely evacuated. People left the villages along with their cattle to the bordering Zamindaries of Sukinda, Madhupur, Chausathipara, Jenapur, Darpan - all in the British Orissa on territory. As observed earlier, these were the pockets which also experienced massive

95. HPD, Dhenkanal State Gazette, 20 Sept. 1938 (ACC-946).
97. National Front, Vol.I, No.35, 16.10.38. However, the Prajamandal later on dropped the idea and called for mass mobilisation to fight against the State repression.
peasant mobilisation against the Zamindars' oppression around the same time under Phani Pal and other radical Congress leaders. The concern for the state's subjects was an usual theme harped upon in the kisan meetings organised in these areas. The feeling of fraternity shown for the refugees of Dhenkanal in these pockets was widespread, and refugees were accommodated practically in every home. Besides, refugees also escaped to Anugul and lived there in self-built camps. The exodus was in a sense partly a response to the helplessness against massive repression by the state and equally, an expression of the popular determination to stay outside the state till their wrongs got righted.

However, the Prajamandal called off the idea of exodus on 1 October, and instead thought of offering Satya-agraha in the state. It instructed people to return to their homes. The practical difficulties associated with exodus and staying in camps as well as loss of property and fear of police back home had no doubt, dampened popular enthusiasm to a certain degree. But, this was compensated, to some extent, by the conducting of mass meetings and effective organisation of volunteer and refugee camps beyond the state borders. The Congress leadership mostly socialist and communist, young volunteers did an immense job for refugees and tried to keep the morale of the people high. The repression was however, stepped up during the whole of October, Bhuban, considered to be the "citadel of revolutionaries" from the beginning, became the target of

99. Ibid.
100. Ibid., and B.S. Das (Publisher), op. cit., pp.9-13.
101. The New Orissa, 16.10.38.
It mentions, how people on several occasions had threatened and assaulted state police, forest officials, and refers to the incidents of 19 August, 12 September, etc.
a raid on 10 October with a view to arrest the activists. About 8 people were arrested from the village but as usual, the arrested were followed by big crowds to the police station, demanding their release. This gave the pretext for police firing killing one, while another died on the way to the hospital.\textsuperscript{102} This was followed by another firing at Nilakanthapur, 2 miles away from Bhuban and the place of a ferry ghat. The people had gathered there when the news of the firing at Bhuban spread.\textsuperscript{103} The police party from Bhuban reached the ferry ghat with the arrested persons to cross the river through the boats. But private boats were refused to the police. Thus ensued a conflict, and the police used force to take the boats. This resulted in a firing. Four persons died on the spot including a boy of 12 years of age, and two more died in the hospital.\textsuperscript{104} The boy was Baji Rout, who became the symbol of Dhenkanal struggle and the sacrifice of the state people. The 6 dead bodies were carried to Cuttack via Jenapur in the train. People instantly collected Rs.150/- for the transportation of the bodies in the train. The dead bodies which reached Cuttack in the night were taken out in a procession placed on a bullock cart, and marched through the streets of Cuttack. People paid respect to the departed souls and it was the Brahmin Kisan activists who held the dead bodies along with included two Harijans.\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{102} AICC Papers, F.No.G-35/1938.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{105} HPD, State Peoples meeting a Jenapur, 25.10.38 (ACC-1002).
The repression continued till November with police firing taking place in Hindol road (17 October), Tumusingha (21 October), Kutumunda (2 November) and Kandar Singha (11 November). The virtual reign of terror in Dhenkanal attracted widespread popular attention in Orissa. We come across popular literature on this issue written to enlist support for the people of Dhenkanal from different parts of Orissa. This is evident from two manuscripts available in the period. *Dhenkanal Guli Fayer Ra Dukha Kahani (The sad story of Dhenkanal shooting)* and *Dhenkanal Ra Daman Lila (The Repression in Dhenkanal)*, written by one Muslim of Cuttack named Hamid, contained moving poems which detailed the developments in Dhenkanal leading to the firing of 13 September and its aftermath. The former poem described how everybody had been bravely and non-violently resisting the oppressive Ruler of Dhenkanal starting from students, who boycotted schools and shouted slogans of "Inquilab Zindabad", to top leaders like Malati Choudhury and Bhagabati Panigrahi (the Communist, described as the rising sun of Orissa). It also described the moving welcome given to the leaders who got released from jail by the people through erecting gates in the town.

The book interestingly contained another poem under the a title: *The communique of Raj Durbar* (translated) which offered a mock narrative of the incident from the Ruler's standpoint. The third poem titled, *Dhenkanalara Damana Lila* (the orgies of oppression


107. The poem "Dhenkanal Guli Fayer Ra Dukha Kahani (Sad story of Dhenkanal Shooting)" proceeds as follows: "They (people) cried aloud "Hari Bola" (God is Gracious) and stood firmly and courageously, oh brothers! demanding the release of the leaders.... On 12th night, the political prisoners were suddenly released from the jail unconditionally. Oh brothers! the people placed pitches full of water in front of their houses... erected gates shouted 'Haribol' and 'Uluulu' (a typical Oriya gesture made through tongue during pujas) wishing the leaders well... to show respect to their leaders...."
in Dhenkanal) vividly referred to the increasing state violence perpetrated on the subjects and the untold misery brought to the people. It also described how people left the villages for Jenapur, Sukinda (in British Orissa) or for the jungles.108 This book contains another poem, titled The white soldiers have returned (translated), which pointed to the violence looming large in the state with the conflicting cries of "kill/catch" of one end and "Oh! mother/Oh! brothers" on the other, appealed to carry out the orders of Prajamandal and remain firmly non-violent against any sort of provocation.109 The poem remained fairly optimistic about the success of the popular struggle. The books, printed in a Muslim owned Kohinoor Press, Cuttack ran into at least two editions by October 1938 indicating the popularity of such literature.110

Clearly, the objective of police firing was to marginalise the Prajamandal activities through an extreme

108. For instance, it reads:
"The subjects fear for their own lives and may have fled away leaving their hearth and home. Some people could not find ways and are hiding in jungles out of fear without any food....
Thousands have fled to Jenapur, Angul and Sukinda in their anxiety - they have been given shelter there; women in advanced stage of pregnancy gave birth to children out of fear, in the jungles...."

109. "The white soldiers have returned". The poem reads as followed:
"Somebody says 'Oh Mother! come out....
Let us take shelter in the jungles. Somebody says 'Oh brothers!' Let them beat us as much as they can, we should bear everything peacefully. Let them kill us with bullets....
We should bear everything remembering God....
It is the order of Prajamandal to obey it bravely....
Our sorrows and sufferings would certainly be removed....
The writer himself being a Muslim goes on to add:
Though the Raja was a Hindu, the image of Kanaka Durga was broken, Oh brothers! what an infamous thing it is for the country:
The Jaban (Musalman) Kala Pahar had broken images of God/Goddesses the Raja did the same thing, though he was a Hindu.
Taimur, Nasiruddin plundered the territories of other countries to take care of their own kingdom but the Raja plundered his own country".

110. The Desakatha, 12/17.10.38.
Joose of terror. The villagers during the raids in these rural pockets, were forced to sign the loyalty tickets. We come across evidence of dacoity committed by the villagers (mostly Panas, the low castes) of Kurumunda, (a strong hold of Prajamandal) in Kaisa village to arrange funds for Prajamandal, which ultimately provoked action against them by the State police of Dhekanal and Talcher, killing a few. However the villagers, both Panas and non-Pana of Kurumunda, resisted police presence in the villages - thereby signalling unity of high and low castes against police repression. At the other level, it implied, popular support for the "dacoits".

**ORGANISATION OF SATYAGRAHA**

The decision of Prajamandal to give up the call for mass exodus and substitute it with the method of Satyagraha vis-a-vis state repression around October was an exercise at sustaining popular enthusiasm. The Prajamandal accordingly, emphasised the building of volunteer corps in every village to carry on Satyagraha. Besides, as usual, the call to boycott state police, officials, and forest guards and to defy government orders at the cost of inviting repression as also to organise meetings in the villages against prohibitory orders and to contribute towards Prajamandal's fund as per personal capacity were stressed to make the satyagraha a success.

The Gandhian principles of non-violence, anti-untouchability, and village reconstruction formed part of


113. *Ranaveri* (Prajamandal Leaflet), No.4, undated; and *HPD*, 12.10.38.
the moral training of volunteers, apart from physical exercise. The volunteers marched to the villages, singing revolutionary songs, carrying lathis and observing the blowing of conch and trumpet as indication of a call for action or discussion by fellow comrades.\textsuperscript{114} Incidentally the boy-scouts of the state became leading volunteers of the Prajamandal. The top leadership of the movement offered instructions to the people by smuggling pamphlets which explained the course of action to be followed and the preparations made by the people. These were, of course promptly banned.\textsuperscript{115} One such pamphlet was Ranaveri, edited and published by the socialist leadership. The Ranaveri called for opening up Prajamandal branches in every village, appointment of commanders to steer Satyagraha by providing necessary directions, establishment of volunteer camp at every biso and village. Further it instructed the volunteers to rush to any part of the state to brave the police to enhance the morale of the people.\textsuperscript{116}

But, the state came down heavily on Satyagrahis who proceeded to offer Satyagraha in batches consisting of 10 to 20 volunteers. For example, on 2 October at village Kualao, villagers had assembled for a meeting in response to a call given by the satyagrahis.\textsuperscript{117} But immediately, police party surrounded the village and forced people to enter and stand in the tank in waist deep water, besides, looting property and dishonouring womenfolk. To meet this kind of

\textsuperscript{114} B.K. Dhal, op. cit., p.120.

\textsuperscript{115} For instance, The Krushak, the socialist weekly, which championed the cause of Dhenkanal movement, was banned by the authorities on 20 September 1938, (HPD. Dhenkanal State Gazette, 20.9.38).

\textsuperscript{116} Ranaveri, (No.6) undated.

It also asked people (a) to boycott the state officials, (b) to court arrest without protest, (c) to enroll at least 500 volunteers in every biso camp. Further, it instructed the commander to proclaim his successor in case he got arrested.

\textsuperscript{117} AICC Papers, F.No.G-35/1938.
eventuality, the volunteers afterwards took up the responsibility of protecting women and children or sent them to adjacent forests to take shelter in temporary leaf huts built for the purpose. But the very nature of repression often made the satyagrahis question the viability of non-violence as a method.118

A meeting held in Jadupur119 (near Jenapur; 25 October) under the Presidentship of Kulamani Acharya (Kisan Sabha leader of Chausathipara fame) declared the objective of such meetings was to warn the people to prepare themselves to pay such heavy prices (like death of Baji Rout) in future for the sake of independence. Addressing the gathering, Naba Krushna Choudhury "Secretary, Cuttack DCC and not as a socialist" that Congress fully supported the case of Prajamandal while branding those who preached that Congress had no connection with Prajamandals as the "underhand policy of traitors". He pointed out that unless there were responsible Governments in the states they would not be in a position to join the Congress movement. He quoted Gandhi, Nehru and Bose to support this line of thinking. He explained that though there were signs of violence at the outset in Dhenkanal, "people were quite peaceful throughout the struggle" for which they had drawn global attention. He referred to Nehru's personal wish to lead the struggle in Dhenkanal. Sarangadhar Das who also spoke maintained that "in America, Spain and China when there were such fights for freedom, the wives, mothers and sisters of the soldiers used to send their relations to the war cheerfully... freedom requires sacrifices. These 12 martyrs had proved this fact and had also warned the rest to be ready for such sacrifices

118. Ibid.

119. HPD, State Peoples meeting at Jadupur, Cuttack, 25.10.38 (ACC-1002).
in the future struggle in case the scheme of federation get imposed". Phani Pal, the leading kisan leader (who had earned a mass appeal around this time as a peasant leader) held both Dhenkanal ruler and political Agent responsible for the oppressions and forcefully advised the audience to remain firm in their belief with non-violence. He also argued that the atrocities in Dhenkanal had been the result of a mutual understanding between British imperialism and the Ruler.

