CHAPTER FIVE

PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN INDIA: WITH REFERENCE TO THE TELANGANA ARMED STRUGGLE

What succumbed in these defeats was not the revolution. It was the pre-revolutionary traditional appendages/results of social relationships which had not yet come to the point of sharp class antagonisms - persons, illusions, conceptions, projects from which the revolutionary, party, before the February Revolution was not free from which it could be freed not by the victory of February, but only by a series of defeats.

In a word: The revolution made progress, forged ahead, not by its immediate tragicomic achievements, but on the contrary by the creation of a powerful, united counter-revolution, by the creation of an opponent in combat with whom, only the party of overthrow ripened into a really revolutionary party.

- Marx, "The Class Struggles in France".
Telangana was a part of the erstwhile Hyderabad-Deccan state which came into being after the disintegration of the Moghal Empire. Chin Qilch Khan, who, earlier worked as the Wazir of the Mughals from 1722-24, became the Viceroy for Deccan and soon proclaimed independence and established the Asaf Jah Dynasty. The Nizams of this dynasty participated in the Carnatic Wars (which took place in 1748, 1754 and 1758) and the Anglo-Mysore Wars (of 1766, 1780-84, 1790-92, and 1799) and in 1798 concluded the subsidiary Alliance treaty with the British East India Company. These, along with the exploits in Bengal and the other Indian territories through the Ring Fence policy, Doctrine of Lapse and Breakwaters policy or outright conquest established the British hegemony over India. By the time of the proclamation of the British Queen's rule over India in 1859 after the suppression of the 1857 revolt of the sepoys and others, India was divided into two parts: one British India and the other Indian India i.e. the Princely states numbering about 600. Though retaining some semblance of autonomy, these princely states with their semi-feudal set-up, nevertheless were gradually dragged into the British colonial framework - through politically by the Governor-General, Political Department's control by the Residents and Agents in the princely states, and, economically by a common currency, exchange, trade and commerce, by railways etc.¹.

¹ See Phadnis, Urmila Towards the Integration of Indian States (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1968).

See also Hurd, John J. "Some Economic Characteristics of the
In many of these the Nizams of Hyderabad served the interests of the British, especially in suppressing the revolt of 1857 and in both the world wars and earned the sobriquet of "faithful ally" of the British. Though essentially the State remained a Semi-feudal society with its Jagirdari system inherited from the Mughal times, it was integrated into the colonial system. Thus from the nineteenth century onwards the administration was revamped by the prime minister Salar Jung. Todar Mal's land tenurial and revenue system was modified by the Trigonometrical survey settlements and so on and railway and roads were built connecting with the interior areas and efforts were made to export cotton from the Marathwada region and castor from the Talangana regions of the State. Before we analyse the Talengana agrarian socio-economic structure that formed the basis of the peasant discontent and protest expressed through the armed struggle from 1944 to 1951 by the communists, let us briefly see


how this issue was treated by historians and others.

A. HISTORIOGRAPHY

The factors, nature, success, failures and so on of the peasant movements led by the Communist Party of India (C.P.I.), the Indian National Congress (I.N.C.), the All India Kisan Sabha (A.I.K.S.) the Workers and Peasant Parties (W.P.Ps) in British India and in the Princely States by the INC-backed All India States’ People’s Conference (A.I.S.P.C.), the Anthra Mahasabha (A.H.S.) in Talengana and so on were studied from different angles. Barrington Moore Jr. argued that in India “peasant rebellions in the premodern period were relatively rare and completely ineffective”. However dealing with the specific case of the peasant movement in Hyderabad he recognized that “There is a revolutionary potential among the Indian peasants”. But for him the spread of the Communist movement among peasants, even if temporarily, was due to the “collapse of political authority from above”. In the over-all Indian context, he argued that the caste system, with its enforcement of hierarchical submission, forms the barrier to widespread rebellions. If the nationalist movement succeeded in winning the peasants’ support and the subsequent transfer of power from the British to the INC in 1947. According to him, this was because of the “pacifying tendencies” of Gandhian politics on peasants. However the East India

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Company and later the British have initiated a new land tenurial and revenue policies in which Ricardo's "theory of rent" was utilised among other things. The ensuring permanent Zamindari, Ryotwari and the Talugdari settlements has had a differential impact in different areas. But certain common features of these colonial policies were the monetisation of the rural economy, commercialization of agriculture, the impoverishment and indebtedness of large sections of peasants. It is as a result of some of these that we witness innumerable peasant revolts and rebellions in the colonial period - viz. the Indigo Cultivators strike of 1860, Deccan riots of 1875, Phadke rebellion of 1879, Pabna revolts of 1870s and 80s, Moplah rebellions, the nationalists-led movements of Champaran, Kheda, Sardoli and the Communists-led Tebhaga, Punnappra-Vayalar (both in 1940) and the Talengana Armed Struggle and many other innumerable peasant movements. Indeed Kathlene Gough counted as many as 77 of these. Among these the smallest were with the participation of thousands of peasants, 30 revolts of tens of thousands and 12 of hundreds of thousands. She argued, against Moore's contention, that caste in fact provided a framework for the organization of peasant rebellions through quick assemblage and so on. The difference between the Indian and Chinese peasant movements, according to her, lay in the British colonial system

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with its thirteen features that led to the uneven development. She classified these movements into "restorative", religious, "social banditry" (as in Eric Hobsbawm's analysis), terrorist vengeance and armed insurrection by the peasantry. If these peasant movements were carried to their logical extention of altering socio-economic structure in the process of their opposition to colonialism, it would definitely form a threat to the powers that be - including the indigenous capitalists and landlord elements. It is this realisation, according to A.R. Desai, that led the nationalists in India (INC, etc.) "to evolve a comp romising "transfer of power" from colonialism to independence". It is also this factor that led Gandhi and others to back the "reformist pressure struggles" against imperialism as against "radical and revolutionary class and militant mass struggles".

There have been a number of studies on peasants by Western scholars. Arguing against the Whig interpretation of Indian history which proposed that there was a continuous progress towards constitutional liberty in which the Indian nationalists

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5 Gough, K. "Indian Peasant Uprising" Economic and Political Weekly (hereafter EPW), vol.IX. Nos.32-34. Special No.(Aug.1974) pp 1391-1412. She defined peasants as "people who engage in agricultural or related production with primitive (paleotechnic) means and who surrender part of their produce or its equivalent to landlords or to agents of the state" Ibid.p.1391.

6 Desai, A.R. (Ed) Peasants Struggles in India (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1979) Editorial Introduction, pp XIX-XX. This volume is perhaps the first comprehensive compilation of peasant movements in India. We shall return to the articles written by participants, historians and others in this volume again.
were seen basically as heirs to the liberal values of the English\textsuperscript{7}, Eric Stokes argued that English liberalism was confronted and modified to an extent by the existing tradition of "paternalism" which resulted in discontinuities\textsuperscript{8}. David Washbrook argued that with the British land tenurial policies, rich peasants replaced the "feudal" lords and that the national movement should be seen not as mass protests but as an expression of local protest movements stirred by the emerging rich peasant section\textsuperscript{9}. To this genre also belongs the work of Neil Charlesworth\textsuperscript{10}. These studies focussed on local and regional aspects of the agrarian society, especially the rich peasant politics but failed to explain as to how they came in conflict with the "semi-feudal" elements in the society. Neither was their explanation of the linkage between the rich peasant and national politics satisfactory. Washbrook, going further denied the existence of any ideological aspect in Indian nationalist mobilisation of peasants and others. The recent historiography--the Subaltern school--concentrated on the ideological and

\textsuperscript{7} The Dean of this School is perhaps Acton. See for an example of such an historiography in Percival Spear, \textit{A History of India} (Harmondsworth: Penguins, 1965) vol.I.

