CHAPTER - IV

THE HIGH TIDES IN RURAL SCENE

(i) FOREST SATYAGRAHA
(ii) MOB AGITATION
(iii) NO-TAX CAMPAIGN
A novel feature of the Civil Disobedience Movement in the Central Provinces and Berar was the forest satyagraha which meant violation of the forest laws. The natural features of the region, with its extensive forests, suggested this course of action as a form of Civil Disobedience. This gave a new dimension to the movement. As this had not been contemplated by the Congress Working Committee in its programmes defined for the movement, it was necessary to obtain the approval of Motilal Nehru who had been appointed President of the Congress on Jawaharlal's arrest.

On 9 March 1930 Seth Govind Das, Ravi Shankar Shukla and Dwarka Prasad Mishra met Mahatma Gandhi on way to Dandi at Jammu Sar and asked for his opinion on launching of Forest Satyagraha. Being ignorant of full facts on the point, Gandhiji refused to give his opinion and asked them to contact Pt. Motilal Nehru for guidance in this regard. D.P. Mishra who had been a 'trusted lieutenant' of Motilal Nehru in the Legislative Assembly, immediately proceeded to Allahabad for consultation. Motilal Nehru was reluctant to enlarge the programme without consulting Gandhiji who was far away at Dandi. In fact, he was apprehensive that a large scale forest satyagraha involving thousands of adivasis and villagers,
cutting trees with axes, might lead to violence. After a long discussion and on the assurance of D.P. Mishra that the forest satyagraha would be strictly in the spirit of the resolution of the Congress Working Committee and the principles laid down by Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru accorded permission to launching of forest satyagraha in a very cautious manner. He realised that the forest satyagraha stemmed from the discontent caused by the restrictions on grazing rights, erosion of the traditional rights to take fuel and fodder from the forests and oppression of forest officials. His approval was restricted only to the violation of grazing law.

In his message, Motilal Nehru gave very clear directions to Seth Govind Das with regard to this well contemplated new phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement. He was asked to tour round the province and personally educate the villagers for the campaign strictly on non-violent lines. He cautioned the Congress High Command such as manufacture of salt, breach of the law of sedition, boycott of foreign cloth and picketing of liquor shops.

1. Young India, 1 May 1930, and A.I.C.C. File No.28 of 1931.
2. Ibid.
3. Young India, 1 May 1930
Thus under the leadership of Seth Govind Das forest satyagraha became an important item of the Congress Civil Disobedience campaign in the rural regions of the Central Provinces and Berar both in its Hindi and Marathi speaking parts.

D.P. Mishra had returned to Jabalpur with this new weapon in his pocket. The Press had given the news a country-wide publicity. The government of Central Provinces was now alarmed. If throughout the Province, nearly half the area of which was covered by forests, the people began violating the forest laws, the situation might become uncontrollable. They, therefore, decided that the leaders should be arrested at the earliest possible opportunity. Soon came the opportunity.¹

The main objective of the forest satyagraha was to put special pressure on the government in order to freely utilize the products of the Reserve Forests as well as that of the Prohibited Forests which was a daily requirement of the inhabitants. In the forest satyagraha, the forest laws were disobeyed in several ways, such as by leaving the cattle for grazing in the prohibited forests, by collecting firewood and tree leaves from these forests without obtaining permission from the forest authorities and by social and cultural boycott of the Forest and Revenue employees of the

government. The main theme was to cut grass and twigs from the forests so as to protest and disobey the government laws. As per the Gandhian practise satyagrahis gave notice to the British government before they penetrated into the reserve forests in the batches of four-four and five-five and started cutting grass. The government arrested them and prosecuted them under Section 379/112 C.P.C. and Section 26 of the Forest Laws and imprisoned them along with fines.¹

In Central Provinces and Berar the inclusion of the programme of Forest Satyagraha in Civil Disobedience Movement had much importance. This movement which started in July 1930 was the most popular movement in the rural areas of Central Provinces and Berar. In this movement in comparison to the town residents, the villagers and tribals played an active, important and courageous role.

**Forest Satyagraha in Berar and Marathi Regions**

Although the originator of the Forest Satyagraha was D.P. Mishra through whose efforts permission was granted by the Congress to begin it, but unfortunately D.P. Mishra was arrested and he missed the opportunity of launching it. It was the good fortune of M.S. Aney to inaugurate it. On 10 July 1930 with a party of volunteers he cut grass

¹. Madhya Pradesh Sandesh, 15 August 1987, A-107
in the reserved forests of Pusad in Berar and was arrested. Thus new form of satyagraha caught the imagination of the people. Dr. Munje followed suit on 11 July, but to his chagrin was only imposed with a fine of Rs.5/- and when he repeated the offence he was again punished with a fine of twice the amount originally imposed or, in default, a week's imprisonment. Other responsivist leaders made similar demonstrations of a theatrical character.1

On 24 July under the leadership of Dr. Parsanis in the forest adjacent to village Jamuna in Khamgaon, forest satyagraha was launched. Dr. Parsanis was arrested along with his party and was sent to jail. Korde-Guruji of the District War Council too was arrested. Dr. Parsanis was sentenced to six months and Korde Guruji was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment. But the satyagraha continued. On the fifth day, the War Chief, Wamangaonkar was also arrested. Therefore, under the leadership of Shriram Surajmal, forest satyagraha started in a nearby forest of village Loni about four miles from Akola. He was also arrested along with his group and each one of them were sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Even then the forest satyagraha continued for a week. In addition to the War Minister, Harirao Deshpande,

1. Note on Civil Disobedience Movement in the Central Provinces and Berar, 31st December 1930, p. 5.
Dadasaheb Oandit, Sadashivram Chincholkar, Rambhau Borkar, Govindrao sohni were arrested and sent to jail.

In Amravati district, forest satyagraha was launched at Badnera, Ganeja, Dewarwada, Surdi, Borola, Chandur Bazar, Rangarwasni, Nerpinglai, Varud, Loni, Damere, Dhugaon, Yavli, Achalpur, Chandur, Manjhri, Daryapur, Dahigaon, Nimkheda etc. In Buldhana district at Jalgaon, Rajur, Jamod etc.; in Akola district at Paras, Borgaon, Kurum, Karanja, Jamthi etc.; and in several other places. It was observed that in the enactment of forest satyagraha there was much enthusiasm and zeal among the people and Congress workers played an important role and whole heartedly devoted themselves to the national movement.¹

In the Wardha district, the village of Talegaon offered an ideally accessible venue for spectacular demonstration inspite of its position as the meeting place of the high roads from Amraoti, Nagpur and Wardha. The Central provinces Marathi War Council selected this village for mass forest satyagraha. As many as ten thousand persons were reported to have been present on the opening day when an extensive damage to the extent of Rs.3500/- was done to the forest. The situation in this area rapidly deteriorated owing to the

excitement caused by this activity, and in view of the general tendency which manifested itself to disregard authority, a strong force of punitive police was imposed upon the Arvi tahsil.¹

In the month of August, the forest law was broken at Nagpur, Akola, Amraoti and Wardha. At Akola and Amraoti prominent leaders were arrested under the Indian Forest Act. In Nagpur division, forest law was broken at sixteen places. At Wardha, about ten thousand persons participated in the forest satyagraha, but no arrest was made.²

In Yeotmal Dr. Tambe and other satyagrahis also showed much interest in breaking the forest law. The venue of the campaign was Dhamangaon road. A huge crowd gave an enthusiastic send off to the volunteers. Dr. Hedgewar of Nagpur led a batch of eleven volunteers. When they began cutting the grass, they were arrested and convicted. Dr. Hedgewar was sentenced to nine months' and the volunteers to four months' imprisonment.³

In August 1930 at Chanda an unruly crowd of about six hundred collected outside the Chanda Forest Office on the occasion of the forest auction. They obstructed the main road and when the