The Cuttack DCC under the leadership of Naba Krushna Choudhury, supported by Sarangadhar Das Malati Choudhury (Secretary, Krishak Sangha), Biswanath Pasayat (Secretary, Students Federation), Bhagabati Panigrahi (Secretary, Congress Socialist Party) gave a call to observe "All Utkal Garjat Day" on 29 October. Massive propaganda was taken up to make the day a success. Many pamphlets were distributed,120 issued jointly and separately by the leaders which pointed out the objective of the day was to extend support to the cause of Dhenkanal people in their resistance against oppression and provide them courage. It specifically appealed to peasants, labourers, cart pullers, rickshaw pullers, shop keepers, traders, ordinary citizens and students to observe Hartal on the day by suspending work and boycotting schools, colleges and instead to attend processions and meetings so as to create strong public opinion in favour of Dhenkanal people. Besides, it appealed to the people to contribute generously for the Dhenkanal fund. The call evoked a massive response with shops closed down and business suspended. People marched in the Cuttack streets, carrying Congress flags, shouting slogans and singing songs depicting oppression in Dhenkanal. A public

120. Oriya pamphlet titled Garjat Divas, "All Utkal Garjat Day" issued by Cuttack DCC, Congress Socialists, Students Federation, etc., Undated, Cuttack (Narayan Press).
meeting was organised in the evening at Cuttack Town Hall. The speakers who included Prananath Patnaik (MLA), Sarangadhar Das, Naba Krushna Choudhury, and Shyamsunder Misra (Servants of India Society).

The overall thrust of the speeches by the leadership was to boost the morale of the people of Dhenkanal. There was distinctly a clear effort to locate imperialism as the source of oppression in Dhenkanal along with the Ruler, thereby whipping up anti-imperialist orientation of the movement. The left leadership within PCC criticised the rightists who were not-so-open in their support to the Dhenkanal movement. As seen in the texts of the speeches, the left characterised those Congressmen opposing the movement as traitors. Even Mahatab was criticised for his efforts at exploring a compromise with the Ruler, and he was not at least successful in Dhenkanal precisely due to the stubborn stance of the Prajamandal. The role of the conservative newspapers like 'the Desakatha' and the Lokmata were roundly condemned in mass meetings for their pro-Ruler attitude.

Apart from repression the state also, simultaneously, followed a policy of conciliation in terms of announcing certain concessions to the people. It also made several attempts to organise meetings and use force to make people attend such meetings but with little success as Prajamandal had ordered to boycott such meetings. On the occasion of

121. HPD, Proceedings of Meeting at Cuttack Town Hall, 29.10.38 (ACC-1005).

122. HPD, OPAI, 5.12.38, No.44 (ACC-923).

123. HPD, Proceedings of Meeting at Cuttack Town Hall, 29.10.38 (acc-1005).

Ruler's birthday on 31 October, the Ruler granted certain concessions, but the main issues like recognition of the Prajamandal and the grant of civil liberties and responsible government were not addressed to. Around November, a pamphlet titled *Dhenkanal calls for help* was released by Prajamandal which highlighted the repression on the state subjects and appealed to the Congress leadership of different ideological persuasions to support the Dhenkanal struggle with a view to making it another Rajkot. In this context, when popular enthusiasm for the movement seemed to peter out in the face of repression through martial law and terror, the left leadership in the Congress thought of joining the state people in the satyagraha around November. The objective was to demonstrate to the suffering people of the state that leadership from above was with the people in their struggle and that Prajamandal still backed them, so that movement did not lose its momentum. Around this time also, Sachi Routrai, the youthful student communist, wrote a poem titled "The banner of those that have lost their all is unfurled" (*Sarbaharara Ude Nishan*) wherein he referred to the developments in Dhenkanal and forcefully pleaded for a violent revolution against the

125. The concessions, broadly economic in nature, granted reduction of cess from Rs.0.2.6 to 0.2.0, abolition of betel-leaf monopoly, right to kill wild animals damaging crops, opening of reserved forests for fuel and release of a few prisoners. However, the Ruler pointed out that the concessions would be liable to be cancelled unless people gave up agitation within a month.


The pamphlet read as follows: "Comrades, citizen, congressmen - organise demonstration everywhere. Declare support to the people of Dhenkanal. Demand withdrawal of British troops condemn the reign of terror. At every demonstration, collect funds and enrol volunteers, pour money and volunteers into Dhenkanal. Make Dhenkanal another Rajkot. This points to the Prajamandal's attempt at organising the movement with outside help and ostensibly calling for assistance from nationalist leadership of Orissa Province."

Raja-imperialism nexus. He wrote:128

"Light the fire of revolution, march on; labourer, coolies and kisans... see how the Raja and the government have combined and are hunting human beings; The butcher is throttling men, Hold fast your weapon. Destroy foreign rule. That is at the root of all exploitation... Break the prison of the person who broke your backbone with bayonet... who keeps your brothers behind iron bars. Dance today in the orgy of blood. Death will bring you deliverance... the bondage of slavery round your neck would be torn.... Hark! Baji is sound the bugle.... Mata, Hrushi, Guri (who all died in firing in Dhenkanal) are calling you.... You, Red soldiers, march forward with the speed of cyclone.... You Red soldiers, unfurl your banners. Establish the reign of labourers in the world, That is your Konark, that is your Taj".

The left leadership within PCC was fully committed to the cause of Dhenkanal and it decided to offer Satyagraha around December. The exercise was primarily meant to send positive signal to the people in Dhenkanal that the leadership fully backed them at every step. Accordingly, Naba Krushna Choudhury resigned his Assembly seat in the face of mounting pressure by "influential congressmen" to desist from him Dhenkanal programme.

On 3rd December, Nabakrushna Choudhury, Bhagabati Panigrahi and Gourang Charan Das approached Dhenkanal state from 3 different directions. Nabakrushna entered from Nuahat Camp (Angul). Bhagabati from Budhapanka camp and Gouranga Charana entered from Jenapur side.129 These leaders were given a warm send off by the fellow comrades at Cuttack railway station on 2 and 3 December and many college students joined the see-off the leaders amidst great cheering. A meeting organised to extend a send off to the 1st batch of Satyagrahis under the leadership of Naba Choudhury was organised in Cuttack Town Hall130 on 2 December evening. Speaking on the occasion, Prananath Patnaik (MLA) pained out that Satyagraha at the stage was necessary to combat the federation scheme and warned British Government of their taking to no-rent and no-tax campaign in case non-violent Satyagraha failed to move the British authorities. So also,

128. The Krushak, 3.12.38.
129. HPD, OPAI, 5.12.38, No.44 (ACC-923).
130. HPD, Meeting at Town Hall, Cuttack, 2.12.38 (ACC-1031).
on 2 December evening, a Dhenkanal Satyagraha meeting was organised at Budhapanka Camp131 (Angul P.S.). Bhagabati Panigrahi had reached the camp to offer Satyagraha in the state on 3 December. Girija Bhusan Dutta who presided over the meeting explained that the objective of the Satyagraha by the Socialist leadership was to protest against the oppressions meted out to the people in Dhenkanal.

However, in their attempt to offer Satyagraha, the three leaders, Choudhury, Panigrahi and Das were arrested immediately on 4 December.132 But the state authorities immediately released the top-leadership and the Satyagrahis from other states while not releasing those of Dhenkanal state. The state police behaved decently with the more prominent leaders like Panigrahi and Choudhury, while torturing the less prominent. For example, Gouranga Ch. Das was mercilessly beaten. Anant Patnaik (the student socialist) who had gone to Bhuban to distribute a donation of Rs.500/- given by Bombay Socialists was kidnapped by the state police at Kabatbandh and severely beaten.133 Socialists from different districts as well as other states came forward to offer Satyagraha. For instance, Gokul Mohan Ray Churamani planned to lead a batch of Satyagrahi to Dhenkanal from Banki side (Gholpur Satyagraha camp site). So also Prananath Patnaik, Sadhu Charan Mohanty from Khurda, Laxmi Narayan Mishra and Bhagirathi Parichha from Sambalpur reached Budhapank camp with volunteers which included

132. HPD Spl Branch Report on Dhenkanal affairs, 7.12.38
women; Ganjam D.C.C. also sent out a contingent. Mohan Das planned to send a batch of volunteers from Gop Kakatpur areas of Puri as also Kailash Chandra Mohanty of Nilagiri state promised to send men and money and satyagrahis to Dhenkanal. Prananath Patnaik (MLA) wrote to Patel to allow him to participate in Satyagraha and enrolled Satyagrahis from the Khurda area. In fact Giridhari Panda, (Secretary, Balsore Students Federation) led 6 volunteers from Nilagiri to Dhenkanal. With the arrest of first batches of Satyagrahis the vacuum was immediately filled up by further batches. For example, Braja Mohan Patnaik, the second dictator of the Dhenkanal Praja Mandal, left for the interior of Dhenkanal on 5 December leading another batch, followed by another batch on 6 December under Debraj Berma. For such meticulous organisation of these satyagrahas Sarangadhar Das stayed back in Cuttack. The above developments suggest that there was an allout effort to enlist volunteers from all parts of Orissa Province. Even after release, the top leadership again planned to offer Satyagraha. For instance, Naba Krushna Choudhury resented the preferential treatment meted out to the satyagrahis in terms of releasing the top leadership and non-Dhenkanal satyagrahis and detaining the satyagrahis belonging to Dhenkanal, and planned to again lead satyagrahis to Dhenkanal.

It is also interesting to note that it was mostly students and youth who actively participated in the organisation of satyagraha. Baidyanath Rath (Law student), Rabi

134. Ibid.

135. Ibid.

Ghosh, Motilal Tripathy (Medical students), Sachi Routrai, Anant Patnaik, Nilamani Routrai (B.A. students of Ravenshaw College), Biswanath Pasayat (Secretary, Utkal Students Federation) performed a substantial role in such organisation. The students like Rabi Ghose, Sudhir Ghose, Srikant Rout, Ananta Patnaik, Baidyanath Rath, Sachi Routrai, etc., involved themselves in the maintenance and organisation of volunteers and refugees camps placed along side the borders of the state.138

Interestingly, Naba Krushna Choudhury were seriously contemplating the stepping up of satyagraha activity in Dhenkanal defying Gandhian instruction.139 In any case, training camps were opened in British Orissa to train the workers of Dhenkanal.140

In the face of massive efforts undertaken by the leadership in the conduct of Satyagraha, the Dhenkanal Ruler employed one S.P. Sharma (the correspondent of 'Hindu' 'Hindustan Times' and Indian Nation) as an advisor to suggest a scheme of constitutional reform for the state.141 In this situation, the Ruler talked in terms of association of Prajamandal in the administration of the state, but his announcement was rejected by the Prajamandal who insisted on real control over administration.142 However, this indicated that the Ruler was increasingly feeling the heat of the Prajamandal's pressure. However, the murder of Bazellgette in Ranpur also inspired the Ruler to heighten repression

138. Ibid.
140. The Statesman, 22.12.38.
141. Ibid. Mr. Sharma advised the Ruler to set up a committee to enquire into the alleged police excesses etc.
against his subjects. So also, responding to the development, OSPC decided against any mass action in the states. However the popular agitation finally reaped dividends by June when under pressure, the Ruler announced certain concessions with a view to democratise the administration. These measures, of course, failed to fully satisfy the Prajamandal leadership.