\textsuperscript{8} Stokes, E, n.4p.xvi. See also his \textit{The Peasant and the Rai} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) for the impact of the British colonial policies on the agrarian society.


cultural aspects of peasant insurgency in India, with post-
modernist and post-structuralist discourse as its point of
departure. Arguing against the “elitist” interpretation of
colonialists, nationalists and even Socialists (which the
Subaltern historiography equates), Ranajit Guha contended
that the peasant in colonial India should be viewed “as the maker
of his own rebellion” of a “purely spontaneous” type. The
conflict in this society, according to him, lies between the
landlords and the “Intermediate types” of tenant-cultivators,
share-croppers, agricultural labourers etc. Though these
movements represented “inchoate and naive state of
consciousness”, there were “fairly well established
structures of defiance over the centuries, which turn things
upside down. The ominous signals of such a massive upsurge,
according to him, should be traced in the sudden spurt of rural
violence. But the major difference between these incidents and
insurgencies lay in the latter being “public collective,

11 See Guha, R. et al. (eds) Subaltern Studies (Delhi:
Oxford University Press, 1984-90) Vol.1, No.VI.

12 Guha, R. Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in
colonial India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.4. His
emphasis is here on the “sovereignty of rebel consciousness
(p.13).

13 Ibid. p.6.

14 Ibid. pp.9-10.

15 Ibid. p.12. Peasants, according to him, not only
attack the “material, symbols” of the state and the landlords but
also undermine the “dominant semi-feudal culture” (p.20).

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destructive and total" in their modalities. Nevertheless, he argued that, as a result of rebel consciousness’s inertia and negativity, it is still "trapped in the old culture that demanded reverence of the superiors". As a result these peasant rebels spare the lives of their enemies in the battles. In his words, "the dye of a traditional culture was yet to wash off the peasant’s consciousness, and its articulation in insurgent violence, directed as it was against the very foundations of that culture, was bound to generate some ambiguity. This is also the reason for the presence of collaborators, informers, traitors and others among the peasant insurgents which reflect "irreducible drags of a backward consciousness". This historiography neither defines properly and consistantly the concepts of "elites" and "subalterns" nor does it explain in concrete terms the broader socio-economic factors that form the basis of the peasant insurgency.

The prospects of the political choices of INC and CPI in their encounter with the British Imperialism and their relation to

18 Ibid. pp.81 and 109.
17 Ibid. pp.164 and 170.
16 Ibid. p.196.

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peasants also were studied in detail. The debate, in academic circles, was started by Bipan Chandra as to the "failure of CPI to become a decisive force". Bagwan Josh in his mission towards a "more realistic and a less bourgeois society" elaborated on the relationship between the CPI and INC in their struggle for the "semi-hegemonic bourgeois colonial state". Arguing against the theoretical perspective of nation-bourgeois and class-workers, etc., he supplemented this with a perspective of "nation-class". Whereas, he continued, communists failed to fight successfully because of the latter's "rational-class adjustments in the economic sphere to achieve maximum unity and fighting capacity by bringing in workers and peasants in the forefront of the national movement along with other classes." Taking this argument further, Josh argued:

The relations of subordination continue to legitimise and reproduce themselves till they begin to be perceived as relations of oppression. In colonial India, "landlord" and "tenant" did not designate in themselves antagonistic position; it was the atmosphere of awareness of rights created by the national movement—the availability of democratic discourse, which helped


22 Ibid : pp 5 and 30 n.

23 Ibid. p.303.
the tenants to question the paternalistic nature of this relationship. This led to the erosion of existing relationship between the "landlord" and the "tenant".24

As to the failure of the CPI in this struggle, he contended that it is not the "Setarian mistakes" of the CPI leadership nor even the state repression but its own strategy derived from the Third International--"the failure of the Marxism of the Third International".25

Telengana struggle too attracted a wide range of scholars and Marxists. One dominant aspect of this discourse is the differentiation of peasants into rich, middle, poor peasants and agricultural labourers and its impact on the political processes. Taking a cue from Harrison's analysis of the impact of caste system on the Andhra Communists.28 Dhanagare argued that Telangana became receptive to the Communists during the latter half of the second World War period with the "authority Crisis"


of the Nizams. Largely recruited from the neighbourhood coastal Andhra region from the rich Kamma Kulak class, he contended, the Communists promoted a class alliance between the rich and small holders, tenant cultivators, and the landless labourers which is responsible for the failure of the peasant insurrection in later period.

Barry Pavier, a member of the Socialist Workers Party, gave a comprehensive view of this movement, situating it in the regiona, national and international context unlike most of the works on Talengana. The roots of the Talengana agrarian crisis lay at the tendency towards a process of "commoditisation" of the rural economy, triggered by the rise in the cultivation of ground-nut after the first world war. This resulted in increasing dependence on the market and capital. In his words, the forms of production "may appear to be the same as pre-Capitalist forms of production and especially of exploitation..., in reality they only exist in their relationship to capital". However, this process need not lead to the "depeasantisation"


28 Ibid. see pp 495-97, 506. He mentions Ravi Narayan Reddy, B Yella Reddy, D.V. Rao some of the leading communists in these struggles as coming from sections with substantial landholdings.

process as "orthodox" Marxists and Leninists would argue but would proceed towards a "simple commodity production".\textsuperscript{30} It is in this context that the "subjective intervention" of the CPI came into existence with its "multi-class popular front alliance" backed by "the deformed Communist International ", which became "an instrument of Russian foreign policy". This alliance, according to him, was also at the root of the defeat of the Communist Movement in Telengana as elsewhere in India.\textsuperscript{31}

A part of the above hypotheses can also be discerned from the analysis of Inukonda Thirumali who argued that the land revenue policies of the Hyderabad state coupled with the formation of the market, the commercialisation of agriculture and so on led to the polarisation of two antagonistic classes--viz., rich peasants and the poor peasants including agricultural labourers, even though "Much material is not available on this aspect to prove empirically."\textsuperscript{32} He too partly agrees with the

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid pp. 49n, 178, 187, 192 His work is thus based on "the elegant Marxist analysis' found in Mann and Dickenson (1978) and Friedman (1978 and 1980) with a tinge of "Chayanovian Maxism".

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid pp. 78n, 80n, 118n, 184. He argued further that "the politics which suppress the self-activity of workers, and which defuse women moving to understand and combat their oppression, and which ignored the issue of caste, have common root-- the politics of social unity of classcollaboration" (p. 194.)

\textsuperscript{32} Thirumali, I "Aspects of Agrarian Relations in Telangana 1928-48" un pub M.Phil Diss., JNU, 1979. see pp. 6 , 32, 81, 88-89, 89n.
above scholarship when he argues that:

The form of labour exploitation [by the Deshmukhs (landlords) and patel-patwaris (village officials)] seems to be pre-capitalist but the character of the production was capitalist. The production was carried on purely for the market to get profits. They forced all peasant classes including the rich ryot to cultivate their lands, to provide measures for their lands, to transport their grains to the market and to do free service in their fields. They used their pre-capitalist power with profit motive. 33

According to him, this is also reflected in the peasant revolt which was "due to the antagonistic interests of the rich peasants and the poor peasants (including labourers)." It is the failure of the communists like P. Sundarayya, Ravi Narayan Reddy, D.V. Rao and others to perceive this conflict that was responsible for the failure of the movement. 34 It is the rich peasants who "hegemonised and led the movement for their "interests" which led to the ultimate sabotage of the movement. 35

Amit Kumar Gupta's work tried to throw light on the Telagana movement in its national settings. Arguing that the "reformist" national policy of the CPI in no way stood in the growth of the movement, he argued that the Telangana Communists adhered to the Popular front and functioned within the United Front tactics. 36

33 Ibid. p.88.
34 Ibid. pp.7, 9.
36 Gupta, AK "The Communist and the outbreak of the Telangana Rising May, 1944-Feb 1947 "Occasional papers on History and Society, No. VII (Delhi; NMML, nd) pp 1-51.
Ian Bedford argued that this insurrection would have followed the same course as it did regardless of the leadership.37

Besides these works the are innumerable published and unpublished works of significance like the rural economic enquiries in the Hyderabad State of 1931 and 1951 by S.K. Iyengar (comparable to John Lossing Buck's analysis regarding land utilisation in China during almost the same period but with more intensity and magnitude), Al Qureshi's work on the rural economic statistics, census reports and government reports on the indebtedness and so on and the works of the participants in the struggle, which we shall examine in the course of our analysis.