¹ Political and Military Department, File No. 302/CDM of 1930, p.7.
² Home Political File No. 368 of 1930.
³ The Bombay Chronicle, 22 July 1930.
police attempted to disperse them they replied with volley of stones, hitting of a C.I., a S.I. and several constables. 1 Twentyfive youths who had cut and stolen trees from the government forest in accordance with the Congress programme were arrested. The small party carrying out the arrest was almost overwhelmed by the mob. The D.I.G., the D.S.P. and the District Magistrate proceeded with reinforcements to their aid and succeeded in dispersing the mob. Stones were freely thrown and many officers including the C.I. were hit. 2

Forest Satyagraha in Hindi Region

The Hindi Central Provinces War Council had formulated a plan to break the forest laws and decided to launch the first satyagraha at Betul. Ghanshyam Singh Gupta was appointed the first Dictator but due to some reasons he could not come on the fixed date, so Deepchand Godhi led the party of satyagrahis and defied the forest law by cutting some grass. 3 They grazed a cow in government reserved forest in the presence of the Forest Range Officer. As the District Magistrate had been informed about this campaign, the police arrived on the scene and arrested Deepchand and his

1. Political and Military Department, File No. 229/CDM of 1931, p.120.
2. Ibid, pp.122-123.
associates. They were tried, convicted and sentenced to one year rigorous imprisonment.¹

After this incident forest satyagraha came like a flood in Betul district. Men and women defied the forest laws in places like Banjari Dhal, Firri, Jambada, Uttam Sagar etc. The most famous among these was of Banjari Dhal, where thousands of Gond, men and women, under the leadership of Sardar Ganjan Singh collectively entered the government forest and defied the law by cutting the grass and twigs.

Subsequently, the Betul District Council released from the cattle pound about three-hundred cattle impounded by the forest department for grazing without passes in the forest, on the plea that proper arrangements for feeding and drinking water were not made by the cattle pound authorities.²

In Chhindwara district, about four kilometers from Ramakona village, in the forest of Amla Khutawa forest satyagraha started in 1930 by cutting grass of the forest. The movement was carried under the leadership of Vishwanath Salpekar, a Senior advocate. At this time the

¹. The Bombay Chronicle, 4 August 1930 and 6 August 1930.
². Home Political File No. 505 of 1930.
satyagrahis reached Ramakona coming in batches of eleven. The camp was managed by Bhopu brothers. The enthusiasm of the satyagrahis was worth seeing and undescrivable. The satyagrahis cut the grass in Khutawa forest and courted arrests. All the satyagrahis were kept in Chhindwara jail. Three of the satyagrahis were sentenced to twentyfive cane beating which was in-human.

There were three satyagrahis below the age of eighteen years. Their names were Madhavrao Bapujir Beida, Ganpatgirdhari Beidar both of village Lodhikheda and Atmaram Khatod of village Sausar.¹

At Katni and Sihora, the police attacked the forest satyagrahis and arrested a large number of them. In the Murwara Tahsil there was a sudden out break of lawlessness, describirbd by the Deputy Commissioner as 'Mass hysteria', which was merely the manifestation of mass feelings of the villagers.² The local authorities reported that the situation was distinctly dangerous and was entirely out of hands.... The damage certainly ran into several thousands of rupees. Such feelings of the villagers had been reported from over a dozen


² Note on Civil Disobedience Movement in the Central Provinces and Berar 31 December 1930, p.6.
different places. Some being very difficult of access in the Murwara tahsil.\(^1\) Finding the situation alarming, government imposed punitive police in the tahsil and authorised whipping of satyagrahis as a deterrent measure.\(^2\)

The Sagar district, nine satyagrahis were arrested at Shahgarh, where they had broken the forest law. At Khurai, the acting president of the Tahsil Congress Committee was arrested.\(^3\) In all other districts of Mahakoshal forest law was violated.

In Narsinghpur district forest satyagraha was launched with great vigour by breaking all forest laws in an organized way. At Chicholi, it lasted for one full week, but in the Bachar forest the entire team of volunteers was arrested before they could actually perform.\(^4\)

In Raigarh district Harijan Dhaniram, Jagatram and Kunwar Bhan courted arrest after violating the forest law.\(^5\)

2. Home Political Department, Fortnightly Report 1, 1930, August.
3. The Hitvada, 27 August 1930.
5. District Gazetteer, Raigarh, 1976, p.55
In Durg district the breaking of the forest law started from the government forest of Mohbana near Durg. On 24 July 1930 the cattle which were grazing were impounded in the Cattle Pound by the government servants. Due to this occurrence there was a dispute between the representatives of the masses and government officials. As a result of the deliberations the impounded cattle were released. Later this occurrence took the shape of a forest satyagraha.¹ The district opened the campaign of forest satyagraha on 3 August 1930 when Narsingh Prasad Agarwal, Pleader, Balod, delivered a speech at a meeting held at Pondi in which he exhorted the audience to break government laws and in particular the forest laws by cutting grass and removing it from government reserved forest. On 13 August 1930 he was sentenced to one year's rigorous imprisonment with a fine of Rs.200/-.²

In the initial stage, the forest satyagraha was carried on by small batches of volunteers in the government reserved forests by breaking grazing law. Subsequently, when the tempo of satyagraha gained momentum, batches after batches followed in quick succession to offer satyagraha and ultimately even other people swayed by the gusto of new enthusiasm and regardless of consequences joined as

². District Gazetteer, Durg, 1972, p.64.
volunteers and made the satyagraha a mass movement. Ten to fifteen thousand people took part in grass cutting and courting arrest with no remorse, became a common sight.¹

A later development of this mass movement was the cutting of firewood trees along with grass as a token of breaking forest law.²

Besides wooing landowners and tenants into the movement the Congress politicians spread this message among the villagers and rural labourers and enlisted their participation into the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. By exploiting the grievances of these groups against the regulations in force in government forests, Congress workers persuaded them to break the regulations in many regional centres, generally in the presence of a large number of spectators.² These acts of Civil Disobedience caused considerable havoc in forests,³ and challenged the government's ability to maintain order, as an official report on the satyagraha in Amravati district observed:

1. A.I.C.C. Papers, File No. 24 of 1930.
3. The total damage to forests was estimated at Rs. 70,000/-. In 1930 there was a 45% increase in unauthorised felling and a 49% increase in unauthorised grazing over the previous year. Administration Review, 1929-30, p.15; Report on the Forest Administration of the C.P. & Berar, 1931.
"The Civil Disobedience Movement in its most mischievous aspects, viz. mass action wanton destruction of government forests, has made its appearance in the Ellichpur Taluk and parts of Daryapur and Morsi Taluks. The police have a very difficult task in effecting arrests in isolated villages and scattered babul bans, often with small forces at their command. Unless the tendency to terrorism resorted to by the jarud people is put down at once similar methods are likely to be adopted elsewhere.\(^1\)

The excited bands of villagers were seen everywhere cutting down and carrying off timber under the instigation of "Congress agents" who had persuaded them to believe that the "British Raj" was over and Gandhiji had given the forests to the people.\(^2\)

The government source estimated that in the Murwara tahsil of Jabalpur district alone damage of forest was estimated to Rs.20,000/-. The total loss

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1. Political and Military Department File No. 39/CDM of 1930. Imposition of punitive police at Chandur Bazar, Tarakheda and Jarod in the Amravati district. R.N. De to E. Gorden, 7 August 1930

2. Home Political File No. 368 of 1930. It contains a communication from Chief Secretary, C.P. to Home Secretary, Government of India, 13 Sep., 1930.
to the forest department owing to the forest satyagraha of this kind was nearly 70,000 of rupees.\footnote{1}

The official government report about forest satyagraha mentions that the congress lost no opportunity to mobilize the villagers and Adivasis to widely develop the movement. No other branch of the government machinery is in direct than that of the forest administration. Therefore, a very delicate situation arose in this regard and the government had to face the situation with much caution.