**ORGANISATION OF VOLUNTEER AND REFUGEE CAMPS**

It is important to look into the organisation and affairs of the volunteers and refugee camps which sprang up beyond the border of Dhenkanal state following massive repression of the state on its subjects. The volunteer camps were referred to as Congress camps by the people. One such important camp site was Budhapank in Angul. The SDO's (Anugul) report about the Budhapank camp in June, 1939 makes interesting reading. We quote a substantial portion of the text here:

"Budhapank Camp consists of a refugee camp known as 'Hizrat' (exodus) and volunteer camp. They are at a distance of a quarter mile from each other. The volunteers along with their leaders stay in volunteers camp whereas others remain in the hizrat camp. There are actually at present about 80 to 100 refugees in the hizrat camp and about 20 volunteers in the volunteers camp though they are exaggerating their number. They all belong to Dhenkanal state and are now under the guidance of Netrananda Naik of Damalu in Dhenkanal state who is known as their leader. There are about 30 huts in the hizrat camp whereas the volunteers camp consists of house with compound fencing. The volunteers have taken to spinning and attend to prayers and take drill exercise under the command of Netrananda Naik in the volunteers camp. The refugees are maintaining themselves by bringing food stuffs from inside the state. The leaders and the people there intend to stay out as at present till the Durbar releases their political leaders already arrested and withdraws the extraction warrants issued against some of the leaders. They also say that they want the abolition of miscellaneous cess of annas 2/- and in the long run to have self-Government. Police officers are not freely allowed to visit the volunteers camp at any and every time at the instance of Malati Choudhry. It seems that they probably avoid the visit of persons of importance particularly persons in authority including police officers as two of their

143. *HPD*, Ruler's declaration, 26.4.39. This promised Panchayats at village level, Praja Sabha at Tahasil level, a 'Praja Parishad', a representative body, at the top among other things.

144. The *A.B. Patrika*, 5 July 1939.


important leaders Maheshwar Subahu Singh and Srikanta Raut against whom extradition warrants are pending for execution often come to their camp for consultation. They hold meetings and issue pamphlets for distributions inside the state. Pamphlets are meant to encourage people not to be afraid of Durbar. Some of them go inside the state in night to bring their food stuffs as also ask people who express their unwillingness to stay in the state to come out and stay with them.

The Budhapank Camp which was organised in October in the wake of Dhenkanal firing started functioning under the overall leadership of Socialists and Communists. Rabi Ghosh (the student socialist) was in fact, managing the affairs of the camp and after his arrest in March 1939, Malati Choudhury took over. Besides, Bhagabati Panigrahi and Naba Krushna were the other organisers of the camp. To keep up the morale of the volunteers and refugees high the volunteers used to regularly pray and sing national songs in the morning and evening under the Congress flag. A placard prohibiting the entry of outsiders without permission was posted outside the camp - apparently to keep off state officials and police. Drills, parades and classes, and lessons on Satyagraha were regularly held in the camp to send 'graduates' into the state for mobilisation. The ideology of socialism and communism were sought to be imparted by the leadership to the cadres in the camp. At least, this is suggested from the kinds of songs composed and sung by the volunteers daily while doing parades and exercises. We come across few hand written pamphlets containing poems composed essentially from a socialist and communist perspec-

147. HPD, S.P. Report, 12.5.39 (ACC-1226); and HPD, S.D.O. to D.C. Anugul, 15.11.38 (ACC-931).

The centre as per certain official observations, seemed to be a communist training centre. However, leaders like Naba Krushna Choudhury, Girija Bhusan Dutta (MLA, Anugul), Bhagabati Ch. Panigrahi (with his experience of Bombay summer school of politics, a communist outfit) and a host of student leaders and Congress activists like Phani Pal, Ananta Patnaik, Sudhir Bose, Raghunath Mohanty, Biswanath Pasait were ideologically involved in the making of the centre.


149. HPD, S.P. Report, 12.5.39 (ACC-1226).
tive. The poems were equally intended to inflame the sagging morale of the fighting subjects.

Poem (1): Wake up the exploited brothers of Dhenkanal... fight for your rights, our blood is not so frozen, but it is like the stream of hot oil... definitely destroy the oppression of Dhenkanal. Our weapon will be 'truth and peace', our object will be freedom... courage is our armament... we built the building of 'Jatannagar' (Palace of Dhenkanal Ruler) breaking hard rocks.... Remember the oppressions of past, ...rise with firm fists. The age of peasants and labourers has come: raise up your weapons.

Poem (2): Sing the song of victory of Dhenkanal.... March forward to join the peaceful fight (Chorus) 'Bethi' has reduced us to skeleton... still we have taken vow to bring light to the 'dark kingdom'. We are not afraid of death.... Let the swords of the state be coloured in our blood but we will upset the bondage of slavery.

Poem (3): March forward, Oh! labourer, unfurling your banners and blowing bugles; one who has be-friend death is certain to win.... We the Majdurs (labourers) are Bahadurs (heroes).... We would build a new world. We would form Government/Society and establish socialism.

Poem (4): Ame Manishara Yuga Anibu (composed on 29 October 1938)
We will bring about the age of man. Kill as many as you like to-day; will one who dies every day by bethi and begar fear to die one day? (chorus).... One who would have died like insect will die to-day like a hero we have given our tears. We are prepared now to give our blood.... Our fear is your greatest weapon.... Four soldiers are maintained at the cost of our wealth.... Don't belittle this dry skin.... It is like the blacksmiths anvil on which iron is melted.... Have you thought of suppressing by show of arms, the race of which Baji - a boy in the cradle gave up his play in the dust and died in the face of bullets. Awake! lifeless awake, shake off fear... crores of fists are being raised up to-day.... Peasants/labourers have awakened. They will bring about the age of man.

Poem (5): Sharpen your weapons with your blood against the kingdoms/Rulers which you set up by the sweat of your blow; Come 'Lakshman' come 'Nata', 'Raghu' and 'Gouri'... blow the trumpet of death (invoking the people who died in the firing).... The 12 year Baji is not dead.... He built a temple bigger than Konark.... Where is fear (Repeat). Baji has personally declared to the world that "there is no Raja".... Hundreds are dying daily of disease, starvation, flood, Oh! the slaves of death; speak how many died here to build history? Keep aside Judgement, reason, learning, morality and your arguments before the Savage who is ruling. Wake up and die for the country".

Poem (6): Awana: The Call (22 October)
Oh! Dhenkanal don't give up your hope, life is mortal, don't be afraid of death. Don't die like flies but heroes. Never give up the hope of victory out of regret for to-day's defeat. Today is the day of battle of the destitute and the uncivilised! Fight for your rights and die for the country. After the death of the evil spirit, the good will appear cheerfully".

Poem (7): We will bring about red morning dispelling dark night. Let the earth, sky and the exploiters tremble. Let the strength of equality be established on earth.

Poem (8): Come, Ye, Swaraj soldiers! come to the people of Dhenkanal: We will destroy the rule of English; destroy oppression. Rich/merchants have become powerful, men hunt down men.... The blind durbar has lost its wisdom, in anger its strength is failing.... The achievement of the last few days has set the exploiters thinking.... (His) blood has turned into water, Victory to the peasants and labourers.

These songs read together, suggest that they were essentially inflammatory in nature and dotted with references not only to the Dhenkanal Ruler but were filled with a deep spirit of anti-imperialism. The optimism expressed in

the poems in terms of achievement of Swaraj, and establishment of peasant/workers raj was basically to enthuse the people to keep up the fight against the Dhenkanal rule.

The meticulous organisation and building-up of the cadres by the left leadership in the camp was really momentous. It is in fact, the volunteers in Budhapank camp who organised the refugee camp around March 1939, induced people from the state to come over to the camp in the British Indian territory to avoid any possible repression. Under the guidance of Rabi Ghosh who had taken charge of the camp before Malati Choudhury (who assumed the charge only in March 1939), a lithographed Oriya pamphlet called Husihar (Beware) was published regularly.151 Such pamphlets were carried to Dhenkanal state secretly and distributed there by the volunteers of the camp to induce state people to leave the state for the camp site. Besides, the pamphlet spelt its objective as providing true news to the people of Dhenkanal in the context of Dhenkanal Durbar's attempt to deprive the people of their right to read newspapers by banning the entry of Krushak and the Samaj.152 The pamphlet regularly published from the camp, focused on the developments in different states including Rajkot, Jaipur, Mysore, Hyderabad, Talcher, etc. It also contained a special regular column which referred to the developments in Dhenkanal state contributed by Maheswar Subahu Singh, the Vice-President of Dhenkanal Prajamandal, who had been evading arrest by the state authorities. Besides, it also contained information about All India States Conference, the Congress, etc.

The Subahu Singh's regular column on Dhenkanal was an exercise at encouraging the people of Dhenkanal in their struggle against Ruler's tyranny. For example, in one of the

151. HPD, OPAI, No.9, 10,9.2.39/13.3.39 (ACC-1187).
152. Hushiar (Pamphlets), 25.2.39, 3.3.39, 24.3.39.
columns, he warned

"if we are misled to-day by Raja's cajoling, then know it for certain that you and your next generation will rot under oppression... on this Dola Purnima day, resolve like Prahlad that you will carry on the agitation through justice and non-violence, despite oppression." 153

Under the overall leadership of Rabi Ghose and Malati Choudhury, the volunteers as well as the refugees had really inculcated a strong sense of resistance and defiance to the Dhenkanal administration and its Ruler. This is evident from the report of Major Hannessey, (the Assistant Political Agent, Orissa states) who undertook visits to few refugee camps of Talcher and Dhenkanal in a bid to resolve the deadlock arising out of refugee problems through negotiations between the Ruler and the people. He visited the Budhapank camp on 10 March, 1939 and made the following observation on his visit,154

"from a careful study of the conditions and people there, I am confident that if action is not taken in the very near future to close down Budhapank camp and their administrative headquarters, and to arrest or Budhapank camp and their administrative headquarters, it will become the nucleus of a dangerous revolutionary centre, as the Bengal movement started in a similar way a few years ago. Except on the occasions of open mob violence, I have not witnessed yesterday in Budhapank".

His visit to the camp was marked with a hostile feeling shown by the inmates of the camp with "leaders remaining aggressive and insolent from beginning to end, refusing to discuss matters with him". The inmates pointed out that Major Bazalegette (who was killed in Ranpur) was dead and "now" the Raja of Dhenkanal, and Major Hennesy the political Agent must also "go" and that they would soon have full civil liberties, and self Government.

In fact, the training imparted by Rabi Ghose, had made the inmates "hot headed and to have a defying attitude". The arrest of Rabi Ghose on 22 March, 1939 and his subse-

153. The Hushiar, 3.3.39 (ACC-1187). Also see ibid., 25.2.39 and 24.3.39 (ACC-1187).

quent imprisonment in Dhenkanal had its repercussion in terms of slowing down the movement of the people from the Dhenkanal to refugee camps. The state police often cracked down on the camp to search the wanted leaders like Subahu Singh and Srikanta, who evaded arrest but the inmates bravely faced the search in the camp without any fear and they would not allow the leaders to be arrested. Such police raids on the camps were also seriously resented and petitions were drafted to the Congress Ministry highlighting the police excesses committed on them. Prof. N.G. Ranga visited this camp (12 January 1939) followed by Miss Agatha Harrison (29 January 1939); and such visits boosted the morale of the people who detailed to such leaders their agonies and tales of police brutality. The leadership and activities of Rabi Ghose were deeply appreciated by Miss Harrison. Expressing serious concern about the Dhenkanal and Talcher refugee camp, Prof. Ranga suggested the formation of a 'State Refugee Relief Fund' to provide for the necessities of the refugees. He pleaded for the active intervention and assistance of the Congress to defuse the crisis. He also warned against any attempt to abandon the refugees just because of the Ranpur incident (the killing of Bazellgette) and argued in favour of Congress Ministry providing police protection to the refugees against harassment by the state officials who entered the camps.