Thus, on the whole a majority of the scholarship mentioned above stressed the role of the rich peasants in the defeat of Telangana without properly-conceptually and organically-accounting for its linkage with the political groups. For instance none of these works mention the impact of the growth of this 'rich peasant' or "commodity producers" or "productive

37 See Bedford, Ian "The Telangana Insurrection : A Study in the causes and Development of a communist Insurrection in Rural India 1846-51" un pub Ph.D. Thesis Australian National University, Canberra (Microfilm at NHML) In this he put forward the "middle peasant " thesis arguing that the tenants and even "small holders" extended their support to the insurrection in the early stages but turned against the communists when their "sectarian" policy and the accompanying violence worked against the interests of these "small 'holders".
classes" on the superstructure in a society in which semi-feudal tendencies seem to be produced and reproduced in various forms. How can one explain the differential impact of the colonial system and the landownership in Hyderabad or for that matter in any part of India where in the absence of a thorough-going capitalist development in agriculture, the most important factor of landownership still retaining semi-feudal characteristics? These and other related objective and subjective factors should be considered if any meaningful understanding of the Telangana situation is to be arrived at.

B. TELANGANA AGRARIAN SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS

Hyderabad State was divided for administrative reasons into four Subahs-Viz Aurangabad, Gulbarga, Gulshanabad (Medak) and Warangal- headed by a subahdar each. These subahdars were entrusted with the responsibility of revenue collection and other duties according to the new system introduced in 1867 called "Zilla Bandhi." These Subahs were further divided into 15 districts headed by the first Taluqdar (Collector) with revenue as well as administrative functions. There was also one subdistrict with an Amaldar. These districts consisted of 101 (and later increased to 117 taluqas) under a Taluqdar with a Peshkar (assistant) and a Girdavar (revenue inspector.) The Department of land revenue and survey settlement set up in 1873 sought to streamline the land tenurial system. As far as
MAP OF THE HYDERABAD STATE

REFERENCES
- District Boundary
- Safai-i-Khas
- Paigah
- Jangar

SOURCE: STATISTICAL YEARBOOK, 1941 [GOVT. OF HYDERABAD]
(HYDERABAD: GOVT. CENTRAL PRESS, 1946)
Telangana is concerned (in the two subahs of Warangal and Medak). The department of land settlement effected a thirty years tenancy settlement for four districts of Warangal, Nizamabad, Medak and Mehboobnagar, a fifteen year settlement in the four districts of Karimnagar and Nalgonda which were partly assessed. In the two remaining districts of Adilabad and the crown district of Atraf-I-Balda (Hyderabad) land was not surveyed at all.

In Hyderabad state, as a whole, broadly two land tenurial and revenue systems came into being. One, Diwani (or khalsa) lands and another non-Diwani comprising about 60% and 40% of the entire Hyderabad State respectively. Sarf-e-Khars or crown lands amounted to roughly about 50 lack acres in about 3335 villages of the state out of which 646 villages are in Telangana but mainly concentrated in the Hyderabad district. There were about 573 such villages in Hyderabad, 25 in Karimnagar, 15 in Nalgonda, 15 in Mehboobnagar, 13 in Medak, and 4 in Warangal districts which contribute about Rs. 2 crore per annum in a state with a budget estimated at Rs. 20 crores. Land revenue collected by the officials in these villages was sent to the Tehsil office from where it was deposited with the Nizams treasury. This was extracted mainly from the 15 lakh peasants who occupied these lands.38 Next in the list of the non-Diwani lands are

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38 The Imperial Gazetteer of India, n.2; Qureshi, AI the Economic Development of Hyderabad, Vol I The Rural Economy (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1947. pp 110-11; Khusro, AM Economic and social Effects of Jagirdari Abolition and Land Reform in Hyderabad (Hyderabad: 1958) p.5; See also Thapar, Romesh Storm over Hyderabad (Bombay: Kutub Printers, 1948) p.9.
**Paigahs** - lands granted by the Nizam to his close relatives (through matrimonial ties) or his army commanders of a high rank. Paigah, hence, meant "prompt and high rank". The land revenue in these estates amounted to Rs. 30-54 lakhs. These covered an area of about 4134 square miles of the state.  

*Samsthanas* and *Jagirs* are the other major aspects of the *non-Diwani* tenures. There are about 10 *samsthanas* located in Gadwal, Anegondi, Paloncha, Gopalpet, Wanparty, Jatpole, Narayanapur, Medak, Amarchinta and Gurgunta. There were former rulers (rajaehs) in these territories who patched-up with the Nizam and retained about 94% of the gross income from the land. They pay a nominal *peshkash* to the Nizam. They also possess village grants on a fixed assessment.  

*Jagirs* were granted by the Nizams to Pathans and Arab *Jamadars* and others for the services rendered to the state. The *Jagirdars*, in turn granted ownership rights in lieu of the payment of a *Nazrana*. These *Jagirs* acquired judicial and administrative powers. The number of the grants of these *Jagirs* increased from about 1,100 in 1992 to 1,500 in 1949 and so do the number of middlemen leading to the "sub-infeudation" process.

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38 See "The Paigahs" In AISPC File No. 65, 1936-49 (Manuscript section, NMML) pp. 6, 7. This booklet studied three big paighas in the State and came to the conclusion that these Paigah owners were a "typical feudal class" (p 17).

40 See for the conditions in these *Samsthanas*, a research note by Nippani Ranga Rao "Misrule in Gadwal" in AISPC F No. 65, N 39. pp 1-5; See also Khusro, n 38., pp 7-8; Qureshi, n 38, p 112, and The Imperial Gazetteer, n 2. p. 273.
Some Jagirdars cultivated their land through forced labour or yetti and Bhagela. These were Swanthakamatham lands or seri lands. On the whole since the revenue to be collected from the tenants was not mentioned in the grants, the land taxes and rents were exorbitant in these Jagirs in comparison to the land tax in the Diwani areas. There were as many as 40 such taxes in the Jagirs at times. Thus through rack-renting and exorbitant taxes, Jagirdars, Samsthandars and others acquired considerable influence in the society. Ten families in this section acquired revenue and taxes worth Rs. 10 crores with the Nizam at its head with about Rs. 2 crores as rental income and a personal fortune worth $2 billion and thus become "the richest person" in the world at that time.41

In the Diwani lands too the influence of Jagirdars, Deshmukhs and others can be seen. Though the settlement in these areas was known as Ryotwari i.e. the owner of the land is in direct relationship to the state on payment of a fixed land revenue - a variable tenure systems emerged, namely pattadars, Jagirdars, Inamdars, Jiaradars, Baniardars, Sarbastadars.

41 See Quresh, n. 38 p. 114; Khusru, n. 38, pp 2, 3-4; See also "Seri Lands " File No. 444/28/50 Record No. 369 in IR State Archives, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad (hereafter H.S.A) also, Hyderabad state list of leading officials, Nobles and personages (Calcutta; Central Publication Branch, 1932); thapar, nb. 38, f. 9.; See also the account of the American journalist who toured Hyderabad at that time, Roth, A "Search light on Hyderabad" Modern Review, Vol 82. no. 3. (Sept 1947) pp 179-82; and Imperial Gazeter, n2. p. 279.
Agraharas, Maktadars and so on. The land occupancy of the pattadars was dependent on the regular payment of the land revenue, but these pattadars more often than not had partners called Shikmidars, from whom the former received a percentage of the agricultural produce depending on the agricultural inputs (implement, seeds, cattle, etc.). Shikmidars were permanent tenants, whereas another group of tenants called Asami-Shikmidars or Kashtakars were tenants-at-will. Ijara (Ijara = contract) lands were granted for the purpose of extending cultivation lands without the tag of any revenue payment for the first 30-40 years but gradually land rent increased after this period. There are about 465 villages in Telangana above of such grants which occupied about 95 lakh acres. Inam lands were granted to the non-cultivating classes for the service rendered to the state or for charitable purposes, either free of revenue or subject to a quit rent. The patels and patwaris were the major beneficiaries of these lands at the local level. Sarbastadars came into existence after Salar Jung abolished the system of revenue farming, the previous revenue farmers given watans or Inams. Deshmukhs payed a fixed revenue to the state and here too the


43 See Inam Lands, File no 29/13/50, Record no. 20 HSA and imperial Gazetteer, n.2. p. 279.
exact amount to be collected from the tenants was not mentioned, leaving Deshmukhs free to employ forced labour. Moneylenders too joined their ranks. **Makta** resembles the **Jagirdari** system, with the exception that the grant holder has to pay a fixed quit rent. This system prevailed in about 664 villages. Though the intention here was to make the actual cultivator a **pattadar**, in practice the **Makta** retained the **patta** by evicting tenants at his will and so on. **Agraharas** were grants made to Hindu temples and **Brahmanas** without any revenue payment. They numbered about 309. **Baniardars** cultivated the forest lands.