\footnote{1 The Hitvada, 24 February 1931.}
VILLAGE MOB AGITATION

While taking permission to launch forest satyagraha in Central Provinces and Berar, D.P. Mishra had assured Pt. Motilal Nehru that it would be a peaceful movement. In the beginning it was peaceful and non-violent, but in due course it spread like a wildfire owing to the cruel and suppressive measures of the government and took a violent turn. The forest satyagraha was not limited only to cutting grass in government forests but it extended towards cattle grazing, protest in increase of land revenue and Begar etc. and turned into a mass mob agitation.

Towards the end of August 1930 and the subsequent months of September and October were marked by a series of violent out breaks, the more serious of which occurred in the districts of Betul, Raipur and Bhandara; while minor incidents occurred in the districts of Damoh, Bilaspur, Sagar and Chanda. A brief sketch of these village mob agitations is being given so as to complete the rural picture.

Banjari-Dhal Case (Betul District)

On 22 August 1930 Gajanand Karooc addressed a meeting of 500 men and women at Banjari-Dhal in Betul district. The police tried to arrest him, there was a scuffle between the police party and
the mob: as a result of which several policemen received several injuries and one constable died.\textsuperscript{1} The Superintendent of Police, Betul, reached the spot with fresh police force. The next day they had a clash with 800 persons under the leadership of Gajanand Karook. As a result of police firing one Koba Gond died on the spot and several persons were injured. Police arrested 23 persons and put them in jail.\textsuperscript{2} Some how Gajanand Karook escaped away. A prize of Rs.500 was declared for his arrest, but all efforts in this direction failed, as he was frequently changing his hiding place. After a month Pachmarhi police arrested him and he was sentenced to five year rigorous imprisonment.\textsuperscript{3}

\textbf{Chiklur Case (Betul district)}

In September 1930 the forest satyagraha took a serious turn. Due to uncertain conditions prevailing at several places police parties comprising of one Sub-Inspector, four Head constables and 50 Constables were posted at the cost of the district.\textsuperscript{4} This party marched under the

\begin{itemize}
\item[1.] Betul District Case File No.77 of 1930.
\item[2.] Betul District Case File No.101 of 1930.
\item[4.] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
leadership of Superintendent of Police, Betul, through the affected villages—Chicklur, Berangiri, Jamdihi, Barakhedi etc. and made several arrests. Consequently, the villagers were excited and on 19 September 1930 they attacked the police party at village Chicklur in order to release the arrested men. Police resorted to firing and as a result of this two persons died and about 40 were injured. Due to this scuffle ten persons were arrested and put in jail.

Gattasilli Case (Raipur district)

Dhamtari tahsil has played an important role in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930-32. At village Gattasilli in Dhamtari tahsil, 300 cattle were seized while grazing in preserved forest area by the Forest officials. They were sent to the cattle pond. The cattle owners reported the matter to the malguzar, Guru Goswami Lal Saheb, who approached other officers of Forest department for the relinquishment of the cattle but was not successful in his efforts. When he was disappointed he suggested the cattle owners to approach Anjorrao Kriduti who did not give any favourable response. Then they had no way except to contact the office bearers of the Congress Committee, Dhamtari. The

1. Betul District Case File No. 93 of 1930.
matter was then reported to Narayanrao Meghawale, Secretary, Congress Committee Dhamtari and Nathuji Jagtap.1

Immediately both the Congress leaders proceeded to Gattasilli with a party of satyagrahis, namely, Shobharam Dewangan, Sheobodhan Prasad, Ramlal Agrawal, Girdharilal Tiwari, Mukundrao Mane and Gangadharrao Padole.2

The news of the satyagraha campaign immediately came to the notice of police Shri Ramji, Circle Inspector marched to the said village with a party of armed policemen.3 When the satyagrahis reached the village, they found that the cattle were let out for sale in decree. The satyagrahis requested the cattle pond authorities to release the cattle and when it was denied, they slept on the cattle pond. The policemen tried to remove them forcibly but they failed in their attempt. This made the police irritative and then boiling water was brought and poured off on the satyagrahis. Even then, they kept mum as they were trained volunteers and patiently bore all the violent atrocities of the police.4

1. Shobharam Dewangan: Dhamtari Nagar Aur Tahsili-ka-Swathantrata Sangram Andolan, pp. 53-54. (Hand written script)
2. Ibid, p.53.
3. Ibid.
Apparently, it was a great success of the satyagrahis over the police which inspired them to go ahead and they decided to defy Forest Laws.

Rudri-Nawagaon Case (Raipur District)

On account of success of Gattasilli, the Congress Committee was encouraged and decided to start the forest satyagraha at Rudri-Nawagaon. It was decided that from the reserved forest of Rudri which was about two kilometers from Dhamtari, a team of five satyagrahis will cut grass everyday and thus defy the forest law. Narayanrao Meghawale was appointed the Dictator of the satyagrahis. It was decided to start the satyagraha from 22 August 1930 and Nathuji Jagtap was appointed the team leader of the satyagrahis.¹

Before the satyagraha could be started, Narayan Rao Meghawale and Nathuji Jagtap were arrested, so Chhotelal Shrivastava became the leader. Chhotelal Shrivastava arranged a meeting near the tahsil office and criticised the British government and made clear his intention to continue the satyagraha. The team of first satyagraha batch was given to Malguzar Govind Rao Dabhawale which headed towards Nawagaon. To boost up their morale Chhotelal Shrivastava also accompanied them.²

¹ File No.R115/3, Freedom Movement in Dhamtari Tahsil, p.2.
When they reached Rudri-Nawagaon, about half a mile of their destination, they were stopped by the police, which intimated them that section 144 CPC had been enforced in the Nawagaon area. Chhotelal Shrivastava paid no heed to it and declared that satyagraha would go on. As a result of this the police arrested the satyagrahis. The police searched the houses of the prominent satyagrahis and the Satyagrah Ashram. ¹

On 23 August 1930 the second batch for the satyagrah was arranged to defy the Forest Law. Police made arrest of Chhotelal Shrivastava, Ramlal Agarwal, Govind Das Joshi, Amritlal Khare and Shankar Rao Kolhatkar.² In addition to the imprisonment, the satyagrahis were punished with 15 to 50 cane whipping.

On 24 August 1930 the third batch of satyagrahis was arranged in which the participants were also from Sihawa-Nagri. Police arrested Shyamalal sonof village headman of Nagri.³ In order to put a brake on the satyagraha movement Shobharam Devangan, Secretary of the Dhamtari Congress Committee, was arrested by the police, under section 117. Despite this the movement continued, and gained momentum.

After the arrest of all the prominent leaders of the tahsil, Lal Saheb Ramsingh of Dhamtari, reorganised the movement. Thousands of people and satyagrahis gathered to defy Section 144 by proceeding for Rudri Nawagaon. A Military van pursued the crowd. On 16 September 1930 an attempt was made by the Congress volunteers to stage the forest satyagraha near Dhamtari. While attempting to check it, the police party was heavily stoned by the crowd. Consequently one Sub-Inspector was seriously injured. The police retaliated and opened fire which wounded two persons. On the same day 5000 people collected at Rudri for forest satyagraha. The District Superintendent of Police was assaulted while dispersing the mob. 1

But the above statement quoted in the District Gazetteer Raipur 1973 differs from the record of National Archives, New Delhi. The record describes: 2

"On 16 September 1930 the District Superintendent of Police with a party of 16 police men found a crowd of 2000 people at Rudri completely out of hand determined to violate orders passed under section 144, C.P.C. in connection with breach of Forest Law. The mob refused to disperse when ordered to do so and melle followed

in which a sub-inspector was disabled
by a wound in the eye. Fire was opened."