Efforts were undertaken to open new branches of refugee

156. HPD, Petition to P.M. Orissa by the refugees 17.8.39 (ACC-1709).
157. HPD, OPAI, No.21.36/Dt.27.1.39/7.2.39 (ACC-1226).
158. HPD, OPAI, No.2/23.1.39 (ACC-1226).

Prof. Ranga maintained: "Such an isolated tragedy like Ranpur ought not to be allowed to result in the stoppel of a legitimate non-violent struggle by the people in the Orissa states especially when these people have so bravely abandoned all their worldly possessions and left their homes in order to free themselves from oppression."
camps for Dhenkanal tenants at Nuahat, Haripur (near Sukinda), Tangi, Pandubharania. Some people even thought in terms of converting the camps at certain places into permanent settlements.\textsuperscript{159} The establishment and continuance of refugees camps, the training imparted there, the impact of peasant movement in the adjacent Zamindaris of British Orissa, and the sympathy expressed for their cause by the leadership emboldened the peasants of Dhenkanal to a considerable extent in spite of the repression carried out by the state. The Dhenkanal refugees who stayed in Sukinda carried back with them the ideas and inspiration of peasant activities with them when they returned to Dhenkanal. For instance, few tenants of Arilajhar village (Bhuban area) cut trees from the Gunduchipasi forest (along the Dhenkanal-Sukinda border). When they were arrested by the Sukinda forest guard, they argued that the forest belonged to Dhenkanal state which in fact had the jurisdiction over the Sukinda estate. This was also followed by an attack of few more tenants on the forest guards killing one forest guard in a bid to release the arrested people.\textsuperscript{160} In this connection, it is important to note that the kisan leaders of British Orissa particularly Phani Pal was active in peasant and tribal mobilisation in Sukinda which resulted in massive tree felling. He was also planning to intervene in Dhenkanal affairs and organized peasant meetings in Hatibari (a place bordering Dhenkanal) which we have noted earlier in the context of the peasant movement.

**III. TALCHER**

The Prajamandal in Talcher was provisionally organised in July 1938, when nearly 400 villagers from 92 villages

\textsuperscript{159} HPD, OPAI, No.47, 56, 83, Dt.10.2.39/22.2.39 and 13.3.39 (ACC-1226).

\textsuperscript{160} HPD, S.P. Report on Sukinda Forest Case, S.R.No.4/39, 8.2.39 (ACC-1202).
resolved to support it; and it effectively functioned from September 1938. The local leaders Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, Dasarathi Pani, Maguni Chandra Pradhan, Gouri Shankar Pradhan and Krutibasa Rath were elected as office bearers of the Praja Mandal. The local leaders Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, Dasarathi Pani, Maguni Chandra Pradhan, Gouri Shankar Pradhan and Krutibasa Rath were elected as office bearers of the Praja Mandal.161 Kosala (village on the border of Talcher) remained the headquarters of Prajamandal. Pabitra Mohan and his associates took on the task of organising people right since 1934-35 through secret organisation of peoples associations in few rural pockets like Poipal (Pabitra's village), Nadikul, Bajrakote and Deranga way back 1935. The impulse which spurred Pabitra for such efforts emanated from the influence of civil disobedience movement and his association with Congress satyagrahis as a student of Ravenshaw College.163 Besides, the influence of his

161. Talcher Prajamandal Itihasa Committee compiled, Talcher Prajamandal (Congress) ra Itihasa, Cuttack, 1950, p.12. Pabitra Mohan Pradhan (a graduate and a teacher of high school), acted as the President of Prajamandal, Maguni Pradhan (electrical engineer) and Dasarathi Pani (Lawyer) were elected as Joint Secretaries, Gourishankar Pradhan (Lawyer) assumed the charge of treasurer and Krutibas Rath became the Secretary.

162. Ibid.

Pabitra Mohan, a graduate from Ravenshaw College had joined the Talcher High School as an Asstt. Teacher. He visited the rural pockets of Talcher to speak to people and widen his contacts with the people on holidays and Sundays. He also enlisted the support of the influential people and intelligentsia of the Talcher state. Such meetings in the rural areas were intended to inspire people about the Congress movement. Newspapers were read in the meetings to mobilise public opinion. People from the other neighbouring states like Pallahara and Baram also attended such meetings organised in these centres. The meetings were usually night-long affairs. Around 1937, villages like Jarada, Kusunda, Bijigola, Damara, Handidhua, Jhulla Khuntia, Kengali, Gurujiang Kankilli, Biru, Seepur, Suleipal and Kankilli had become active centres or nationalist activities. Maguni Pradhan organised coalmine areas with Madan Pradhan taking the charge of organising khemei area. Congress leader like Girija Bhusan Dutta (Angul MLA) as well as OSPC extended considerable help and support to their activities. Angul, bordering Talcher, as usual remained the hotbed of their organisation and politics against the state in the face of state's repression.

163. Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, Muktipatha Sainika (Oriya), Vol.I, p.31. Here, Pradhan also recalls, how he was inspired by his uncle, Bankanidhi Bhaktaballabha who was jailed in 1933 by the Ruler for championing the cause of the people and was also equally a great sympathiser of Congress movement. He had also helped Pabitra to further his higher education at Cuttack. The influence of National Movement was so important on Pabitra that he thought of quitting his studies to join the movement and realised the necessity of initiating a struggle in the princely states to end the misrule of the Rulers. In fact, his uncle had set in
"nationalist uncle" on him was significant. However, his secret activities could not develop due to the massive repression of the state. The only course left open for him and others like him was to leave the state for Anugul (the bordering British district). 164 Pabitra, meanwhile, had resigned his job as a teacher of Talcher High School and come to camp in Panigola.

Panigola, which became the first rural camp was strategically placed in terms of its proximity to collieries of the state. The objective of inaugurating a camp there was to instill revolutionary ideas among the labourers, mostly hailing from the Talcher state and Anugul. Around August, labourers in one of the collieries struck work. 165 One gets a clear glimpse of the planning under the leadership of...

...Continued...

motion the process of secret organisations of people in the rural pockets of the state and imbued the people with nationalist feeling.

164. Ibid., p. 60.
Pabitra Pradhan left the state for Anugul around July, 1938.

165. A Police Report on Pabitra Pradhan observed that "he was the most intimate friend of Juba-raj of Talcher and an influential person too. As he was tired of Raja's alleged oppressions which did not spare his own family members, he strongly protested this and got in to trouble. Thus, he slipped off from Raja's palace and formed Talcher Prajamandal and became President thereof on 6.9.38 Established his headquarters at Kosala (Chhendipada P.S.) and secured some oppressed into his own with their help and after consulting some of the Congress leaders he formed his plans and had propaganda work throughout the state. By and by he got several adherents and with their help formed camps at Kosala, Kampasala, Paniola, Changuria and similar bordering villages near Anugul and managed appointing him supervisors. Maguni Pradhan, Maheswar Pradhan, Balaram Mahapatra, Bankanidhi Pradhan and Chandrasekhar Rajballav were his well-known supporters. He asked oppressed people to leave their homes and come away to British Orissa with their friends/relatives to get rid of the oppression of the Raja and his police. With the issue of extradition warrant against him, he has been concealing his presence at no fixed place, but yet looked after the Prajamandal affairs.... Thousands of people are coming away to Anugul Blaka and putting up in leaf huts because of him. None of them however is inclined to give out his whereabouts.... He has now become a renowned figure before the tenants in most and has given birth to the agitation in Talcher state now. He is an intelligent, educated and influential pro-Congress man."

This testifies to the mass appeal of Pradhan.
Pabitra for Prajamandal organisation in Talcher towards the end of August. Pabitra Pradhan, Maguni Pradhan, Dasarathi Pani and Gourishankar Pradhan used to meet regularly to discuss the organisation of Talcher Prajamandal. They were of the view that it would not be possible to follow examples of Dhenkanal and Nilagiri movements in Talcher as people there were greatly attached to the Ruler. His suggestion was to camp outside the state and get hold of all the coolies from the nearby collieries and railways which would enable them to have enough people to exhibit their strength to the villagers. Pabitra further said that since simply going to the people and asking them to join the struggle would not catch the imagination of the people in the villages, Maguni Pradhan who enjoyed a mass appeal with the coolies should try to foment a "general revolt and strike". In his view, since the Kisan Sangha and Prajamandal were against the princely states and capitalists, the Kisan Sangha would support their cause in case they succeeded in stopping the colliery works which would divest the capitalists and the Rajas of their extra income. He also suggested the breaking of forest laws cutting of trees without permit, and stopping the payment of cesses and fees which would paralyse the administration and usher in "our own Government". On certain occasions, they even threatened the police of the state, who would try to overhear their discussion on their organisation saying that "we are out to oust the Raja and bring the administration to a standstill.... We will go out of your clutches to stay in Angul to befool you".166

166. HPD, Raja Talcher to Collector, Cuttack, 12.9.38 (ACC-916).

The other local leaders associated with Pabitra Pradhan in Paniola Camp were Maguni Pradhan, Bamdeb Mishra, Srinibash Sahu and Krutibaeh Rath. These leaders while camping in Paniola (outside the state territory) retained their linkage with the state through their relatives and acquaintances who visited them and carried information and ideas from them. This helped to fuel discontent among the agricultural classes against the state.
Local Congress activists sympathised with their cause. For instance, Girija Bhusan Dutta backed a plan by the Talcher leaders to open a volunteers training camp at Anugul to send volunteers to the state for mobilisation of the people. The Talcher Prajamandal office was housed at his residence in Anugul in the beginning.\(^{167}\) Lakshminarayan Mishra, the Congress leader of Sambalpur, in a Kisan meeting at Anugul, threatened the SDO, Anugul with a transfer to Koraput because he was harassing the refugees and their leaders from Talcher who had crossed over to Anugul by pointing out that Congress Ministry disapproved of such interference.\(^{168}\) In due course, several volunteer training camps as well as refugees camps sprang up in various rural centres like Kosala, Paniola, Natada, Kamsala and the Santrabandh in quick succession beyond the border of the State and meetings were frequently organised in these centres. People from Talcher visited their leaders in these centres with food stuffs and other necessities and go back with fresh ideas and imagination.\(^{169}\)

A meeting organised in Kosala\(^ {170}\) (6 September 1938) to formally constitute Prajamandal was attended by nearly 5,000 people of Talcher and Anugul. The meeting focused on the abolition of bethi system, as well as non-payment of illegal taxes to the Talchere Raja (such as taxes on marriage, funeral ceremony, betel, bidi, kerosene and salt). The people were advised to put up a determined and united fight 'peacefully' against the oppression of state police, forest officials and the Raja. Besides, the meeting demanded the

\(^{167}\) HPD, Report of S.I. Talcher, 29 August 1938 (ACC-1195).

\(^{168}\) HPD, D.M. to Chief Secretary, 9.9.38 (ACC-916).

\(^{169}\) Ibid.