These **Jagirdars**, **Samsthanadars**, **Deshmukhs**, **Baniardars** and so on exerted formidable influence on the rural socio-economic structure. They have extensive powers in the villages including judicial and administrative functions. The small **Jagirdars** and **Deshmukhs** indulged in moneylending, secured **abkari** (toddy, liquor) contracts. Even though they numbered about 0.5% of the population, they as rent receivers and land holders trampled upon the rural folk by **vetti** and **bhagela**. However, there were many gradations within the landlord sections. For instance, on the one hand we see a Jana Reddy Pratap Reddy possessing as many as 1,50,000 acres of land, a Visnoor Ramchandra Reddy with about 40,000 acres, a Suryapet Deshmukh with 20,000 acres, and a Kallur

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44 See Qurshi, n. 38, p. 109; Iyengar, SK Economic Enquiries in Hyderabad State, Vol I General Survey (Hyderabad, Government press, 1931) p. 51; **Sarbstadars** were present in roughly about 664 villages and derived a revenue of about Rs. 6.7 lakh in 1901. See **Imperial Gazetteer** n.2. p. 279.
family about 80,000 acres. The compilation of the names of the landlords possessing extensive lands is difficult. But a glimpse can also be had from the fact that about 77 holdings in Warangal District and 53 holdings in Karimnagar District ranged between 1,000 acres to 2,500 acres. About 10 holdings in Warangal and 7 in Karimnagar Districts varied between 2500 acres to 5,000 acres. On the other hand we find small landlords with a few hundred acres who live in a single village who invariably indulged in moneylending (grain lending to be precise) land grabbing and so on.

This was the social stratum which the Hyderabad state backed to the hilt. The state sponsored reforms committee of 1938 said it in as many words: its report said that the heads of the Samsthanas, Jagirdars, Zamindars have permanent attachment with the state and the Royal House....[Their] loyalty to the Ruler and his Government, on which rests their stability, has always remained unshaken". In the words of the Nizam himself,

You Jagirdars belong to a class of gentry who stand in special and distinctive relations to the state of Hyderabad. My principle has always been that, as far as possible, Jagirs should be continued to be preserved and that they should be saved from extinction.45

Beneath these sections are the "lower" classes-agricultural

workers, who constitute roughly about 10% of the population (including farm servants and farm labourers but excluding those who perform general labour and earth work comprising about 13% of the population), tenants of various gradation who pay a land rent to the landlords forming about 31%, and others. Caste-wise the break-up is according to the following pattern. There are about 21 castes and sub-castes; they were roughly Kapus or Kunbis (based on the land) numbering about 26% of the population. Next in strength were Malas or Madigas in Telangana or Mangs in Marthwada comprising about 14% of the population. The rest was occupied by other castes: Brahmanas formed about 6.21%, Vaishyas or Komtis (traders) 4.91%, Collas (shepherds) 7.47%, Gaundlas (toddy-tappers and liquor venders) 2.55%, Korivas 4.78%, Salas (weavers) 3.8%, Banjaras (gypsies) 1.54%, Gonds (tribals) 0.49% and so in 1903. As population grew so did the numbers of these castes but almost in the same proportion. When survey settlements were made the state did provide lands to washermen, barbers, Malas carpenters, blacksmiths, etc to perform labour for the villagers but without permanent rights over the land or disposable rights. These sections were the most vulnerable, as the dynamics of the countryside showed, to the exactions of the state landlords, moneylenders on the one hand, and famines and natural calamities on the other side.

See Imperial Gazetteer n.2.; See also Syed Sirajul Hassan, Castes and Tribes of HEH The Nizams Dominions (Bombay: 1920), and Census of India, 1941, Hyderabad Vol. II. pp. 673-4.
This is also reflected in the extraction of surpluses from the tenants and the labouring sections. Of all the sources of revenue to the state, land revenue and excise duty formed the major part almost throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Till 1904 land revenue alone formed more than 50% of all revenues collected by the state, though it decreased considerable from about 1920 onwards, whereas revenue collected from excise contracts (toddy in Telangana and Mahua in Marthwada areas, liquor and the distilleries at Secunderabad) showed a perceptible increase. The figures for the collection of land revenue is as follows: roughly about 58% in 1880-90, 54% in 1890-1900, 52% in 1904, 38% in 1922-23, 30% in 1932-33, 26% in 1942-43 and 17% in 1947-48.

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| Total Non-govt.   | 7.7              | 9.1            | 7.3            | 7.2            | 8.6            |
| Grand total       | -46              | 47             | 44             | 39             | 46             |


The revenues collected from the excise duties are as follows: 11%. In 1880-90, 13% in 1890-1900, 12% in 1904, 21% in 1922-23,
20% in 1932-33 and also in 1942-43 but 27% in 1947-48. The exact amount collected from the tillers of the soil was many times than the figures quoted. In 1938, when the reforms committee looked into the question of giving representation to the Pattadars, Liardars, Kauldars in the legislature based on the income and property they posseses, it cited figures of 1921. The committee said that the 76,000 and odd persons in this category who paid an annual quit rent of over Rs 150/- each are eligible to be represented. In this context the report of this committee said that the actual income that this section annually acquired was about Rs. 525/- in Telangana and Rs. 675/- in Marathwada.

It is under these circumstances that we witness in Hyderabad the effects of British colonial interests and the impact of the fluctuations in the international market. The growth of railways and road transport, monetisation of the economy to some extent, establishment of industries in towns, the impact of the worldwide economic depression of 1921-31 on the agricultural production and so on. Thus the state sponsored (with help also from outside) industrialisation process from about 1875 onwards. An

47 See for these figures, The Imperial Gazetteer, n.2. p. 304; Government of Hyderabad, Review of Hyderabad Finance (Hyderabad: 1951) pp 67-81 The influence of the Deshmukhs in excise contracts can be shown by the fact that Pingali Venkatram Reddy a Deshmukh acquired excise contract for Telangana as a whole.

Industrial Trust Fund was formed for setting up industries, Nizam Guaranteed State Railways stated functioning (under private ownership from 1874 but was bought by the Government in 1930), Singareni Coal Mines were opened, from 1932 onwards the state nationalised the road transport system, a Hyderabad construction company started functioning from 1934, sugar factories were established at Bodhan, Sirpur, Shahbad, a number of textile mills at Hyderabad, Ajamjahi, Aurangabad, Osmanshahi, etc. were opened, tobacco factories, established, Rice and oil mills were started in villages and taluq headquarters and so on. In response to these changes there also occurred some major changes in the countryside both in the agricultural crops and production and in the agrarian socio-economic structure (See table II). Whereas rice cultivation, which was between 5 to 4% of the total cultivated and cropped area from 1880-1903, it fluctuates and increased in the subsequent years, especially in 1929-30, 1941-42. Jowar cultivation which was about 35-40% of the cultivated area between 1880-1903, also fared badly in the subsequent years. Other crops in this category which declined were wheat, bajra, maize and so on.

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A = Acreage; P = Production

$\text{# (in bales of } 400 \text{ lbs)}$
But there was a remarkable growth in the cultivation of oil seeds. Roughly from 10-14% in 1880-1903, it showed a gradual increase. Linseed for instance, though declined in 1932-33 and 1937-38, grew in the later part. Sesamum, though its cultivation was less in the early years showed remarkable recovery in 1930-31 and 1944-45. But the most important crop in Telangan (thanks to the nature of its soil) was groundnut (cotton for Marathwada areas with its black soils). Groundnut cultivation increased from a mere 3000 acres in 1925 to about 6,27,538 acres in 1937 displacing castor in the long run. The fact that these oilseeds have a greater demand in the metropolitan countries led the colonial interests to give a fillip to the cultivation of these crops especially to tinseed and groundnut with improved varieties, irrigation facilities, etc. The cultivation of these crops at an increasing pace after World War I though with fluctuations due to the international market responses inflation, food crisis etc, has considerably improved market conditions and rich peasants but the hold of the Deshmukh and Jagirdars increased over the rural society. This situation also led to a massive land-grabbing by the Deshmukhs. Thus, other than

50 See Statistical Yearbooks, The Nizams Dominions of Hyderabad for the years mentioned; See also Qureshi , n. 38 pp 53-56 and 225, 258, 268, 280-86 and Government of Hyderabad Trade Statistics for 1936-37 and 1940-45 (esp. 1936-7 : pp 44-45) and 374 and 1940-41, pp 211) and Narayan, BK The Agricultural Development in Hyderabad State (Seconderabad : 1982).