Shobharam Dewangan, freedom fighter writes
"The incident happened about 2.00 to
2.30 p.m. on 16.9.30 lathi charge was
made by the police, while satyagrahis
defied section 144 C.P.C. During the
lathi charge, disorder and confusion
was natural. Rambharose, a Sub-Inspector
fell down into stoney and muddy land and
wounded his eye. But it was assumed by
the police that the sub-inspector was
stoned. It was nothing but retaliation
that resorted firing. Bhinduji Kumbhakar
and Ratnuji of Lamkeni village were
seriously wounded, but even in that
condition, they were arrested and sent
to Raipur jail. Bhinduji died in jail
within two or three days of his arrest".

About the same incident other Government
records informs us :-

1. Shobha Ram Dewangan, Dhamtari Nagar- Aur-
Tahsil-ka-Swatantrata Sangram Andolan, p.
59 (Hand written script).

2. Home Political Department, C.D. Campaign,
File No. 14/14/1931.
The Raipur district had passed an order under Section 144 C.P.C. to deal with attempts of forest satyagraha. Information had been received that an attempt would be made to violate these orders. The District Superintendent of Police wired to Nagpur for a detachment of Special Armed Force and he himself with a small party proceeded to Rudri. There he found a large number of excited villagers surrounding the constable on duty at the Station House. The mob was getting out of hand and District Superintendent of Police, therefore, approached them and warned them to disperse. They refused and a violent attack was made on him and his men. During the fracas the police were separated into two parts of eight men each under the District Superintendent of Police and Sub-Inspector respectively. The District Superintendent of Police had scattered the crowd in front him. When he was returning he heard shots.

He found his sub-inspector lying unconscious and three constables injured, while one constable who had fired eight rounds stood over them facing a dangerous crowd. Again the District Superintendent
of Police charged and finally dispersed
the mob which throughout the affair had
evined a most murderous disposition."

The following satyagrahis were arrested on
the spot; Dinkar Rao Hishikar, Hastamal Jain,
Pt. Indra Prasad Shashtri, Nathuji Yashwantrao
Jalap, Thakur Chajjoo Singh, Jhuman Shah, Smt.
Dayabati Bai, Smt. Drupadi Bai, Lal Saheb Ramsingh,
Thakur Mahesh Singh, Chandrayyaji and an unnamed
Bengali Saint. 1 After the arrests, Section 144
C.P.C. was extended upto 10 March 1931 from 10
September 1930. During these six months, volunteers
were imposed with punitive tax. Many were arrested
and sent to jail Rs. 30,000/- was collected from
satyagrahis as punitive tax. The satyagrahis were
fined at the following rates: 2

Nathuji Jagtap - Rs. 1,100, Sheoratan Puri - Rs. 600/-
Shyamal Soni - Rs. 600/-, M.R. Hishikar Rs. 500/-,
Raghunath Yadav - Rs. 500/-, Chhotelal Shrivastava - Rs. 500/-
Ramlal Agrawal - Rs. 400/-, Bissoo Pawar - Rs. 300/-,
Khamanlal - Rs. 300/-, Govind Rao - Rs. 300/-,
Narayan Rao Meghawale - Rs. 250/-, Sunderlal Sharma - Rs. 250,
Sheobodhan Prasad - Rs. 200/-, Pt. Girdharilal Tiwari - Rs. 200,
Chandrayya Vaidya - Rs. 200/-, Ramprasad Potdar - Rs. 200/-,
Sunderlal Watchmaker - Rs. 200/-, Dulbha Pawar - Rs. 200/-
Shankar Rao Jagtap - Rs. 200/-, Mehtaram Pawar Rs. 200/-,
Sadashiv Rao Jagtap - Rs. 200/-, Lavkishan Gor - Rs. 200/-

2. Ibid., pp. 61-65.
Shankarlal Baboo-Rs.200/-, Nanhelal Panduka-Rs.200/-, Yadavrao Ramodhker-Rs.200/-, Balram Nagker-Rs.100/-, Ramchandra Puri-Rs.100/-, Sheoprasad Dau-Rs.50/-, Biharilal Sahu-Rs.50/-, Kondak Prasad- Rs.50/-, Sadaram Sahu- Rs.50/-

However, the serious situation in the district caused great anxiety to the government. Consequently, punitive police were imposed on 16 September 1930 in Dhamtari, Mahasamund, Arang and Gariyaband with a total strength of 122 police officials at the expense of Rs. 27,484/-

**Tamora Case (Raipur District)**

Yatiyatanlal Jain and Shankar Rao Ganodwale launched the forest satyagraha in Mahasamund tahsil. In September 1930 a party of satyagrahis proceeded towards Tamora village led by Bhagwati Prasad Mishra and accompanied by Prayag Dutt Shukla, JeewanGiri Goswami, Adwait Gir Goswami Chouthmal, Chhotelal and Raghubir Singh.

On 9 September 1930 Yati Yatanlal Jain and Shankar Rao Ganodwale were arrested on the charge of contraband of forest goods after which Arimardan Giri became the dictator of the movement. About the arrests of Yati Yatanlal Jain and Shankar Rao

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Ganodwale government records inform us as under: 1

"On 9th September some 5,000 persons armed with bows and arrows set off from Tambora to challenge the authority of police. The Ranger of the forest was present at the forest boundary and warned the people, but was brushed aside. Police were requisitioned, and several arrests made."

The movement continued with a great fervour. Though the contemporary Sub-Divisional Officer, Shri M.P.Dube had sympathetic and vindictive view towards the satyagrahis but he tried to entice Adwait Giri Goswami, leader of the satyagrahis by offering him a government village Ghode on condition to withdraw the movement. Adwait Giri Goswami declined the offer and the movement still continued for about 15 to 20 days. It was the rostering routine of the satyagrahis to enter the preserved forest and defy the forest law by cutting grass. The Forest Officers and Police officials retaliated this move and made arrests. During the movement fifty to sixty satyagrahis were confined and sentenced to five to seven months' rigorous imprisonment along with a fine of Rs.200/- to 700/-. On 24 September 1930 Adwait Giri Goswami,

1. Home Political Department, C.D.Campaign, File No. 14/14/31.
Chouthmal, Budansab and Chandra Pal Karare were arrested.¹

Section 144 C.P.C. was promulgated on 13 September 1930 Tamora village as well as in the adjoining areas of preserved forest. Despite this 10,000 persons gathered there to defy Section 144 C.P.C. and the Forest Law. About hundred constables armed with guns were also stationed there. One day in a usual course the party of the satyagrahis led by a teen-aged girl Dayabati proceeded towards the preserved forest to defy forest law, but she was prevented and stopped by M.P.Dubey, the then Sub-Divisional Officer and Magistrate. On this she slapped the Magistrate. It was rather more than enough to resort to firing or to shoot her, but the kind hearted Magistrate appreciated her boldness.² Anyway she was able to enter the preserved forest along with the party of satyagrahis and defied forest law. Dayabati has described this in her own words: "On the day of the meeting, the police was preventing the people by covering the road with ropes on both sides who were coming from villages...


² Ibid.
Karubhata, Dhonga, Dhorabhata etc. to participate in the meeting. We also reached there. Thereupon the police resorted to caneing and also persuaded us to disperse, but we said that you better kill us, we will not move. Even after police obstruction, we managed to let the satyagrahis in the forest." In this team of satyagrahis there were about forty women. Police arrested a number of satyagrahis which included Halekhi Khar, Chatai Teli, Jhuthu Gond, Badan Gond, Mehta Gond, Mehru Gond, Bihari, Ramcharan etc.