\(^{170}\) HPD, Meeting at Kosala, 6.9.38 (ACC-916).
stopping of auction sale of lands for non-payment of rent and the right to jobs and services in Talcher coal mines, as well as the right to free enjoyment of forest products. The demands for a hike in the pay of the Paika and allowing them to cultivate Jagir lands free of rent and the enforcement of Orissa Tenancy Act in the state were also stressed. The meeting also resolved to seek linkage with the OSPC. The meeting in fact represented the beginning of popular protest against the Talcher Ruler's oppression amidst shouts of Gandhi Ki Jai, Bande Matram, Victory to Talcher people and Inquilab Zindabad. When people left for Talcher, after attending the meeting, the Ruler responded by massive arrests, but here too a surging crowd (more than thousands) followed the 'arrested' and forced the Ruler to release them instantly. The people, in turn, pressed the Ruler to redress their grievances and allow them to organise meetings in the state. 171 The people also resorted to a no-tax campaign and refused to pay the hat tax. We have noted earlier in the context of the peasant movement that a no-hat tax campaign picked up around this time in Anugul. The trend came to be reflected in Banibahal (Anugul town) and Talcher hats around September 1938. The sellers in the hat refused to pay tax after being advised accordingly. The Congress activists as well as Prajamandal workers took the lead in this regard. 172 The popular enthusiasm was further heightened by the developments in Dhenkanal during this time and the impact of Jenapur Kisan Conference (1 September) was no less significant where Congress leaders expressed deep sympathy for the states people and promised assistance.

The refugees at Paniola Camp ably supported by a Con-

171. HPD, S.P. to D.M. Cuttack, 12.9.38 (ACC-916).

172. Ibid.

Gatikrishna Sahu (Koela, Chhendipada) who organised the no-tax campaign was a Congress activist. However, when Girija Bhuan Dutta asked the people in the hats to continue paying the hat tax until it was abolished by the Government, his advice was not accepted!
gress activist, Bhagaban Pradhan went to the extent of asking the inspector, Anugul to engage Choukidars for helping in the arrangement of their meeting to be held at Kosala. The meeting was planned to be held on 16 September and was to be addressed by leaders like Nabakrushna Choudhury, Mahatab, Sarangadhar Das, Malati Choudhury and Lalmohan Patnaik. They asked the Choukidars to collect fuels, leaves, rations, etc., for 150 people and not to report to the police inspector as "people pay the tax for the Choukidars and not to the police" and instructed them to remain with and assist Bhagaban for 3 days for supply and accommodation of Congress as well as other activists.173 Talcher Prajamandal released its printed charter of demands from Paniola camp in September, highlighting the right to organise popular associations and meetings, abolition of rasad, magan and bethi, modification of state tenancy and forest laws in favour of the people and the right to organise trade unions in the collieries.174 These demands were pressed before the Raja when the latter asked the Sarbarakars (village headmen) to meet and represent the grievances to him. However, upon being served the charter of demands by the Prajamandal and asked for its recognition, the Ruler responded by declaring it illegal as well as banning public meetings.175 It unleashed the usual reign of terror with arrests of innocent people and physical torture. The Ruler secured the help of the political department in terms of additional troops when its attempt to seek the Governor's intervention (in imposing Sec.4 and 5 of the Indian States Protection Act by the Congress Government of Orissa in the villages bordering Anugul to monitor and suppress the Praja-

mandal activities) failed. The Congress Ministry rejected the proposal of the Ruler. Police atrocities were stepped up. A peasant, Bika Naik (a Harijan), was killed when he refused to lift a police lorry from the mud and 5 others were injured. But such repression only helped to generate progressive popular response, with courts and offices of the Rulers being boycotted, and parallel Panchayats organised villagewise. Defying prohibitory orders, meetings under the call of Prajamandal got organised. Thus, a virtual non-cooperation movement prevailed with people refusing any illegal tax, bethi, etc. The Krushak (17 September 1938) reported:

"Temporary camp of the Prajamandal is located in Paniola in Anugul.... Despite prohibition, hundreds of people are coming to the Prajamandal office without fearing police threats.... Raja has ordered the Sarbarakars of every village to arrest the political agitators and send them to the police station.... A piece of paper in which it was written that articles covered by patta viz. Pan, Bidi, Gurakhu should not be used was affixed to a tree in Bijogole hat, when the S.I. turned it upside down, a tenant turned it up again and began to read... it was written in the patta that tenants of Talcher will not make roads by bethi.... Thinking that it is illegal people are not doing bethi and even disobeying the police."

On 16 September Kosala witnessed nearly 25,000 peasants marching on to hold a meeting. Labourers from nearby collieries also attended the meeting.

In the face of Prajamandal sponsored activities and massive popular response to them, the state swung in favour of intense police repression. The state police would conducted raids into deep interiors to sweep the Prajamandal activists. But people bravely refused to carry out the

176. LC, Governor, Orissa to Governor General, Vol.II, 19.9.38.


178. Talcher Prajamandal Itihasa Committee, op. cit., p.23. People supporting the Ruler were boycotted and declared outcastes. This is equally borne out by Pabitra Mohan Pradhan's, op. cit., p.65.

179. Ibid.; The Krushak, 17.9.38.

orders of the police either by fleeing to the nearby jungles or paddy fields by deserting the villages. However, those who could not escape had to bear the wrath in terms of being robbed, the breaking of houses, and outraging the modesty of women.\textsuperscript{181} As elsewhere, press was gagged in Talcher and the entry of the Samaja and the Krushak banned. This police torture was the reason for people moving into villages beyond the state border and even at times to Bamra and Pallahara states. Thus around November 1938, many refugee camps came to be established at the border of the state to accommodate the refugees.

SATYAGRAHA

Around October, Prajamandal decided to launch a Satyagraha in the state.\textsuperscript{182} Trained volunteers (at least 20 per batch) marched in processions shouting Prajamandal demands and Congress slogans. Paniola remained as the most important camp for training of volunteers. Volunteers were trained here to picket in the Talcher state, and equally to enlist villagers to undergo training at Paniola camp for the purpose of offering picketing in the state. The daily routine as well as the method of conduct of Satyagraha is best revealed in the following report on Paniola Camp.\textsuperscript{183}

\begin{quote}
"All the Talcher refugees get up very early in the morning. Then a whistle was given. All the volunteers gathered in the mango tope in front of their camp... When another whistle was given all the volunteers stood up in a circular form round the bamboo pole. One Krutibash Rath of Talcher state hoisted a tri-coloured flag on the bamboo pole. With another whistle, all saluted flag followed by singing of national songs... Total number of volunteers were counted and it came to 56. When asked how many of them were willing to go (to offer Satyagraha), all wanted to go. Then 20 of them were selected. They were instructed that they must go on telling the villagers not to do bethi (for) road work, not to give magan, Bajekars (miscellaneous tax) etc. They should also tell men who are willing to go as volunteers to go to Paniola. They must go up to Talcher Town by this evening. They should tell the villagers that they should not follow in a body. If they will be arrested, they should not use violence. They should be singing national songs and crying out ‘Gandhi Ki Jay’ when entering any village or getting arrested. They should not care for beating or canning rather cry out "Gandhi Ki Jay”. If they will be arrested far off from the town,"
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{181} For detailed description see, AISPC Papers, F.No.164; and The Krushak, 24 Sept. 1938.

\textsuperscript{182} National Front, Vol.I, No.35, Dt.15.10.38.

\textsuperscript{183} HPD, S.D.O. Angul to D.C. Angul, 8.10.38 (ACC-931).
they should fall down on the ground and demand a lorry for the journey up to the jail and
should not move from the place. These instructions were given by Maguni Pradhan, Dasaratih
Pani and Krutibash Ratha (leaders of Prajamandal). With another whistle, the party dis-
perssed. Again these 20 selected volunteers turned out with Gandhi caps and Khadar dress at
8.30 A.M. after taking their bath and meals. The same instructions were again given and
the party left Paniola for Talcher singing national songs and crying out Gandhi Mahatma Ki
Jay. Another 36 volunteers and about 70 other men of Talcher are still at Paniola....
They are having drills regularly in the evening. The volunteers were also given a Oriya
pamphlet...."

The pamphlet reads as follows:

Translated: WAY TO FREEDOM (MUKTI RA PATHA) Pamphlet No.7, D.6.10.38, Prajamandal:

Dear Brothers:

In spite of all our sufferings up till now, the eyes of the Durbar did not open. As a
protest the Prajamandal has commenced ‘Satyagraha’ since yesterday. Yesterday 20 volunteers have
firmly and courageously courted imprisonment by going to propaganda and picketing work for your
liberty. The police arrested and kept them in jail hazat after giving them ten stripes each. But
they went to jail smilingly singing songs as if taking the stripes as their food. On seeing their
work, 20 volunteers have been out to go today again to jail as they are to do propaganda works
and picketing. The Durbar is thinking to suppress our peaceful movement by putting people in jail and
deceive us by persuasive words and propaganda; but come brothers and sisters - Be united tight your
fist. We will fill the jail of the Durbar by hundreds and see how big a jail the Durbar has got to
imprison us we will see how much of wealth the Durbar is having to fed us in the jail. Now it is
the order of the Praja Mandal that at least 20 volunteers from each village should come and talk
with us.

Yours

Sd/- Pabitra Pradhan
(Talcher Prajamandal)

One important feature of this Satyagraha was that
various articles like salt, kerosene, tobacco leaves, pan, soap, soda, coconut, bidi (items covered under state
monopoly system) came to be openly sold by the Satyagrahis in defiance of the state law braving arrest and confiscation
of such goods. Satyagrahis also picketed and propagated against the performance of bethi used to build public roads
and other public works of the state. So also, use of Khadar and Gandhi caps was increasingly resorted to as a symbolic
protest against the oppressive rule of the state.184 Around
mid-November the pattern of Satyagraha was confined to
holding meetings defying the prohibitory orders of the
state.185 Later, a call for non-payment of land revenue was

184. AISPC Papers, F.No.164.
Interestingly, Khadar and Gandhi Caps were banned and people arrested for their use.

185. Ibid.
given inviting confiscation of lands of defaulting tenants. 186 Nearly 1400 Satyagrahis were arrested by November. 187 Such arrests were followed in such cases by brutal torture of the Satyagrahis by the police using hot irons to brand NI-HA (Nimak Haram: meaning betrayer of salt). 188 The important Prajamandal leaders like Gourishankar Pradhan, Krutibas Rath, Dasarathi Pani, who had taken shelter in Girija Dutta's house, were arrested in November. 189

On 9 October, the Orissa PCC condemned the policy adopted by the durbar and expressed solidarity with the people's struggle for civil liberties and responsible Government. 190 On 2 November, Pabitra Pradhan wrote to the Resident, Eastern States Agency, detailing the views of Prajamandal and exploring the possibility of negotiations between the Durbar and Prajamandal. 191 The letter, while projecting a typical Gandhian style of leadership was important in so far as it tried to explain the leadership's initiative at a compromise (realising the limits of mass Satyagraha in the face of brutal oppression carried by the Ruler). The letter pointed out:

"though the formation of Prajamandal was constituted to restore the cordial and congenial relations of the Ruler and the ruled... Durbar without availing the opportunity, rather took opposite view and resorted to oppressions ranging from looting... molesting the modesty of women. Despite all these, Prajamandal observed perfect non-violence and bore everything as dumb driven cattle... As a protest against such inhuman oppressions and torture, it began Satyagraha which is repressed with inhuman cruelty. The Satyagrahis are in the jail and still undergoing hardships and untold misery... We are determined to die in peaceful and non-violent fight and Satyagraha to achieve our end. But before having recourse to such final ordeal, we again send another letter to the Durbar... You are here... with requested to intervene and make an investigation into all the affairs in the presence of both the representatives of Durbar and Prajamandal to save any unfortunate situation..."