51 See for the extension of cultivation by improving the irrigation facilities, Iyengar, n.49, pp.143-74 and also for the impact on the rural society.
inheritances and partitions about 10.4% of the total occupied area has passed out during 1922-1937 out of which 5.9% were grabbed by the agricultural moneylenders, 3.4% to non-agricultural moneylenders, and 1.1% to Patwaris, etc. according to the 1937 Bharucha report. In the surveyed 118 villages these amounted to 34.5% owing 1935-40, 22.4% 1940-45 and 33.6% in 1945-50. Thus there is a rise in these land transfers during the post-economic depression years, a decline during the war years and rise in the post-war years. On the whole for the period 1935-50 land transfers amounted to about 7% of the occupied areas out of which 63.8% of the area was parted by cultivating clashes, 36% by non-cultivating okanes. In this period about 80% of the transferred land was secured by persons actually cultivating the land while 10% was secured by persons not actually cultivating.

In individual districts of Telangana there was a marked increase of their transfer of land in Hyderabad, Nalgonda, Nizamabad and Mehboobnagar. Another interesting factor that led to discontent in the society was that these transfers were effected due to the debt accumulations at a higher percentage during 1929-30 as the enquiry showed (about a third of the transferred area in Warangal), but decreased to about 15% in all the districts in the 1949-50 enquiry. Thus this aspect of land transfers due to

52 See Iyengar, n.49, pp.112-126. It is interesting also to know that there was an increasing trend towards litigation cases of peasants. From the late-nineteenth century onwards the judicial cases won by the Sahukars against the cultivators increased. See the Report of the Administration of H.H. the Nizam's Dominions for 1303H. p 100 (HSA). Sahukars took the indebted peasants to the courts. They obtained decrees from the
debts brings us to another point i.e. the growing indebtedness of peasants. Between 1930 and 1939 the increase in the indebtedness of peasants of Hyderabad state is about 63% (for Telangana it comes to about 89% and for Marathwada about 35% due to the deflationary crisis. In 1939-50 the figures were 122% & 28% respectively. Of this 31.4% was due to professional moneylenders, 38.3% to cultivating families and 21.3% to non-cultivating non-professional moneylenders i.e. 91% was due to "indigenous bankers". Another factor to be considered is the rise in the prices of different varieties of land (dry wet and garden land) in this period. The rise is highest in Nalgonda district for 'A' grade dry land. Though in the depression days the value of land fell steeply. There was a perceptible increase during 1930-34 and 1950 which comes to about 491% for dry land, 488% percent for wet land and 615% for garden land.

The general effect of this phenomenon is to increase the courts in their favour. However, the government's legislation in this regard, the Peasant Acts, tried to mitigate peasantry's plight. Nevertheless, the Sahukars influence could not be curbed, which invariably would lead to skirmishes among peasants and Sahukars. See the confidential report of the District Superintendent of Police, "Alleged Victimisation" Home Department, Govt. of Hyderabad, 13-1-1935, F.No.89/1345.

Ibid: pp 408-29 See also Table on p. 436. Though Iyengar says that the important purposes for which these debts were incurred were marriages, the long term effects of the agricultural economy as mentioned above definitely has a bearing in this process. Se K. Vankata Ranga Rao, "Causes of Debt" Golkonda Patrika (Bi-weekly) 19-5-1938; see also Ganu, LG "Land Revenue and Rural Indebtedness" Finance Department, English Branch No. 1 of 1937, The Hyderabad Bulletin, 28-8-1937.

Iyengar, n.48, pp.175-86.
hold of the Deshmukh - moneylenders sections of the society. The most vulnerable section were tenants and tenants-at-will, the latter numbered about 76% in 1929-30 but increased to 77% in 1949-50. That is of the leaseholders, 46.6% are landless in 1949-50, increased from 31.5% in 1929-30. As to the agricultural labourers there was a sharp increase in the rise of wages but also a rise in the cost of living. Though there is a decrease in the ratio between resident families and landless agricultural labourer families from 1937 (from about 30%) to 1950 (to about 19%), as we have seen. There was an enormous section of the rural population which became tenants-at-will, even if some of the agricultural labourers migrated to the towns and so on.

Now these figures can be summarised as follows: in the Hyderabad state, a substantial landholding section is at the helm of the society which oppressed the tenants and agricultural labourers (as the term of the tenants-at-will was just for one year, and so on) through rackrenting, exhorbitant land revenue exactions, vetti and bhagela and moneylending practices. Despite the growth in the agricultural production - especially oil seeds rather than food grains - and industrial establishments the emergence of a rich peasant section in the villages who employed hired labourers from the ranks of the impoverished peasantry in

addition to their family labour, the growth of capitalism in agriculture was a distant dream overshadowed, as it were, by the weight of the landed aristocracy and semi-feudal relations and moneylenders in the villages\textsuperscript{57} and also because of the fact that even though the 1947-48 figures indicated a positive net savings of about 28\%, these limited savings were in a higher percentage wasted in the payment of overdue interest and repayment of debts.\textsuperscript{58} The total amount of peasant debts in the state were computed at about Rs. 80 crores in the 1940s with a rate of interest ranging between 200-250\% per annum! Moreover, as Amiya Kumar Bagchi observed in his study, it is not in the interests of the British colonialists to give fillip to the Indian capitalist development.\textsuperscript{59} As a consequence of these factors it is difficult to imagine an all-powerful rich peasant section in the Telangana countryside, divided as it were between the dominant semi-feudal relations and the market compulsions. Hence there is a point in the communist struggle in the countryside and it is here we should shift our attention to the peasant protest.

B. PEASANT PROTEST AND COMMUNIST AGITATION

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid. pp 449 and 452. Though many industries were established as we have seen above, this was mostly in the hands of the Sowcars or moneylenders. See Government of Hyderabad, Handloom Weaving Report, Hyderabad, 1933, p.72.

\textsuperscript{58} Iyengar n.49, pp. 449 and 452.

Peasant struggles in India against the oppressive regimes were not uncommon. Based on available sources we can count more than 100 of these movements. Telangana is no exception to this rule. To counter the peasant struggles in Hyderabad State, the government was spending 15-21% of its expenditure on the military and related activities between 1880 and 1904 at a time when the colonial power was very well established in India and the subsidiary alliance looked after the larger issues of the states security. Despite this expenditure on the 32,573 troops (inclusive of regular & irregular & British and Native troops) and a wellmaintained police system after 1869 down to the village level, the number of person tried for offenses against property related issues showed an increase between 1860-1905 from 12% to 15%. Specifically, to mention individual cases peasants waged struggles against the Jagirdars and big landlords exactions of vetti and demanded rights to the tenants. For instance, in the Betharolu Maktar, the Maktadar, who used to collect 13 exorbitant taxes, etc from the peasants, was opposed by the entire peasant sections including rich, middle and poor. The leadership of this movement came from the Patwari who is a landlord himself. The demands of the agitating peasants revolved around the abolition of illegal taxes, vetti, regulation of land rent, a proper survey and settlement of the Mukta land, etc. This took a legal form for about twenty years. In Kolanupaka (in Nalgonda) peasants fought against the Jagirdar. In another case

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of Paritala Jagir, the Jagir's agent was killed in the clashes. In Ammapalem, and Munugodu also the landlords were killed by the peasants. But in Visnoo one peasant youth Bandagi was killed by the agents of the Deshmukh when he launched struggles along with other peasants on the latter. Neither Paigah lands were free from the peasant agitation where in one instance 10 villages refused to pay land revenue for about three years.61

But the main defects of these struggles were that they were fought in opposition to the big landlords and with active participation and leadership of the small landlords. In these the struggles of the poor peasants and the agricultural labours were not allowed to come to the fore. Neither they have an alternative ideological vision and hence soon fizzled out. Like in the Chinese history, these movements also failed to entirely alter relations in the countryside and have to wait for the advent of the communists.