Other incidents:

A public meeting was held at Salhya village of Mahasamund Tahsil, presided over by Anjor Singh Thakur, a Rajput malguzar of Tanwathpara. The participants of the meeting were suddenly assaulted by the police which made the mob wild. They attacked the police. One Circle Inspector and some policemen were severely wounded. The police arrested about 144 persons.²

One head constable and two constables were escorting a Congress prisoner through Raipur. They were followed by a mob of about two hundred who hurled stones and hustled them. The head-constable

1. Report of Thakur Pyarelal Singh dt. 14.4. 1931. (The Report was compiled by Congress Committee which inquired about the atrocities committed on the villagers.)

2. Ibid., p. 13.
The events moved rapidly. The government wanted to suppress the movement. The police atrocities made the people resentful. The Assistant Superintendent of Police with a party operating in the Nawapara Station House in Mahasamund tahsil arrested a man for whom they held a warrant at an evening meeting at Patarpaili, seven miles from the Station House. When the arrest was made, the mob became violent which had to be dispersed. The crowd retreated, but it again attacked the police when they returned home that night. A running fight lasted for about two miles during which the mob persistently stoned the police injuring about twenty persons. The difficult nature of the ground and the darkness made position of the police precarious and they were forced to open fire in self-defence. The Circle Inspector and his constables were found missing during the home march. But on the next day they were found in badly injured condition in the neighbouring village.  

The Extra Assistant Commissioner incharge of superseded District Council was proceeding to Arang to enquire into the case of a dismissed school master. He was stoned and his car was damaged.  

1. Home Political Department, C.D.Campaign, File No. 14/14/1931.  
2. lb'd,p.8  
3. lb'd.
Encouraged by the success of the forest satyagraha of Tamara, a forest satyagraha was launched at Tanwat-Nayapara also. There had been no restrictions on grazing in the zamindari forests of Central province and Berar, only fees was being charged by the zaminders for the same. Besides this a fee of Rs.1/- was recovered from each cultivator towards firewood even though he was not collecting it.¹

These rates were enhanced by the zamindar in the year 1930. The new rates were so high that the cultivators found it impossible to pay owing to their poverty and pitiable condition. In order to settle the matter a meeting was held at village Saliha in which the malguzars and cultivators of all the neighbouring villages participated. This meeting was attended by nearly 4,000 to 5,000 people. At the instance of the zamindar, the Circle Inspector Police accompanied by twentyfive constables reached the meeting spot and started caneing the gathering. Subsequently twentyeight persons were arrested and put in jail.²

On 13 September 1930 forty men of the zamindar along with the police party visited Tanwat-Nayapara. They collected the cattles of the

¹ Amrit Sandesh, Raipur, 15 August 1972.
² Thakur Pyarelal Singh, report submitted to the Mahakoshal Provincial Congress Committee d/- 14 Apr. 1, 1931.
villages Salhebhata, Siyaldih, Oaresmuda, Golmul and Gotma and empoind them in the cattle pond, though the cattle were not being grazed in government forest and there was no restriction of cattle grazing in the forests of the zamindaries. In addition to this the police party committed various types of atrocities in the villages, entered their houses forcibly, assaulted them and took away their belongings and also took 'Begar' from them. Punitive tax was also collected from them. 1

The poor villagers were thus tyrannized by the zamindars as well as by the police, and no stone was left unturned to crush any movement started against them.

Turia Case (Seoni district)

An incident that happened at Turia in Seoni district is typical of the hysterical manner in which the police behaved. On 9 October 1930 an angry mob included the accused truculent and armed, made a concerted attack on a handful of police party.

Sequel to the prevalence of forest satyagraha movement in the Korai Tract, a notice was given to the Deputy Commissioner, Seoni, intimating the grass cutting in the government forest in Turia by the people on 9 October 1930.

1. Ibid.
The Sub-Inspector Police, Sadruddin, with two Head constables, ten constables, Range Officer G.D. Mehta and his forest guards went to the place on 9 October 1930. At Turia the party put up in the Malguzar's bada. On enquiry it was found out that the satyagrah would be launched at Waverghani and not at Turia. The party accordingly leaving its things at the malguzar's place went to Waverghani, where the Sub-Inspector and the Range Officer persuaded people not to do satyagrah. They agreed to follow the advice of the Sub-Inspector and the Range Officer. The party left Waverghani and while returning to Turia they found some 500 to 600 people assembled at Khirka outside Turia population. The Range Officer and the Sub-Inspector approached them and tried to dissuade them from launching the satyagraha. They proved amenable and some of them dispersed. The police party left the place and proceeded towards the malguzar's bada at Turia. On the way they met a large procession consisting of about 2,000 people with lathies and axes led by Gujarisi God of the village Piparia. On seeing the police the mob began shouting slogans (डूंडा ऊंचा रहे हमारा) instead of (झंडा ऊंचा रहे हमारा) and assumed threatening demeanour by levelling their lathies at the police. The Sub-Inspector Police scenting danger went to the malguzar's bada and thence started immediately for Khawasa. The surging mob finding a small body of police going away precipitately chased it and intercepted its
way at the Nalla on Turia-Khawasa forest road about four miles away from Turia. The Sub Inspector Police, the Range Officer Mr. Mehta and their men faced there a huge crowd, which began to throw stones and lathies at them. The importunities of the Sub-Inspector and the Range Officer fell on deaf ears. The crowd closed in. The police continued menancing and hurling stones. In this way the small party was surrounded by the violent mob and was hit by lathies. The Range Officer and the Sub-Inspector were hit on the heads, and blows fell on their hats. Daddu, a Constable fell down on the ground by the blow of a stone. Another constable met with the same fate. The hood of the bullock cart was broken. The situation was getting frightfully critical the people were outraged and when all attempts to pacify them proved futile the police resorted to the last measure—that of firing. One shot was fired but it did not have the desired effect. The crowd remained defiant and militant. Volley firing was then ordered by the Sub Inspector of Police Mr. Sadruddin. Some of the people fell. It produced the desired effect. People began to scatter and then dispersed. Constable Kashiram received an injury on his right fore-arm by a chisel hurled by the mob. Two chisels, an axe, lathies and one Basula were found on the spot where the mob was assaulting the police party, after it dispersed. The police proceeded to Khawasa. Later
the Sub Inspector went to Seoni and reported the matter to the District Superintendent of Police, and the Deputy Commissioner. The Circle Inspector of Police started investigations and the subsequent prosecutions of the accused.

The Forest Satyagraha was violent in Korai tract from June 1930 to October 1930. During the months of September and October it came to full swing. The number of rioters was large and they were shouting provocative slogans. Soon they became non-violent. The Sub Inspector Police was faced with the question of life and death and also apprehended the same of the police party, as such he was constrained to order firing. The arrested persons were Mukka Lohar and Gajarsi who were the main leaders, the other prominent persons arrested were mahoo, Sahoo, Gulsai, Kanhoo, Gulabsi, Barati, Ganga, Gajjar, Chatri, Jangli, Chidoo, Sakharam, Saddoo, Jaisingh, Budhiya, Ujjiar and Fakira.

The case of prosecution was tried in the Court of Mr. Laxmi Narayan, Sub Divisional Magistrate, Seoni, who delivered the judgement on 5 May 1931 charging the accused with creating an atmosphere of lawlessness and chaos against the government. Out of the whole lot Mukka Lohar and Gajarsi were the real originators of the entire trouble who had instigated their other followers. Both were sentenced to eighteen months' rigorous imprisonment. The other accused Mahoo, Sahoo,
Gulsai, Kanhoo, Gulabsi, Barati, Ganga, Gajjar, Chatri and Jangli were sentenced to nine months' rigorous imprisonment. Accused Chidoo, Sakharam, Saddoo, Johri, Jaisingh, Budhiya, Ujjar and Fakira were sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment. It was also observed by the Sub Divisional Magistrate Seoni in his judgement: "As for the sentence the circumstances under which the serious offence has been perpetrated are highly aggravating and call for severe punishment. The accused were members of violent and vociferous mob and under the cover of non-violent satyagraha they carried out their violent schemes. Recalcitrant and revengeful, they paid no heed to the entreaties of the small posse which but for the firing would have been extinct. They have shown that the so called non-violence is in reality another phase of violence".  