188. Ibid., and National Front, Vol.I, No.35, Dt.15.10.38.
189. HPD, I.G. to Chief Secretary, Dt.9.11.38 (ACC-1030).
190. Ibid.
191. HPD, President, Talcher Prajamandal to Resident, Eastern States Agency, 2.11.38 (ACC-931).
In the face of unabated repression, at a meeting at Anugul, in which Girija Dutta and Mahatab participated, it was resolved to seek Gandhi's intervention on the impasse of Talcher. Gandhi, in his turn, proposed a mass exodus of the people of Talcher to neighbouring British territory of Anugul to force the attention of British Government and thus increase pressure on the Ruler.

EXODUS AND REFUGEE CAMPS

Thus, the hijrat commenced from 8 November and as Pabitra remembers people of 25 villages left their homes to Prajamandal camp at Kosala. Girija Dutta explained the reasons for the exodus to backbreaking rent structure of Talcher and the massive repression by the state. He also pointed to the expanding social base of the movement as Sarbarakars and the rich people had started joining the movement against the Raja. On 15 November, the state declared that people had to pay 2 instalments of rent at a time without paying one instalment, failing which their lands would be confiscated and the state officials in fact took away the ripe paddy. In this context, the exodus swelled. By December, a new colony of refugee camps built on co-operative basis sprang up in different villages of Anugul. The official details regarding exodus by the 2nd

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So also, The Statesman (20 December 1938) wrote that 20,000 refugees were staying in Anugul leaving their homes and crops to escape state oppression. Though the report might have been a little exaggerated the possibility that the crops and homes were not fully deserted nor had people any intention of deserting them. For example, a member from a family attended the refugee camp for 24 hours, before being relieved by yet another member of the family.
week of December put the number of refugees as conservative-ly as possible in the following manner.196

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Number of Refugees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kosala</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santrabundh</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natada</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kankrai</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paniola</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kukudang</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampasala</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambpal</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethianali</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narayanchandrapur</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakosinga</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajnipal</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As against this Girija Dutta's estimate of the refugees for Kosala camp stood at 16,442197 and Biswanath Das's visit to Kosala and Kampsala (7 December) refugee camps led him to estimate a total refugee population of 17,050.198 In any case, nearly 1/3rd of the population of the state left the villages for different camps in Anugul.199

The exodus of the people was given ample encouragement by the leadership. Malati Choudhury, addressing a meeting at Kosala camp on 23 November explained to the refugees, Gandhi's message to Mahatab's on Talcher issue and pointed out: "we can't help those who are afraid of their Raja. We can help them if they come away to Mugalbandi leaving all their properties and promise not to enter the state until their claims are got."200 As per police report, by 27 November nearly 6,000 people crossed over to Kosala, Samilsahi and Takwa villages and attributed the reasons for this to be the speeches of Malati Choudhury and other Congress


198. HPD, Biswanath Das's Tour Diary, Anugul (ACC-922).


leaders. Besides, the rumour that Nehru was supposed to lead Satyagraha in the state of Dhenkanal and also the plan to force the attention of the Viceroy, who would visit Anugul, to the plight of the refugees to a certain extent explained the reasons for the huge exodus. These apart, the fact that Naba Krishnna Choudhury's intervention in Dhenkanal in terms of leading the Satyagraha himself was another factor influencing the people of Talcher state. In any case, the camps were "unduly swollen" with the expected visit of political leaders - thanks to the efforts of local leadership.

The social basis of the movement broadened with Sarbarakars participating in the struggle against the Raja. For instance, few Sarbarakars of the state came over to the refugee camps with rations while their families back in the state faced harrassment by the states official - a fact duly witnessed and supported by the Chief Minister Das on his visit to the camp at Kosala. The refugee camp at Kosala, in fact, had 50 Sarbarakars, along with people of high and low castes - indicating the fraternity obtaining between rich-poor and high caste-low castes.

It is really interesting to go through the impressions of the Chief Minister Biswanath Das who visited Kampasala and Kosala Camp on 7/8 December 1938. This at

203. HPD, Cuttack S.P. to I.G. Orissa, Dt.10.12.38 (ACC-1039).
204. HPD, SDO to D.C. Anugul, Dt.18.1.39 (ACC-922); and HPD, Biswanath Das to Resident, Eastern States with an enclosure of Tour-Diary of Anugul, Dt.4.2.39 (ACC-922).
205. HPD, Tour Diary of B.N. Das to Kampasal and Kosala Camp-7-8, Dec. 1938 (ACC-977).
least reveals the Ministry's concern for the refugee crisis and the sense of solidarity expressed to the refugees. He pointed out that the determination to stay in the camp was more deep seated in women than men, despite great privations like putting up in biting cold weather and the suffering of the babies. Refusing the allegation that the migration of people was just for demonstrating before the viceroy the physical numbers of the people leaving the state, he explained the cause of exodus to be chiefly the fact of brutal repression by the state on the people. The Ruler's insistence on the payment of all the kists of rent in the context of a pressing economic depression and in the case of failure, forcible attachment of crops standing in the field of the peasants, he pointed out, were stronger reasons explaining the immediate and huge exodus. He also pointed to the popular nature of the movement by noting that Sarvarakars in large numbers had started joining the movement in spite of their dismissal by the Ruler. Interestingly, he noted in his diary that refugees had a marked tendency to call everything provincial as 'their own' and everything "state" as "foreign" - indicating the popular feeling existing at the time, of identifying with the people of British India and the sort of expectations from the Congress Ministry. While advising the Ruler to create necessary conditions in the state for the return of refugees by foregoing the arrears as also the income of lands to avoid starvation conditions in the refugees camps, he did not rule out the possibility of 'crimes' in case they were pushed to the brink of hunger. The scarcity of food in the camps was a definite reality even forcing the refugees to go for begging in Anugul. But despite such hardships, refugees stayed on which explained the intense popular discontentment with the Ruler. The December report of the S.P.,\(^{206}\) who visited some of the

\(^{206}\) HPD, S.P. to I.G. Orissa, 10.12.38 (ACC-1039).
villages in Talcher as well as Kosala camp, held the state rule responsible for the emerging crisis. The S.P. wrote his impression as follows:

"I believe this account (of heavy taxation and police brutality) to be approximately true. No doubt the refugees have relations left in their villages and do actually return home occasionally and bring food. Also an unduly large number of women and children are in evidence in the camp possibly indicating that some of the men are remaining charge at home.... I personally walked into Talcher village.... The houses were empty but not abandoned as I had been told in the refugee camp, there are obvious signs of occupation that day. I found an armed Talcher constable who said he had been there for 15 days with the tax-collector. The people he said, had gone across the border on seeing my car. ...Some of the refugees get food from their villages and to the very poor, the Prajamandal gives relief. The recent visits of political leaders has led I think, to unwarranted hope of relief among some of the people. At one place, my orderly was asked, if it were true that Swaraj had come and rents to the Raja would be abolished. Further visits of political leaders are therefore to be deprecated. There is a grave danger".

The morale of the refugees was kept up by regular speeches of the leaders who visited from different districts of British Orissa. As noted earlier, Girija Dutta remained an active co-ordinator for the camps in Anugul. He even procured and arranged rations for the refugees. He advised the refugees not to trust the police and even to "beat them, cut their nose with weapons" 207 if they approached their huts in the camps - a suggestion often enthusiastically received by refugees. The refugee camps housed leafy huts or shed in large numbers on compact areas. In the compound of the camps, a Congress flag was usually hoisted tied to a big pole and fixed in the centre of a wooden platform. The volunteers and the leaders marched round the platform shouting national songs and slogans regularly in the morning and evening. The volunteers used to clean the compound and attend to sanitation. The Kosala camp conducted demonstrations classes on spinning, managed by the females of Bari Gandhian Ashram of Jajpur. Besides, the children of the refugees were taught under leaf sheds used as class rooms by the rural intelligentsia. 208 By June 1939 the very nature

207. HPD, SDO to D.C. Anugul, Dt.20.12.38 (ACC-931).
208. HPD, D.M. to Chief Secretary, Dt.10.2.39 (ACC-931).
This contains a report on Natra, Kosala and Kampsal Camps for Talcher refugees.
of activities in Kosala camp ultimately generated the idea of opening a training school at Kosala on the line of Gandhian (Wardha) scheme of education with the facilities of free boarding, lodging and training of the youths. The catchment area of the youths for the centre proposed to cover the states like Talcher, Dhenkanal, Bonai, Athamallik, Rairakhol, Baudh, Bamra, Pallahara.\(^{209}\) The camp thus, in fair degrees emphasised the Gandhian constructive activities as part of the overall Satyagraha movement carried out against the state rule.

However, the refugees also clashed with the state police and choukidars. For instance, a group of refugees while coming to Natara Camp in Angul carrying small bags of rice from Neteli Village of Talcher were arrested by the constables of the state but to be only followed by a larger group of 40 people who assaulted the constables and released the fellow refugees who had been arrested. Instead, the refugees tied the constables and intended to take them to Natra camp with the shouts "Mar, Mar", "Natada Kamp Ku Nei Jao" (Beat, beat, take them to Natada Camp). But, on their way the refugees were advised by the Choukidars and Sarbarakars of Rajanipal village (in Anugul) to report the cases to Anugul police station. Accordingly, the refugees proceeded and reported the case in Anugul police station with the hope that Anugul police would take action against the Talcher constables for assaulting and arresting them.\(^{210}\) This incident besides implying popular resistance also indicates faith of the state people in the administration of British Orissa and the way popular perception related to the the installation of Congress Ministry.

\(^{209}\) Board of Revenue, Special Branch report, Anugul, 26.6.39 (Sl.No.166).

SUPPORT TO REFUGEE CAMPS BY CONGRESS MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP

The continuance of refugee camps caused serious concern to the administration. The S.P. Cuttack in his December report\textsuperscript{211} observed that "there is a grave danger that the sections of these refugees who do not return early to Talcher may turn ugly". He was also apprehensive of the increase in crime and suggested the deployment of extra police in the Anugul locality where camps existed. Besides, his recommendations were three-fold -

(a) Government to hold an immediate enquiry by an experienced political officer in view of the serious effects of the agitation in this province; (b) prohibition of political leaders visiting the camps or their neighbourhood including the whole of Anugul; (c) famine arrangements like work on roads and tanks might be provided and the cost demanded from Congress fund as "Congress has fomented the agitation and has made collection, to further it".

Around January 1939 the Minister N. Kanungo responding to the crisis observed:\textsuperscript{212}

"Popular Ministry can't afford to see famine condition, prevailing in any part of the territory and we have to spend considerably to meet the situation which has resulted from mal-administration in the states. So, possibility should be explored to restore normalcy in Talcher by returning the refugees to the states. As a civilised state, we can't deny them shelter as long as condition in Talcher doesn't improve".

He went on to point out that "a no-rent campaign is looming large in the state". The Ministry pleaded for Governor General's intervention to diffuse the crisis and threatened resignation by observing that

"if force is used for subduing the claims of the people for the elementary rights of human beings (civil liberties) and we are helpless in influencing the Governor General to prevent such occurrences, then the least we can do is to dissociate ourselves from the responsibility of having a share in the administration".

The Congress Ministry sanctioned Rs.3,250/- as relief to the poor and helpless refugees. Besides, Gandhi Seva Sangha availed a financial assistance from the Government for opening a training school for spinning and cottage industries on the line of the Wardha Scheme. As noted earlier, classes were conducted on spinning and weaving,

\textsuperscript{211} HPD, S.P. Cuttack to I.G. Orissa, 10.12.38 (ACC-1039).