Before we look into the Telangana agitation of Communists over the agrarian issues it would be instructive to briefly recall the national and international context, as this policy in Telangana was considerably modified by the context in which it took place. It is difficult to explain the changing policies of the CPI according to the changing contexts in all its

manifestations. We have seen in the previous chapters Lenin's formulations regarding the agrarian policies to be adopted in the backward countries world-wide. In the "preliminary Draft Theses", in the "Colonial Commission Speech", In his report of Commission on the National and Colonial Question", in the 1921 Theses, in the Congress of the Third International (Comintern - hereafter C.I.) Lenin stressed the need for anti-imperialist struggles in the colonies in a United front with peasants, workers and national bourgeoisie on the condition that this bourgeoisie democratic revolution is "genuinely revolutionary", that the workers evolve a policy of retaining their "independence" in these movements without "merging" with the national bourgeoisie, in the larger goal of a "bourgeois communist movement". The important role peasants play in these movements was emphasised beyond doubt. Subsequent congresses of the CI also emphasised this point- the Fourth Congress in 1922 arguing that a "historic bloc of feudal-lords, indigenous capital and imperial capital" was established in the colonies and the need was to oppose this. Stalin's position,

62 This phrase "bourgeois communist movement" was not Lenin's coinage but "bourgeois democratic" movement as the translator Pavlovich did not record it properly. See Datta Gupta, S Comintern, Indian and the Colonial Question 1920-37 (Calcutta : KP Bagchi, 1980) p 32.

63 See Adler, A (ed) Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International (New Jersey : Humanities press, 1980) p. 410. See also for the other congress and resolutions. CPI, Comintern and National and Colonial Questions, Documents of the Congress (New Delhi; People Publishing House, 1973) In general CI suggested reduction of land...
that the national bourgeoisie was divided into two sections—reformist and revolutionary—as a result of the export of capital into the colonies, was to influence the sixth congress of the CI in 1928 and subsequently also that of CPI. Broadly at three junctures the CI's position regarding the colonies was to change, once in 1928, in 1935 and in 1941 which was to have an important bearing on the CPI's policy vis-a-vis the national bourgeoisie and also peasants. Let us also mention briefly the CPI's position in this regard.

M.N. Roy's draft supplementary theses to CI and the subsequent discussions in the CI with Lenin were well known. He argued that as a result of British colonialism and industrialisation there was an increasing tendency towards the growth of the workers (industrial as well as agricultural). He opined that the 1906 railway strike would lead to a general uprising in India, and that hence there was no need to fight imperialism along with the INC confined, as he thought, to the "small middle class" and that the masses were moving towards revolution independently of the bourgeois nationalist movement". In the Tenth thesis at the CI he suggested for supporting "the revolutionary mass action through the medium of a communist party

rents lowering of usury burden, land lordism to be abolished without compensation; extension of credit, etc. See International Press Correspondence (hereafter Impcor) Vol. 3. n. 13, 6-2-1923, p. 1; Same Vol. no. 12-1-2-1923 of p 7.
of the proletarians.”

With 7 members a communist party was formed by M.N. Roy in Oct, 1920 in Tashkent and an Indian military school was established for training Mohajir youths. A manifesto was addressed to the INC’s session at Ahmedabad in 1921 wherein the affiliation of peasants and workers was sought against imperialism. Subsequently letters were exchanged between Roy and S.A. Dange for setting up of a separate communist group within INC and working for workers and peasant mass organisation with class demands. Roy’s pamphlet "What do we want?" was circulated in the Gaya Congress of INC at 1922 outlining the need for an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. In yet another piece of work “Ourselves” Roy reiterated the position that the INC can never be able to lead the workers and peasants because it is a bourgeois political party. Other efforts were also made by various persons in India. Singaravelu Chattiar formed the Labour Kisan Party in 1923 at Madras, Manilal and Abani Mukherjee issued a "Manilal Manifesto" in 1923 arguing for the establishment of a labour-peasant party. In March–April 1925 the fifth plenum of the executive committee of the CI suggested to these Indian Communists that in order to fight effectively

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against imperialism there is need for working inside the INC and the left wing of the Swaraj Party of peasants and workers. Finally in 1925 Dec. the CPI was formed. In the following year workers and peasants parties (WPPs) were formed in Bengal, Bombay (in 1927), Punjab, and United Provinces. These were termed by Adhikari as "open forums" through which the CPI can function in times of repression (which was increasing as exemplified by the various conspiracy cases imposed on CPI leaders— for eg. the Peshwar conspiracy case 1922-27, Meerut conspiracy case 1929-33, etc). The CPI proposed a countrywide general strike against imperialism and a no-tax, no-rent campaign against landlordism at this stage. In 1926 its Manifesto to the INC session at Guwahati raised the slogan of "land to the tiller". These slogans subsequently were raised by the WPPs (in 1927 session of INC at Madras). It was also decided by the CPI to set up an All India WPP, which was realised about with many conglomerations in Dec. 1928 at Calcutta. This organisation demanded the abolition of landlordism, establishment of peasant proprietorship and for extending class struggle in the rural areas. But soon with the economic depression world over and the failure of the United front with Guomindang in China, the CI sixth congress's suggestion were put to effect by CPI: henceforth the entire INC was declared a compradore bourgeoisie especially after the INC's

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65 Adhikari, n. 64, Vol III A p 32; See also the Meerut Conspiracy case proceedings, 1929-33 at NMML (Manuscripts section) for the stifling effect of these conspiracy cases against communists.

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stand on dominion status to India and there is a need for disbanding the WPPs while stressing the role of CPI as an independent organisation. This is reflected in the Draft Platform of Action of the C.P. of India” of 1930 which criticised M.K. Gandhi, J. Nehru and S.C. Bose for their compromise with the British; and decided to organised workers ‘and peasants’ Soviet Republics” and for armed struggle. This sweeping position drew flak from the Communist Parties of China, Great Britain and Germany which in an open letter, criticised the CPI and advise it to follow United front in order to paralyse the capitalists in the national movement. Subsequently the Central Committee of the CPI took the position that in the interests of the struggle against imperialism it is not proper to be in isolation and hence should fight for the leadership in this struggle. The stance that emerged was the support to all classes against the

86 See Inprecor, Vol 9 no. 46, 4-8-1929 for the declaration of ECCI Tenth Plenum that the INC stand on Dominion Status “Exposed the counter-revolutionary role of the Indian bourgeoisie” See for the WPP s, Inprecor Vol 8, no., 88 pp 1665-73; Inprecor Vol. 9 no. 16, 1929 p. 316. See also Aditya Mukherjee on WPPs in Chandra, B(ed) Left in India, n 20 for general introduction; see also “The Political Situation in India ; Thesis of the workers and peasants Party of India” Labour Monthly. Vol VI, (1933). See for the 1930 Draft of CPI, Inprecor, Vol. 10 no., 58. pp 18-20 1930., pp 1219-22. This draft was endorsed by the CI in its Eleventh plenum in 1931; See for the position of CPI on armed Struggle, Communist, Vol. I n. 1 Sept 1933, pp 1-4.

The British government proposed a ban in 1934 on the CPI activities compelling it to work through the All India Trade Union Congress, All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and so on till the ban was lifted in 1942 (which was again to be imposed in 1948) by the independent India). In the meanwhile CPI also participated in a United front with INC and Congress Socialist party (CSP) from 1937-39. Initiated by the Dutt-Bradley Theses in 1936 a people's front was implemented against the imperialist powers. CPI supported the INC agrarian legislation in tenancy rights, reduction of rents, debts, etc. when congress ministries were formed in provinces in 1937. The tone was set by the CPI's Manifesto for 1938 in which it declared in drastic change of its policy—that "the Zamindars and the capitalist .... always stood outside and opposed to the congress". With the outbreak of

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**See** "The Draft political Theses of the CC of CPI "Inprecor Vol. 14, no. 40, 20-7-1934, pp 1025-31. At the Seventh Congress of the CI in 1933 Aug. George Dimitrov suggested to the CPI that they should "support, extend and participate" in anti-imperialist war in order to form a "national revolutionary wing". This has arisen because of the emergence of fascism in Germany and Italy. The need, he stressed was an united front from below and above. See Inprecor Vol. 15, no. 37, 20-8-1935.