An appeal was filed against this judgement by the accused in the Court of Shri M.C. Tiwary, Sessions Judge, Chhindwara, under Criminal Appeal No. 40 of 1931. The judgement was delivered on 27 June 1931.  

of imprisonment was reduced except in the case of Budhiya who was sentenced to six months' rigorous imprisonment, the term of imprisonment was confirmed and remained unchanged. Accordingly Jaising, Saddu, Johri, Fakira, Ujjar, chiddu, Sakharam were sentenced with rigorous imprisonment for a term of four months, while Mahu, Ganga, Gulsi, Chatri, Jangli, and Gajjar were imprisoned for a term of six months' rigorous imprisonment.

Thus the Turia Forest Satyagraha case of Seoni district which has been regarded as a unique one came to an end with the above appeal judgement of 27 June 1931.

Khuradi Riot Case (District Bhandara)

Khuradi is a village in the Gondia tahsil, situated in the interior, about twelve miles to the south of Gondia near the forests. According to the declaration made in a public meeting held at Gondhia on 4 October 1930 a mass satyagraha was to be performed in the government forest near Pongazari about six miles beyond Khuradi on 6 October 1930. A police party consisting of one Circle Inspector, two Sub Inspectors, three Head constables and twenty constables left for the forest area on 5 October 1930 and reached Khuradi on way after 7.30 p.m. and halted there for the night. The party lodged in the bada of a malguzar named Ramlal
who was a local board member and kept himself aloof from the political agitation. It was noticed that the village Dhimars were rather unwilling to go to perform their customary services and went very late to the malguzar's bada at the instigation of local Congress workers. According to Ramlal Patel some constables seemed to have given a push or two to some of the Dhimars in the night. However, nothing happened that night.

The real trouble arose in the morning when the police party began to make arrangements to reach the satyagraha spot in time. The statements of Ramlal Patel and the village Kotwar Nama show that in spite of the two calls sent to them, the Dhimars refused to come to work. They were doing customary services which consisted of drawing water and washing of pots, generally known as Chowka. Ordinarily the service is not paid for by the subordinate officials. In the morning of 6 October 1930 when the Dhimars did not turn up for work, one of the Head constables along with fifteen constables dressed in uniforms and ten of them having their lathies and rest empty handed went to call the Dhimars for doing Chowka along with the village Kotwar and also to bring the Dhimars. The Kotwar showed them a Dhimar's house. One Gotya Dhimar was sitting in Kusna Dhimar's verandah. On being questioned as to why he was not going to work, he flatly refused to go and said that it was
his pleasure. One constable caught hold of the hand of the Dhimar who cried out and this was the signal for about 200 men armed with lathis, Khatwas and dutais to come out from the surrounding houses and lanes and some men who were sitting on stones in the middle of the Chauraha also joined them. The place was well chosen for a sudden attack. It was about 30' square with four roads leading out on four sides. There were plenty of stones jutting out in the centre which made movements difficult. The police men defended themselves and counter attacked. One of the assailants fell down and this dispersed the villagers yet many of them however, chased the policemen upto the malgazar's bada, about three furlongs off. During the scuffle two of the Gowaries named Timya and Janya (who were brothers) received stabbing wounds while eight of the police constables were injured. There is no doubt that the villagers made a premeditated attack and the refusal of the Dhimas to work and bringing of the police party to the ambush were all prearranged. From all versions including that of the Kotwar at least 150 persons with lathis surrounded the policemen and blocked three roads of exit. The villagers were reluctant to send the injured persons-- Timya and Janya-- to hospital at Gondia for treatment after the scuffle, but with great persuasion they started at about 4 p.m. and reached hospital at 12 p.m. One person died at 9
a.m. next morning and the other at about 12.45 p.m. due to injuries caused by some sharp weapon on the abdomen. The Sub Divisional Magistrate who was camping at Tirora, went to the hospital at Gondia and inspected the injuries of both the deceased persons. Some of the local pleaders of Gondia and the Congressmen who inspected their injuries. Later on the bodies were handed over for postmortem examination. By this time a large crowd collected and tried to take out a procession of the dead bodies through the main streets of the town after the postmortem. No permission was granted by the authorities and they were advised to take the dead bodies to the burning ground. A mob of about 300 persons formed the funeral party and went to the burning ground.¹

The news flashed in the Hitvada, Nagpur, of 12 October, 1930, under the heading, "Police Method at Gondia: Death of two villagers".²

Government of the Central Provinces, Political and Military Department, issued a communique on 22 October 1930 stating that prior to this enquiries in the matters were instituted by the government officials and the result was that they had recommended prosecution of the villagers under Section 148 I.P.C.

¹. Political and Military Department, File No. 208/CDM of 1931 pp.168-182.
². The Hitvada, 12 October, 1930.
The matter was later put up to the Governor, who took it as an unfortunate local quarrel, and directed that proceedings against the police or the villagers be dropped and offered to provide without prejudice for the dependents of the deceased. Thereupon a monthly allowance of Rs.5/- each was ordered to be paid to the widows of the persons who died—Timya and Janya.¹

Owing to this unfortunate incident which happened suddenly on 6 October 1930, the scheduled forest satyagraha to be started at Pengijhara about five miles from Kurhadi could not take place.

**Minor incidents elsewhere**

Minor clashes also occurred at Damoh, Sagar, and Bilaspur during this period. On 1 August 1930 in Damoh when the trial of some leaders was going on a demonstration outside the jail got out of hand and had to be dispersed. On 30 August 1930 at Khurai a mob invaded the railway station on the occasion of the arrest of a satyagrahi and stones were pelted on a passing train. In Bilaspur an attack was made on a number of policemen who were returning to their lines after dispersing a crowd at the Government High school, Bilaspur.²

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¹. Ibid.
². *Note on Civil Disobedience Movement in the Central Provinces and Berar, 31 December 1930*, p.9.
Despite these widely spread manifestations of violence there was no doubt that improvement in the situation was taking place which steadily became more marked. Beginning from Jabalpur division where serious trouble first began and ended, it gradually extended through the Berar and Nagpur divisions then to the Chhattisgarh division, which was the last show of violence and where the normal conditions were restored.

By the middle of October 1930 forest styagraha and mob agitations had almost ceased to exist and the congress activities were confined chiefly to dwindling meetings and/or sporadic attempts to continue picketing of liquor and foreign cloth in a few of the districts of Central Provinces and Berar.
In the third decade of the present century a wave of awakening came among the Indian farmers. They realised their strength. An awareness came in them. They started organizing themselves. It was also due to the world wide economic market depression. The farmers especially had been badly affected financially and their economic condition got worse. Another reason which brought about awakening in the masses was due to the wide change in the political situation. The movement launched by the Indian National Congress in 1930 was to be a mass movement.

The economic depression of 1929-30 had reduced the prices of agricultural products to the extent that they came down below 50 percent or more of the prevailing prices. It adversely affected the plight of Indian farmers who suffered tremendous financial hardships and found it difficult to pay land revenue and taxes. The government was not prepared to reduce the taxation or to ask the zamindars to reduce the land revenue. Though the depression in the world market had affected the industries also yet the prices of their products did not go so low as in the case of agricultural products. The farmers were compelled to pay taxes, land revenue and outstanding dues of loans at the prior prevailing rates. This deteriorated their economic and financial condition to a great extent.
In this atmosphere of great discontent the Civil Disobedience Movement was launched by the Congress. In many parts of the country it also included non-payment of taxes and land revenue as one of its programmes. The farmers had a successful gain previously in the Bardoli satyagraha movement of 1928 so the farmers played an active role and participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement with much enthusiasm and boldness.