\textsuperscript{212} HPD, N. Kanungo to B.N. Das, 12.2.39 (ACC-1039); LC, Vol.II, Husback to Linlithgow, 8.1.39.
offering avenues of self-employment. So also, to deal with the problems of sanitation and water scarcity, the Government had to spend money.213 Besides, Government gave the necessary permission to cut timber for the construction of refugee huts at the camp site.214

Gandhi who was really concerned about Talcher developments and contributed several articles on Talcher in the Harijan journal, chose A.V. Thakkar as his representative to Dhenkanal, who in turn stayed in the refugees camps.215 Thakkar in a letter to Gandhi, Nehru, Rajendra Prasad, Patel, Bose and Biswanath Das appealed to "some first class leaders" to visit the camps in Anugul observing that216

"the sufferings of the refugees have been terrible and had it not been for the kindly services of the Marwari relief society of Calcutta and of the Charka activities of Malati Ghoudbury, even the modicum of relief that has been given would not have been given. The Talcher Durbar is still adamant... and waiting for the refugees to get drenched with the first regular heavy rain fall in Anugul and return to their houses with folded hands, falling at the feet of Raja. I am sure this is not going to happen in 1939, because Orissa Government is alert in relieving the sufferings of the refugees".

Gandhi also requested the Government of Orissa and other charitable organisations to offer help to the refugees.217 He wrote the Harijan (4 February 1939): "The Ministers in Orissa may not sit comfortably in their chairs... if they don't send back the 26,000 refugees of Talcher to their homes with an absolute assurance of safety and freedom of speech and social-political intercourse". Charity in great sums was also forthcoming to the camps. The Marwari relief

214. Talcher Prajamandal Itihasa, op. cit., p.27.
216. HPD, Letter of Thakkar to Gandhi, 25.5.39 (ACC-1709).
217. Talcher Prajamandal Itihasa Committee, op. cit., p.27.

Gandhi had also requested the Political Department (Government India) and the Provincial Government to redress the popular grievances.
The refugee camps succeeded in winning considerable media attention with the visit of press people who visited the camps regularly. Miss Agtha Harrison (member, British Parliament) visited the camp and described her views in the British Parliament back home in England. Miss Harrison talked to the refugees and leaders and saw the problem obtaining in Anugul refugee camps as essentially 'human' and sought the immediate intervention of political department for a settlement between the Ruler and the subjects. C.F. Andrews, the noted Gandhian, also championed the cause of Talcher people.

By the setting of summer and the subsequent approach of rains in 1939, the crisis in the refugee camps worsened. The nature of popular feelings inside the camps was best reflected in a pamphlet that was circulated around this time (June 7) deploring insufficient relief and poor attention of top leadership to the refugee issue and earnestly seeking personal Gandhian intervention to diffuse the crisis. It noted:

"The exodus started about mid-November 1938 after a severe repression in the state of Talcher, which means that subjects were very much exhausted when they arrived in the refugee camps. They experienced bitter chill of the winter of Anugul and at present, at the end of a severe summer (temperature going up to 112 degrees). In spite of all this, they are holding out courageously, but the public sympathy was very poor and the attitude of the leaders most discouraging. During the last six months, they received altogether a financial help of Rs.6,000/- including Rs.5,000/- from the Marwari Relief Association. All this is intended for the refugees numbering over 20,000. It is admittedly the outcome of the agitations of the states people in India. But not even one member of the working committee except Mahatab cared to visit the camps... not even Rajendra Prasad has visited Orissa...."

It went on to add:

"had Gandhiji taken up the cause of the Talcher refugees, the success of the movement would have been an accomplished fact even about 2 months ago, as on account of the great faith of


220. HPD, Note by a well-informed friend ref.: Talcher and Gangapur states in Orissa, Undated, Author not known (ACC-1709).
the people in Gandhiji, even the few that are now in the state would have come out leaving the state completely deserted. The peoples' capacity for such an undertaking is very well known and the recent exodus from Kanpur though on different ground is a sufficient example....

**LEADERSHIP AND ATTEMPTS AT NEGOTIATION**

We have already observed the Ministry's perception of the refugee camps. Immediately after the exodus, Mahatab and Girija Dutta were trying to explore the possibility of a negotiation with the Ruler of Talcher. While appealing to "eminent people" of India to contribute financially to the refugees, Mahatab was eagerly trying to seek Gandhi's intervention to the issue. However, the socialist leadership was critical of Mahatab's intervention in Talcher issue. The efforts by the Resident, Eastern States, and political Agent to pressure the Talcher Ruler for effecting a solution was a failure. However as has been observed earlier, right since the exodus, the Congress Ministry expressed its serious concern over the issue and appealed to the viceroy to intervene so as to bring about a solution.

Biswanath Das met the Viceroy who was on his way to Madras via Orissa and apprised him about the crisis. Biswanath Das and Nityananda Kanungo (Revenue Minister) discussed the issue with the viceroy as well as the political agent, Major Sarle, and pressed for the establishment of a supreme Appellate Court in each state and grant of civil liberties (like right to free speech and association) to the states' people. Kanungo's view was that "so long as people don't advocate crime or violence, they should be allowed to speak and associate freely". The CM also emphasised the release of an authoritative document detailing the promises and concessions of the Ruler on property rights, bethi, magan, etc., on the basis of which refugees could be persuaded to return, in view of lack of faith in the Ruler by

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the people.

In March, Major Searle accompanied by Captain Wood (of Salvation Army) met the refugees in Natada camp. They also asked the refugees to go back to their homes in response to the Ruler's grant of a few concessions on bethi and rasad. But the refugees insisted on a written assurance from the political department for fear of non-implementation of such concessions as had been done previously. They also emphasised the withdrawal of extradition warrants. Thus, under pressure from the Ministry, the Political Department began to negotiate around March. Accordingly, a meeting was arranged between Maj. Hannessey (Assistant Political Agent) and Mahatab (the Congress Ministry's representative) and Mr. Ansorge (Revenue Commissioner). The outcome of the meeting was an agreement between Hennessey and Mahatab. As per the agreement, Mahatab would suggest a scheme of proposals for the solution of the Talcher crisis. Accordingly, Mahatab suggested the following proposals.

- 3 Annas per rupee of rent and the undertaking that after the settlement, the rent and cess will not be higher than Angul rent for the same class of land.
- Abolition of monopolies on the necessities of life except hides, skins, horns, ganja, opium and liquor.
- State administrative machinery should not be used for enforcing fines and collection of fines levied by courts and panchayats.
- Abolition of bethi except for public purposes and on payment of wages at ordinary rates.
- Abolition of special tax on industrial cess.
- No interference with the freedom of speech and meetings provided there is nothing subversive and disloyal to the Ruler or his administration.
- Peasants should be allowed to kill wild animals in the state on their own property without any penalties.

223. The A.B. Patrika, 15.3.39.


The Ministry was eager for an early solution of the refugee problem because of the approaching rainy season and the consequent negligence in ploughing the fields by peasants resulting from a no-settlement of the problem.226

However, the British resident promised that except extradition cases, the rest of the demands would be conceded. On 1st May, the Durbar made the expected declaration ignoring the issues of miscellaneous cesses and extradition cases. This stance by the Durbar did not resolve the deadlock.227 So, Gandhi wrote in the Harijan on 20th May: "Talcher promises to be much worse than Rajkot. In Rajkot, it was the Ruler's word that was broken... in Talcher it was paramount power's..."228 C.F. Andrews also appealed to the Prajamandal to intensify the struggle.229 The Ministry released the prisoners from the Talcher state who had extradition warrants against them in June. Nehru's comment on extradition warrant against the leaders was that: "it was a demand which no Congress Ministry could agree to without losing honour and betraying our comrades in the states and being false to our principles".230 The Raja was also seeking support from the princes of other states to forge a counter strategy to crush the movement.231 Even then the refugees refused to move back to the state unless the accord of March was put into operation. Meetings were organised in Khandapara State where people were exhorted to carry on

227. Ibid.
229. Ibid.
230. AISPC Papers, F.No.187.
their agitation in the manner of Talcher and a good deal of sympathy was expressed.232

By June, with the onset of rains, and in the face of the continuance of deadlock, the news of impending visits of Gandhi and the Viceroy to Anugul to personally handle the issue of Talcher were spread by the Prajamandal in an attempt to offset the 'demoralisation of the refugees'.233 In fact, the authorship of these ideas was attributed to Mahatab. Besides, Mahatab and Sarangadhar Das were planning to hold the Feudatory States Peoples' Conference in Orissa and ask Nehru to preside over it.234 The objectives of such exercise however remained to apprise the top leadership about the deadlock as also to seek their intervention in it.

Looking at the situation Nehru observed on 30 May: "Among all the states in India the Orissa states stand out today in their agony - Talcher of broken promises and starving and wandering, starving refugees.... No one dare say that their freedom can wait till we are free."235

Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, also expressed his deep concern at such a state of affairs in Talcher. He also desired to make an on-the-spot enquiry during his visit to Orissa. The Ruler was warned that if the refugees did not go back to the state before Viceroy's arrival in Orissa, Talcher would be confiscated and brought under direct management.236 However, on 23rd June, the Ruler made a proclamation fulfilling the demands of the Prajamandal by abolis-

232. Ibid.
ing forced labour, gifts, religious cess, protection of wild animals and collection of fines imposed by ecclesiastical courts. A promise was made to fulfil the other demands. The people under the leadership of Pabitra Mohan Pradhan accepted the proclamation and returned to the State on 21st June.237

We have only attempted to focus on the popular struggles in Nilagiri, Dhenkanal and Talcher here. The pattern of these struggle is a broad pointer to the overall scene obtaining in equal degrees in so many other states like Ranpur, Gangapur, Khandapara and Nayagarh to quote a few. The remarkably radical character of the leadership and the militant aspect of the movement pointedly indicate the progressive thrust of a radical ideology inside the broad Congress movement vis-a-vis the autocratic states.238

On an overall assessment, it can be stated that popular movements in the princely states of Orissa assumed a powerful thrust during 1938-39. The mass movement that enveloped the princely states of Orissa were primarily due to the terribly backward socio-political conditions characterising the states. The mass character of the movement was in part caused by mass poverty (95% of the states' population being peasantry) and the attendant social disabilities (whether high caste or Harijans, they used to suffer equal disabilities). The mass character of the movement was also evident from the charter of demands the Prajamandal brought out. The other crucial factor in the situation was that popular Congress Ministry provided the peoples' struggle with a lot

237. Ibid. Also, for the full draft of the Ruler's declaration see, HPD, D.C. Anugul to Governor Orissa, dt.2.5.39 (ACC-1794).

238. For this aspect as well as popular movements in Ranpur, and Gangapur states, refer C.P. Nanda, Civil Disobedience to Congress Ministry: A case study of Orissa (1930-39), M.Phil. Thesis, CHS, JNU.
of confidence. We have observed the nature of leadership so also the pattern and extent of popular mobilisation in at least three states; which suggest the refreshingly open-ended character of the movement backed by insights and innovations of the leadership from top to bottom. These aspects have been specifically focused in our study while dealing with refugee/volunteers camps as well as 'Congress Ashrams'. So, also, we have seen how caste rules were ignored through mass meetings and 'common dinners' were organised by the Prajamandal. Also in Dhenkanal, Sankirtan or Bhajan melas (devotional songs with music), performance of Puja with devotional songs or Jagyans (sacred fire performance along with religious discourses) became vital components of the mass mobilisation drive by the Prajamandal activists and leadership.\(^{239}\) An intense feeling of solidarity existed among the people of different states. For example, Dhenkanal Prajamandal ordered that every adult man or woman must contribute one paise to the Nilagiri Satyagraha fund, or the Khandapara people would express their deep concern for the Talcher refugees.\(^{240}\) The Krushak newspaper which had a low circulation in 1934 (the year of its foundation) sold in thousands around 1938. This paper lent a tremendous ideological support to the movement. Besides, the impact of peasant movement in the neighbouring British Orissa, the intervention of kisan leaders in the popular struggles in the states and the specific impulse generated by Jenapur Peasant Conference (held in September 1938; it devoted a day of the Conference for Dhenkanal calling it Dhenkanal Day) helped push the struggle to new heights.