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**From about 1935 onwards the CPI was arguing that the social base of the British in India lay in the "princes, feudal lords, merchants and moneylenders, whereas INC respresented the capitalists and "liberal" landlords. (See CPI, The Manifesto of Anti-Imperialist conference in Home Political File No. 7/7/1935 in the National Archives of India - hereaf ter NAI ). CPI's pamphlet "CP ka elan" (in Hindi) distributed in the Allahabad kisan conference in 1935, in which 1,000 kisan delegates
the World War II, CPI followed a policy of anti-fascist and anti-war. Even though it worked with the INC, CPI proposed an armed revolution of workers and peasants along with a no-rent, no-tax-campaigns. But with Hitler’s attack on USSR in June 1941, CPI's policy took a complete U-turn in 1942. It went a step further extreme: in the people's war policy, CPI not only criticised the massive movement of Quit India, but it also proposed an anti-struggle course of action which included a "Grow More Food" campaign for the war effort, postponement of the anti-landlord struggle in the period 1942-45. This also coincided with the lifting of the ban on CPI in 1942. In this period CPI participated in the activities of AIKS. Specifically on the peasant question, CPI's policy was restricted to "the

participated, demanded reduction of rent and land revenue to the level of 1895 and abolition of debts. This pamphlet also demanded a "Kisan- Majdoor Raj" in which peasants would occupy Zamindar and Sowcar lands, etc (See Home Pol. File No. 4/13/1935, NAI); The Dutt-Bradley Thesis intervened at this jucture, see Dutt and Bradly "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front" Inprecor., 29 Feb, 1936; See also "The Communist Party joins the fight against Imperialism " Communist Vol i no . 15 , march 1937; As a part of its appreciation of the congress ministries agrarian policies, CPI organised peasant marches at various places in India demanding the respective Governors of the provinces to give assent to the land bills introduced by INC (See National Front, Vol 1, no. 30, 11-9-1938 p. 3, National Front Vol 1 no. 20., 3-7-1938, Communist Vol-2 no. 11 Aug 1938, Editorial to Inprecor, Vol 17, no. 41, 26-9-1937 and so on. To be fair CPI also criticised the INC when Zamindars influence in the latter trend to scuttle the tenancy bills, suchas in Bihar. See National Front, Vol.1 no. 25, 7-8-1938. These activities of the CPI alarmed the government so much that by 1939 its intelligence network reported that the CPI has "captured" workers and peasant bodies within the Congress. See Home Political File No. 7/6, IB (Home Dept) 1939, NAI.

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amelioration of the burden of indebtedness rents and taxes. Exercise price control in their interest or removing of silt from the tanks, etc. With the close of the war in 1945 and with reports pouring in of peasant revolts in Warli in Maharashtra, Tebhaga movement in Bengal, Punnapura-Vayalar movement in Kerala and in Telangana, fresh lease of life was given to the CPIs anti-feudal agrarian revolution.

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70 See Joshi PC. The Indian Communist Party: Its policy and work in the war of Liberation (London: CPGB Publication, 1942). p.17. See also Peoples war Vol 2 no. 5, 1-8-1943; Peoples War. Vol 1 No. 6, 16-8-1942; Peoples War Vol 3. no. 32, 4-2-1945 and so on. See also the Resolution passed by the CC of CPI in 1943 "Food Crisis and our Tasks" In Sardesai; SG Peoples War to Food (Bombay: Peoples Publishing House, 1943) pp 41-46.
The CPI demanded abolition of landlordism, nationalisation of land, its redistribution to peasants, ban on usury and private trade in grains. However in this struggle, it ralled with the small landlords and rich peasants with other peasants.\(^{71}\)

This in brief was the general national and international context with its sharp swings, pulls and pressures on the CPI's agrarian policy. It is in this atmosphere that the communists functioned through the Andhra Mahasabha (AMS). It was established in 1930 by the "moderate" congress leaders and the "militant" leaders the latter guided by the Andhra Provincial committee of the CPI which came into being in 1934 but soon secured a party membership of 1,000.\(^{72}\)

Starting as a "reformist" organisation with resolutions mostly on obsolete customs like

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\(^{72}\) Prior to 1930 also there were organised political movements. Andhra Jana Sangham was formed in 1923 and held its conferences every year except between 1925 and 1928. But these were mostly confined to the library expansion movement, and other social reform measures. Merchants Association were also formed but could not take-off because of the prevalence of restriction on trade coupled with forced labour. In 1929 Ryoto Sangham (peasant Organisation) was formed but this too could not develop into a full-fledged organisation. See Madapati Hanumantha Rao *Telangana Andhrodhyaman* (Telangana Andhra Movement - in Telugu) 2 Vols (Hyderabad : 1949-50) Vol-I,pp 23-24, 30-51, 71-72, 145) See also the confidential Report of the first Telugdar of Warangal to subedar Warangal in W.S. File No. 15 of 1356 Fasli (1946-47) R.No. 14, H.S.A.
purdah, child marriages, and on citizenship rights, AMS in its fourth conference in 1935 for the first time passed a resolution on Jagirs and peasants: but this was limited to seeking parity with the people living in Diwani areas and the like. In the next conference the resolutions on peasants revolved around the decrease of the taxes on land and water, and vetti (not by that of the Jagirs and others but that of the state officials). The central weakness of the AMS during this phase is a sort of "class-collaboration" policy adopted, much akin to the INC's policies in the neighbouring territories. This phase was to end - though gradually - after the Andhra Provincial Committee (Andhra PC) of CPI started sending members / sympathisers into this movement secretly, reflected also in split of AMS in 1944 at the Bhuvangiri conference into two. One group was to merge with the Congress movement, the other to lead the armed struggle with its 50,000 membership.

The origins of the communist movement in Hyderabad state can be traced to the following aspects: apart from the incessant peasant struggles in the Jagir-Mukta paigha-Deshmukh areas as was mentioned earlier briefly there were intermittent working class struggles in the towns- especially in the Nizam State Railways, once in 1928 and 1935. But the growing discontent among the people coupled with the failure of the "moderates" and the Hyderabad state congress movement during the 1938-39,

suggested the possibilities for AMS leaders like Ravi Narayan Reddy, B. Yella Reddy, DV Rao, A Ramchandra Reddy, S Ramanadhan and others of militant struggles in the rural areas. It was at the same time the Krishna District committee of the CPI (which formed the major base for the Andhra PC in terms of cadres and struggles) decided to send its functionaries through Madhira and Khammam taluqs to the Telangana areas. In Hyderabad city itself, students who formed "Comrades Association" in 1939 viz. M. Mohiuddin, RB Goud and others were drawn into the communist movement with the help of the All India Congress Writers Association. In the Marathwada areas of the state too socialist groups started actively participating with the advent of Chandragupta Chowdhary.74

In the Chilakaluri conference of the AMS in 1940 Ravi Narayan Reddy became the president and some major changes in the functioning of the organisation were effected. The membership fee was reduced to 25 paise, a regrouping of the forces took place, the leaders started touring villages for propaganda and related purposes against the Vetti, and other peasant problems and village association formed. But even at this stage the AMS was not seen as functioning against the small landlords rich peasants and moneylenders but against the big landowners. But in Nalgonda district the struggle took a different form. The

Kaupards were supported in their struggles against the landlords. The workers in the rice mills in Surypet were being organised for higher wages etc. In Akkalagudem in Nalgonda district the AMS won a legal battle against the landlords. The village disputes and the collection of illegal dues was solved at the local level itself by the village association thereby affecting a loss of revenue due to the Patels and Patwaris. This has considerably increased the popularity of the AMS which was called in the rural areas as Sanghams.75