The Congress Working Committee met at Allahabad on 12th to 15th May 1930 and decided that the time has come for the launching of a no-tax campaign by non-payment of specified taxes in certain provinces. It was further decided that the beginning should be made by non-payment of the land tax in provinces where the ryotwari system prevailed, such as Gujrat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra, Tamil Nadu and the Punjab and by the non-payment of the Chowkidari Tax in provinces where it was levied such as Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. It, therefore, called upon such provinces to organize campaigns for non-payment of land tax or chowkidari tax as the case might be in areas to be selected by the concerned Provincial Congress Committees. The Committee warned the tax-payers of areas not selected by the Provincial Congress Committee against embarking on a campaign of
non-payment of land revenue or chowkidari tax as such an action was likely to interfere seriously with the conduct of the general campaign of Civil Disobedience.¹

As mentioned earlier the economic depression had caused misery and discontent among the peasants. As if to further their troubles a new Land Revenue Settlement came into effect, which was quite dissatisfactory.² Besides this the government increased the land revenue. The farmers became furious.

Towards the end of May 1930 the Settlement Officer (Land Records) visited Arang in order to distribute the "Patta" to the farmers. The Congress volunteers organized a meeting and exhorted the farmers not to accept the Patta and not to pay any land revenue or any other kind of tax. As a result of their speeches and appeals, nearly 180 farmers who had assembled at Arang refused to accept the Patta and decided not to pay any land revenue to the government.

In the Satyagraha Ashram at Dhamtari, 1300 Congress volunteers were receiving training. After it was over on 15 May 1930 they visited the nearby


villages and exhorted the villagers to graze their cattle in the government forests and not to pay any grazing tax or fee in this regard.¹

One of the leading Congress workers of Chhattisgarh, Thakur Pyarelal Singh, moved from village to village and organized the farmers and a movement was started not to accept the Patta or pay land revenue.² This was one of a dangerous moves against the British government, therefore, Thakur Pyarelal Singh was arrested on 25 June 1930 and was imposed imprisonment.³ He was released after the Gandhi-Irwin Pact along with other political prisoners. About this movement a unknown poet had composed and recited a poem, which reads as under:⁴

करें तुम्हारी करबर्दी की मालपुरा बुलाये हाल ।
आज देश को विफट समस्या बेढ़ों अड़े बीच मन्दिगर ॥
तुड़ पर मन में खोया भैया जो बंटवाला हुआ है हाल ।
लोग लेकर मरना बड़ौं दौं केवल पुष्च किसान हाल ॥
स्तरिय जीतन भरहै दाना को फसन न तन पे दीखत भाय ॥
उषा कुंज दियो समुद्र ैं, करबर नियाल लेनु बनय ल।

¹. Political and Military Department, File No.187/CDM of 1930, p.7.
³. This is a controversial issue about the term of imprisonment imposed on Thakur Pyare Lal Singh whether it was one year or three years.
In Bilaspur district, 'No-Tax Campaign' was organized by Gajadhar Sao of Mungeli. He along with some other workers organized the farmers and encouraged them not to pay the increased land revenue to the government. The farmers of the entire district gave their full cooperation and actively participated in this movement and refused to pay the land revenue. On the request of the Zamindars and the Malguzars the government arrested Gajadhar Sao.¹

¹In Berar the price of cotton had gone down to a greater extent. This badly affected the financial status of the farmers. This became a subject matter of anxiety for the government. A meeting of the high government officials was convened at the bungalow of the Home Member, Central Provinces and Berar at Nagpur, on 19 December 1930 to review the political and economic situation prevailing in the province. In the meeting Commissioner of Berar expressed his concern about the economic condition rather than that of political situation. He was of the opinion that the economic condition prevented a very favourable field for political agitation. He emphasised that the government should assist the people by grant of substantial sums of taccavi, which would amount to Rs.20 lakhs for his division. In the meeting it was

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also discussed that there would undoubtedly be considerable difficulty in collecting land revenue and that a non-payment campaign was likely to find more favour with the people, if it was found that government was not coming forward for their help. The Commissioner, Nagpur Division, emphasised that the economic situation of the cotton tract of his division was much the same as that of Berar and farmers were facing considerable economic difficulties. Politically, the Nerbuda division gave no cause for anxiety.

The question of the application of the Unlawful Insitigation Ordinance, which related to the non-payment of taxes, to the province was also discussed. The Commissioner, Berar division, was of the opinion that the talk of non-payment of revenue or the "Bardoli Week" campaign was serious and was not very anxious for the immediate application of the Ordinance to Berar. The Commissioner, Nagpur division, was in favour of the Ordinance being applied at once, in view of the ventilation of no-tax campaign. The general feeling of the meeting was that it was desirable to have the Ordinance extended to the province at once.¹

The no-tax campaign had been activated in some cases by the issue of printed applications

¹ Political and Military Department, File No. 272/CDM of 1930. Proceedings of the meeting held at the bungalow of Home Member, on 19.12.1930.
to villagers asking them to petition the government against the recovery of land revenue. In two places in the Nagpur district hand-bills were posted calling upon villagers not to pay rent.¹

The Congress organization, especially in the Jabalpur division, set itself up at the time of the last rabi kist to make political capital out of the economic situation. Under the pretext of championing the rural community, Congress leaders, initiated a campaign to discourage the payment of rent and land revenue by telling the farmers that they were unable to pay, and that, if they insisted on this act, government would give them concessions. The line taken was to render lip-service to the obligation to pay, while emphasizing that the raiyats were not in a position to do so. At a meeting of malguzars and tenants organized at Sihora in Jabalpur district on 15 May 1931 the speakers held the government officers up to derision and made it obvious as the Congress cared nothing for the law or the orders of the government servants and that the farmers should also adopt the same attitude. The speeches were full of phrases such as:

1. Political and Military Department, File No. 229/CDM of 1931, p. 128.
"If the speakers chose to break orders and agitated for non-payment, Government would not be able to collect a pie of revenue.

"Any way in five or six months the speakers will be the government, and the present officers of government will be their servants who must obey or go."¹

At the Political Provincial Conference of the Congress held at Sagar on 12 June 1931 K.R. Khandekar, a Congress leader, said that the national movement was over, but they have to carry it to the rural population. This agitation led to a riot in Jabalpur district on 29 June 1931 when the tenants of tenants to pay rent to a malguzar’s munim.²

Although in 1931 Congress had partially suspended the Civil Disobedience Movement for the time being but it had tried to rouse the spirit of the public by arranging mass meetings. It was also incorporated in the first fortnightly report of May 1931 of the government of the Central Provinces as under:³

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1. Political and Military Department, File No. 60/CDM of 1932, p.64.
2. Ibid.
3. Home Political Department, File No. 18/5/31, FR1, 1931 May
"It is rather observed that the Indian leaders have before hand apprehended that the Round Table Conference would prove a failure as such they have formulated a plan that nobody should pay the government taxes and land revenue and started the movement."

During his visit to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel stressed upon the leaders and active workers of the Congress to bring the village farmers and labourers in their fold and to have their active participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement. He further assured the farmers that after attainment of "Swaraj" they will get many remissions and free-hold in land revenue and other taxes.