We have considerably focused on the different strands

\(^{239}\) National Front, Vol.II, No.25, Dt.30.7.39.

\(^{240}\) The Hindustan Standard, 10.3.39; AICC Papers, G.35, Part-I, Rabi Ghosh, Jana (Oriya fortnightly), 15.4.60. Quoted in B.C. Rath, op. cit., p.154.
of leadership and their styles of functioning within the broad movement of the states. Yet, a contemporary column contributed by P.C. Joshi on the cadres and leadership of Dhenkanal movement really makes valuable reading. He introduced them as follows.241

*Sarangadhar Das - He was a sugar technologist, and hailed from landlord family. The woes of the victims of the state terror led him to the movement. He is no socialist, yet he is with the comrades as they work and help the people. From his ambition of becoming a leading industrialist of Orissa, he has become the true leader of movement.

Naba Krushna Choudhury: As leader of CSP, the political strategy comes from him. He helped to link up Congress with Dhenkanal Movement.

Malati Devi: She looks after the victims of terror and the hospital arrangements as only a woman can and wins the respect of all.

Subahu Singh: A true son of the soil. He is to Dhenkanal as Swami Sahajananda is to kisans of Bihar, led a mass movement in 1921 against enhancement of rent and rigidity of forest laws. He has got a mass appeal, knows how to move people. He could arrange huge gathering of people. He is a great enthusiast. When he knew that Nehru would be personally leading the state peoples movement, he was ready to collect Rs.10,000 (he would have got the people to sell their cattle and utensils to make Rs.10,000/-) which would enable Nehru to come to India in 'Hawai Jahaj' to personally lead the Dhenkanal movement.

Laxmidhar Sahu: His slogan is "no settlement with Raja without responsible Government"; Secretary of Dhenkanal Prajamandal, a teacher in Mission High School in Cuttack, aged 25.

Harmohan Patnaik: A law graduate, enjoys respect of all including the Raja.

Baisnava Patnaik: A painter on the B.N.R. got attracted to Marxism and Leninist ideology, would talk of Lenin, Marx, Russia, Freedom. Regularly writes for Krushak, collects information from the state in coolie dress (worker-socialist).

Srikanta, Rabindra Ghosh, Banamali: All students. They work as captains for collecting volunteers and funds. All of them had joined COM and joined CSP after coming back from jail. Banamali leads Nilagiri Prajamandal. They are of material of which Bolsheviks are made.

Reflecting on the character of state peoples struggle. Sarangadhar Das perceived:242 "It is a true case of masses seeking contact with leaders, the Congress leaders have long looked for opportunity of moulding this freshly awakened mass and of linking it up with great movement for freedom". He went on to note,

"the Congress began to come into contact with the masses and discovered the whole gamut of their political, economic and social disabilities which are constantly eating into the vitals of the people.... The mass awakening in British India to-day is therefore, the culmination of the continuous hard work of the leadership of the Congress during the period of last years, which was marked by the entry of Gandhi to Indian Politics".


242. Ibid. S. Das: "Masses seeking contact with leaders". 

269
MINISTRY AND THE MOVEMENT

Since its formation in 1937, the Congress Ministry proceeded rapidly with its programme. This had reaction on the states people. On account of their constant contact with neighbouring British Orissa a hope for representative institutions arose among them. The vernacular press and propaganda by other organisation also backed them. In this context, it is important to map the response of the Ministry to the movement which certainly clarifies the Congress leaderships' perception of the problem and its initiatives in this regard.

In the beginning of 1938, the issue of garjat movement featured prominently in the agenda of the Utkal Provincial Political Conference held in May 1938. Sarangadhar Das, one of the top leaders of the state peoples movement, placed the magnitude of the crisis in the states before the Conference. The Conference deplored the absolute absence of fundamental rights in the Orissa states, existence of anti-people laws and repression and reactionary measures tending to curtail the civil liberties of the people. It pointed out that the such fundamental rights were being denied to the people as:

(a) The Ordinance of Raikhol (Sambalpur) which prohibited the assembly of five persons or more and the soliciting and collection of any subscription for any purpose.

(b) Forcible dispersal by the Keonjhar police of a peaceful meeting at Sagadupatta where some 300 people had gathered to formulate their grievances for presentation to the Ruler of the state. The authorities arrested and detained 10 persons for 6 days in the thana and subsequently enforced for many days section 144 P.C. on Dhana Naik, Dirja Dehuri and others of Billa and such other villages.

(c) The promulgation in Nilagiri of Regulation I and II of 1938 requiring registration of any association and making it compulsory to obtain permission one week before for any meeting to be held.

(d) Harrassment of Bama villagers for the reason that they had joined Congress as ordinary members.

(e) Arrest and conviction of 5 villagers from Oragoon (Nayagarh Village) on criminal charges with a view to break Pan boycott movement which was the only weapon available to counteract the abnormal price-hike in Pan due to monopoly system.

(f) Ban on the press particularly the Samaj and the Krushak newspapers in certain states.


The Conference urged the people of the states to organise on the established principle of truth and non-violence in order to defend their civil-liberties. It extended its strong sympathy and moral support in their struggle against all kinds of repression in the states and for the winning of full responsible Government. The Ministry from the beginning was disposed in favour of the state people's struggles. Referring to the attitude of the Ministry to the crisis in the states, the Governor told the Viceroy:

"The sympathies of the most people in Orissa are with the subjects of the state and against the Ruler. They allege the Government of these states as inefficient, antiquated and oppressive. This view is held by Congress Ministers, Congress party. The Ministers share the sympathies to the full and blame the Government of India for importing troops to bolster up an inefficient and oppressive rule. For these reasons they are not prepared to take any action or check the agitation beyond the undertaking to use their influence to discourage actions in Orissa calculated to promote violence in the states. The Ministry holds that shooting in Dhenkanal is making it more and more difficult to keep the agitation in check. They are strictly opposed to the extension of the articles 4 to 7 of the Indian States Protection Act (1934) which curtail speeches of the leaders'. Explaining the Government's helplessness, he added: "if they are forced to do it, they would resign and there is no possibility for alternative Ministry as all sections of Congress will support the Ministry on this issue'.

When the Ministry was apprised of various camps operating in Orissa just outside the states and about the distribution of seditious literature in the states and was pressed for necessary action against them, the Chief Minister held that "such action would rekindle the agitation".246

Throughout 1938, the Ministry stood deadly opposed to the extension of articles 4 and 7 of Indian States Protection Act to States where a District Magistrate would have power to discourage certain activities on the ground that such steps would intensify the agitation in the states. It also clearly kept its option open for resignation if it was pressed to do so. It also demanded that the Orissa states situation should be isolated from that of other


246. Linlithgow Collection, Chief Secretary to Viceroy, Vol.I, dt.15.9.38.
states as locally there was little interest in the latter. In this respect, Biswanath Das and Kanungo constantly referred to the repression in the states and the refugee problem which was getting acute due to maintenance of camps and the problem of cultivation with the approaching monsoon.

The Ministry demanded that the state peoples' issue must inevitably be the State Government's concern even though according to the existing constitutional arrangement it was not legally so. Explaining this, Biswanath Das argued that

"the refugee problem in Angul Camp creates serious problem for the provincial Government so there is a justification on our part in making suggestions which might help to allay the causes which led to the exodus of the refugees from their homes". Thus he came to suggest the following measures:

(a) The recognition of civil liberty and right to property and security of such rights to be protected by a reliable court to be announced by Political Department which would satisfy public as these rights are preliminary to any system of administration both responsible and representative form of Government. This should be immediately introduced by the ruler of the state.

(b) For maintaining close contact with the state, the headquarters of the residency should be shifted from Calcutta to Orissa.

Nityananda Kanungo, the Revenue Minister, also stressed the same factors. He made the following suggestions:

(a) Right of free association and free expression of opinion should be guaranteed.

(b) Right of appeal in both criminal and civil cases to a tribunal under the control of political department independent of princes should be made available to the state subjects.

He also warned: "unless these elementary demands are conceded, states will remain a seething mass of discontent with its inevitable repercussion on the neighbouring districts of Orissa". The views of the Ministry on securing civil liberties for princely states were characteristically summed up by Mansfield, the Chief Secretary, who observed:


248. Ibid.


the provincial Government feel that there must be some local means of ensuring that concessions, which are granted on paper, will not be whittled down in practice, and some recognised means for ventilating common grievances and expressing public opinion. In the opinion of Ministry, this can only be secured by the formation and recognition of a body or association which may be formed by the subjects in each state for the purpose to be followed by the inauguration by the Ruler of some body with desired rights and responsibilities. Until such steps are taken the provincial Government urge that a responsible non-official of this province should be invited to help the Raja in negotiations with their subjects. 251

This powerfully brings out the Ministry's attempt to lend moral support to the movement in princely states by pressurising the rulers to grant civil liberties. That the Ministry helped to expand the space for the movement in the states was clearly seen, when it refused to lend police aid to the states to suppress the popular movements. Thus lamented a pro-Ruler newspaper:

"Mr. B.N. Das (P.M.) sometime ago appealed to the Rulers of Orissa states for support to the Orissa University Scheme and yet refuses to lend police aid to the states in times of great need with the result that British troops and Gurkha force have been requisitioned from the Government of India to quell disturbances. In this a friendly act? 252

The Ministry brought up the states issue during the visit of the Viceroy to Orissa during July, 1939. The Ministry decided to avoid any kind of congratulatory meeting for the Viceroy. It maintained that "we cannot afford to have a meeting of this nature in view of Viceroy's visit when thousands of our countrymen are rotting as refugees in Angul and elsewhere". It pointed out that "due to the prevailing situation in the states and no prospect of settlement of the refugee problem, the public opinion is considerably agitated and Linlithgow's visit at this juncure would not appeal to public mind as it would have appealed in the case of a solution of the problem." 253

The Ministry also consistently fought against the authorities on the issue of extradition cases. The people

251. HPD, Chief Secy to Viceroy, 7.12.38 (ACC-1039).


who were arrested in connection with violent activities or for delivering inflammatory speeches (usually false charges were levelled against activists of Prajamandal such as theft and robbery) by the colonial authorities were demanded to be handed over to the state authorities. The Ministry, however, asked the District Magistrate to refer all extradition cases to the Orissa Government. It also released several such prisoners from Dhenkanal and Talcher on the ground that they were working with political motives. The Ministry during December, 1938 released 8 prisoners out of 10 belonging to Dhenkanal and Talcher states. The tug of war over this issue embroiled the Ministry throughout 1939. The Ministry went on delaying the handing over of prisoners arrested under extradition warrants to the states for a pretty long time. It also pleaded that regarding powers under the extradition law, the local government should be admittedly a factor to reckon with.

Throughout, the Ministry went on pressurising the colonial authorities to concede the legitimate demands of the people by issuing the necessary directives to the states. As has been noted above, the Ministry was dead opposed to certain obnoxious laws which were intended to curtail popular movements. Thus it gave strong encouragement to such movements in the states. Moreover, it was ever ready to resign on the states' issue, thereby threatening a constitutional deadlock.

254. Hubback in several letters (written in 1938) to the Viceroy made allegations against the Ministry for its slow-response to the extradition issue.


256. Mahatab Papers, Mahatab to Gandhi, dt.5.2.39.