To examine the economic conditions of the farmers, the Mahakoshal Congress Committee formed an enquiry Committee in November 1931. The Committee made an extensive tour of the villagers of Sagar, Damoh and Jabalpur districts and submitted the report. Though the committee made observations in three districts but it was of opinion that similar conditions prevailed in almost all other districts of the Central Provinces. It

1. Home Political Department, File No 18/6/31 FRI, 1931, June
was also observed that due to successive crop failures the condition of the farmers had much deteriorated. It had also put a stop to their productivity. This resulted in the increase of their financial burden towards loan etc. which had increased to the extent of 30 percent to 50 percent or more. The net result was that many of the cultivators had to sell off their lands. The government had been forcibly recovering the loan from the farmers and in the event of non-payment, their lands were confiscated and they were being put behind the bars.¹

As a result of this, when the Civil Disobedience Movement was suspended in 1931, the farmers did not remain inactive but they organized themselves for their active support and participation at an appropriate moment.

Soon came a call upon the Nation to enter the fiery ordeal for the second time. The Working Committee of the Indian National Congress issued instructions to 11 congress men and women throughout the country on 1 January 1932 with regard to the non-payment of taxes in the following manner:²

"It is not commonly known that under modern artificial conditions people pay more to the State through indirect taxation than through direct taxation.

¹ Agrarian Committee Report--Summary of pages 1 to 10, Mahakoshal Congress Committee Files and papers 1929-52.
² A.I.C.C.Papers,File No.P-22/1932
Thus the nation pays the State crores of rupees through the State railways, posts and telegraph services, the customs and the like. If the nation realized this fact all young and old who use these services can take an effective part in the no-tax campaign inaugurated by the Congress Working Committee.

The Congress Working Committee, therefore, calls upon all concerned to help the movement and themselves by reducing to the minimum their use of such services and articles on which customs are paid. The Working Committee draws the attention of the public to the fact that the reduction here proposed in addition to promoting the no-tax movement and thus withdrawing support from a system which the nation seeks to change, will decrease individual expenditure in these hard times and, in the case of goods covered by customs, will encourage Swadeshi.

The Working Committee assures the Zamindars concerned that the no-rent proposals referred to were in no way aimed at them but that they represent an economic necessity for the peasantry which is known to be half starved and
at present suffering from unprecedented economic distress. The Working Committee has no design upon any interest legitimately acquired and not in conflict with the national well-being. The Working Committee, therefore, appeals to all landed or monied classes to help the Congress to the best of their ability in its fight for freedom of the Country."

When the Second Civil Disobedience Movement was started, Raipur town was the most prominent base for the "Non-payment of Taxes" agitation. On 10 January 1932 there was a mass meeting of the peasants under the presidency of Pt. Ravishankar Shukla. Thakur Pyarelal Singh also addressed the meeting and asked the people to resist the government measures and exhorted them not to pay the land revenue. Thakur Pyarelal Singh was, therefore, arrested on 29 January 1932 and sentenced to two years rigorous imprisonment and made to pay a fine of Rs.150/-.

In default of payment of fine all his immovable properties were seized by the government. Even then, the government was not satisfied and it further seized his LL.B. degree. He was the single lawyer in the Central Provinces, whose degree was seized by the

1. A Compilation of Important Political Trials in C.P. & Berar, p.11
The agrarian condition in Bilaspur district was pitiable and the agitation for non-payment of taxes and land revenue was being carried on there. A number of meetings were arranged in different villages throughout the district in which the economic conditions were discussed by the speakers. Land Records Settlement operations were just completed in the Janjgir tahsil and the preparation of the new Wajib-ul-arz led to some excitement, as in the new Wajib-ul-arz there was no reference of the custom of Bhet begar, while there were two references of the fact that members of the proprietary body had a right to recover grazing dues. The custom of Bhet begar has apparently continued up till recent times in many villages and in return for its continuance malguzars had not been enforcing their rights to collect grazing dues. There had already been friction in some of the neighbouring zamindaris where efforts had been made by indiscreet persons to continue to extract forced labour or alternatively to collect grazing dues. There were ample signs that there would be a similar friction in the Janjgir Tahsil. Discontent of this type could usually be handled without difficulty in normal

times of prosperity. But the economic condition then had contributed to the spread of restlessness amongst the tenants of many of the Janjgir villages. If a general refusal to pay rents occurred in the Janjgir tahsil there was little doubt that the example of the tenants there would readily initiate the same movement in the neighbouring zamindaris in the Katghora tahsil. In Mungeli and Bilaspur tahsils there had also been some propaganda by various Satnami leaders, while in the vicinity of Mungeli itself Gejadhara Sao, with his eleven volunteers, was actively preaching the desirability of refraining from paying rents and of going to jail.¹

In order to rouse the sentiments of the farmers in Janjgir tahsil, meetings were arranged by the Congress workers at different places in which speeches were delivered. Extracts of some of them are narrated below:²

Place: Sheorinarayan — December 29, 1931:
Speaker: Amarsingh, "The tenants in Allahabad have refused to pay revenue and their leaders have been arrested. Government is now not so strong and so is compelled to pass special laws. There will now be another war and more volunteers will be needed."

¹ Political and Military Department, File No.11/CDM of 1932.
² Political and Military Department, File No. 61/CDM of 1932 pp.67-71.
Place: Champa: 1 January 1932. Speaker: Amarsingh

"The Settlement Report was made when the price of rice was 14 seers per rupee. It was possible to pay rents when prices stood at that level. The price is now over one maund* per rupee. Congress will decide what is to be done. This time we must be prepared to receive bullets as well as lathi blows."

Place: Bamnidih. Speaker: Ramdayal Sonar.

"If you come to the meeting in Bilaspur in a crowd the government will bend before you. We must obey the orders of the Congress and we must wait for the next war."

Speaker: Badri Prasad Bani.

"The land revenue was fixed when grain prices were high, but now they have fallen. You must prepared to act together."

Speaker: Amarsingh

"We are expecting a new war. You must volunteer, you must all be ready to receive bullets and learn how to die."

Place: Janjgir: 3 January 1932. Speaker: Badri Prasad Bani

"It is impossible for tenants to pay their present taxes."

* 40 seers = 1 maund
Speaker: Ramdayal Sonar

"Tenants have no money as the prices of dhan have fallen. The crops have not been good and it is difficult for tenants to pay their taxes."

Speaker: Amarsingh

"Non-payment of taxes has been started in the United Provinces. Government is unable to control the situation. More volunteers are now required."

Place: Balod: 6 January, 1932. Speaker: Amarsingh

"The tenants in the United Provinces have refused to pay land revenue. Another war is to be started. If everyone does his best, government will collapse. It is necessary to carry on the agitation."

The No-tax Campaign gained momentum in the Central Provinces and Berar. The farmers joined hands with the Congress leaders and happily answered to their calls. It was for their own financial help and they had been so awakened by this time that they could understand the national interest too.

Further, the Congress politicians, particularly the land-owners, sought to associate land-lords and tenants with the No-Tax agitation against the government. Though both the rural and
urban professionals were connected with this activity, its main leaders in cities were the Marwari merchants, some non-Brahmin politicians, members of the Youth Leagues, and other volunteers. This form of Civil Disobedience began in December 1930 when speakers urged the non-payment of revenue at meetings in Nagpur and Akola, and continued doing so in taluq head-quarters and other places in both divisions in 1931. ¹ When the government took steps to control the campaign in March that year, Congress leaders modified their demands and called on the government merely to reduce or suspend revenue, and formed a committee to enquire into the conditions of farmers in the Marathi region in 1931 and 1932. These activities served to strengthen the connections between the Congress and land-owners and tenants, though they did not greatly affect the intake of revenue.²

1. Home Political Department, File No. 18/13/30, FR II 1930, December
   File No 18/1/31, FR I, 1931, January.
   File No 18/3/31, FR I, 1931, March.
   File No 18/5/31, FR II 1931, May.
   Administration Review 1931-32, Vol. I, p. 31

2. D.E.U. Baker, Changing Political Leadership in an Indian Province, the Central Provinces and Berar, Delhi, 1979, p. 84.
Thus, the No-tax campaign as an important programme of the Civil Disobedience Movement gained gradual success and acted as a catalyst in the spread of the movement.