The eleventh conference of the AMS at Bhuvangiri was a

75 See DV Rao, n.61, pp 236 and 241-42 He argued that it was at this juncture that differences started cropping up in the organisation. While some of the Andhra PC leaders were against these struggles, the Nalgonda District Committee felt that these programmes among peasants, against Vetti, Deshmukhs were also struggles of a class nature (pp 232-40) Moreover there were other differences with the central committee of the CPI and within the Andhra PC. The majority trend in the PC- Rajeshwar Rao, Barsavapunnaiah, K. Gopal Rao, Chandram and others-opposed the "reformist" policies of the CC of CPI - relating to the no-strike policy after 1942, grow more food campaign", on the scheduled caste Federation and on the International Issues of American and French imperialism in Algeria, Lebanon, etc. The "minority" trend- which accepted the position of the CC and Polit Bureau of the CPI were P. Sundarayya, Vasu and others. These differences were to affect the organisational relations in future. In the early 1940 Sundarayya put forward the slogan of allotting seats on 50-50 basis for the Hyderabad-based Muslim fanatical organisation Ittehadul Muslimeen (which was backed by the Nizams government and whose Razakar bands were to create havoc in the Telangana countryside in future) and the AMS and Maharashtra and Karnataka Parishads - much akin to the later CC of CPI's document in Sept. 1945 to the effect that independence from the British "peacefully...if the Congress [Muslim] League- Communist unite" The PC rejected this formula in Hyderabad. But the differences among them would grow, especially after the second congress of CPI in Feb. 1948 when BT Ranadive, opposing the reformist leaders, proposed an armed struggle in India. See for these differences, the Self-Critical Report, n. 74.
watershed in the history of the peasant movement in Telangana. Hence forth struggles against Yetti, forced levy of food grains from peasants (in which Jagirdars and Deshmukhs invariably escaped to fulfill their quota of levy), evictions of tenants and the atrocities of the Jagirdars etc and of the bureaucracy were to be fought tooth and nail. As a result of the reduction of the membership fee further, and opening of branches in the taluqs and villages, peasants flocked to these Sanghams and started organising. The first reported land seizure were perhaps made by the Mundrai Lambadi peasants even though the Sangham put a "break on the people's upsurge" at this stage. In the initial stages when meetings were held in about 30-40 villages, peasants felt bold and started questioning the landlords and tried to eradicate Yetti in their villages. The first serious encounter with the landlords in this phase is with the Visnnor Deshmukh, who through his agents tried to raid Ailamma's crop but in vain as peasant volunteers of Palakurti as well as from the vicinity not only threshed her crop but safely deposited it in her house.76

76 See Ailamma's account of this incident in Stree Shakti Sanghtana, Manaku Telivani Mana Charitra (Our History that we are not aware of — in Telugu) (Hyderabad: Navayuga Book House, 1986) pp1-13 also published in English As We Were Making History (Delhi; Kali for Women, 1989). As mentioned above, levy of food grains on peasants in various parts of the Telangana districts and elsewhere and the handling of this issue by the administration and police has caused considerable discontent. Intelligence reports did mention a number of cases registered against offenders for illicit hoarding and profiting, contravention of the rationing rules or supplies order etc (which, in some cases, used to increase to about 34 cases in a week, etc.). However, this hardly improved peasants conditions. See, for instance, the Summary of Intelligence Reports of the Special Branch of the Hyderabad City Police, Home Department,
In 1945 the twelfth conference of AMS was held in Khammam with a participation of about 20,000 people and the movement spread by extending the struggles in the Jagir of Taldarpalli and other areas. On the issue of collection of levy grain in Akunoor and Madireddypalam, a massive repression was unleashed by the police on the reluctant villagers, which were highlighted by the AMS. It was at this time the village volunteers corps were raised as self-protection groups for the peasants against the landlords agents. But soon Doddi Komarayya was killed in Kadivendi village by the Visnoor Deshmukhs agents. The irated peasants attacked these gangs, conducted a people’s court and punished them.

From now on distribution on lands to peasants also formed a major part of the agenda of the AMS, at least in Nalgonda and some parts of Warangal in the beginning. But at this stage it is not the landlords land as such which become the object of distribution programme but that of the recently evicted or transferred land from tenants to moneylenders and Deshmukhs due to

Govt. of Hyderabad, 23-4-1354 Fasli (1945); 26-2-1354F; 15-8-1354F; 20-2-1354F; 15-1-1354F and so on.

77 See Hyderabad Residency Records, Fortnightly Report for the fortnight ending 15-4-1945 in File No. 6 (45), p / 45 in Reel No. 1 ACC no. 44 at NAL. Andhra PC members also participated in this conference.

indebtedness and so on. Soon propaganda campaigns ("Jaitra Yatras") were organised, cultural squads (with "Burra Katha", Payadas folk songs and the drama Ma Bhoomi being the most popular among peasants) and gradually military squads were formed as self-defence squads in the villages to counter the landlord - police-Razakar raids. A "Jungle Satyagaraha" was also organised throughout in which cutting down of toddy trees of landlords was carried out. This has considerably reduced the excise revenue of the government as it formed one of the important sources of revenue as we have seen earlier. It likewise curtailed the income of the landlords. In the mass meetings the question of land seizures was discussed and first the fallow land, relinquished lands were divided by the village committees and distributed among peasants. This also increased repression on villages. By 1946 about 240 such villages were raided, with 22 (including 3 women) shot dead, 64 women raped, 8,000 arrested, 15,000 beaten and harassed, Rs. 12 lakhs worth property looted by the police of Razakars. The influence of the CP/AMS also increased from 300 villages to about 2,000 villages.78 Between 1947 and Feb 1948 statistics indicated a sharp rise in the casualties and losses suffered by the Telangana people. Thus in this period about 316 were killed, 508 wounded, 5791 tortured, 12,434 arrests were made, 472 women raped, Rs. 97

78 See for these figures, Hyderabad State Communist Committee "Hyderabad's Battle for New Democracy is yours" (Feb-1948) (Bezwada: prajashakti press, 1948) pp. 3 and 8.
lakhs worth or property looted, 5046 houses burnt, about 20 villages completely razed downs.80 Women's participation in these struggles on a large scale is an important phenomenon in this movement when they not only drove away the police parties but showed exemplary courage in securing the release of AMS workers from police custody.81

It was at this movement that the British withdrew from India, the Nizam tried to declare independence but the Indian Military and Diplomacy (through KM Munshi and others) was too strong a force for him to pursue such designs. And in Feb. 1948 at the second congress of CPI at Calcutta, BTRandive called for an armed struggle, abolition of zamindari system, "land to the

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80 See Ibid. p. 16. See also Report to HEH the Nizams Govt on the Communist Agitation in Hyderabad State, W.V. Grijegosn, Revenue & Police Member. 5-12-1946, Proceedings, History of States, Govt of India, File no. 15 p(5), 1947, NAL; See also Home Department, Govt. of Hyderabad, F.No. LI/d518 "Communist Activities in the villages" 1947.

81 See People's Age 14-12-1947 and People's Age 1-4-1948 for the incidents in Penngoda and Appajipet for the participation of women. See also Stree Shakti Sanghtam, n. 76 and Sundarayya, n. 78 Part II, ch. 9 pp 380-407. The intelligence sources also indicate the increasing activity of the communists among women. The Mahila Nav Jivan Mandal and other organisation led by Yashodha Bai, Pushpa Bai, Premalata Gupta, Krishna Kumari, Tara Laxmi, Naval Devi, Kanta Devi and others stressed the role of women in the anti-colonial struggles, improving the condition of the women, etc. See, for instance, the Summary of Intelligence Reports of the Special Branch, Hyderabad City Police, Home Department, Government of Hyderabad, 4-3-1354F; (1945 A.D.); 16-9-1354F; 23-9-1345F; 9-9-1354F; 4-12-1354F; 25-12-1354F.
tiller\textsuperscript{,} and so on.\textsuperscript{82} In its special circular the CC of CPI asked its party ranks to guard against disruptive demands of the withdrawal of the armed struggle in Telangana and defend it "with all the means at their disposal".\textsuperscript{83} The differences in the Andhra PC Secretariat surfaced again with the "Andhra Thesis". In this draft Resolution, two positions can be discernible. The entire Andhra PC except Sundaryya argued that it is wrong on the part of Adhikari to compare the present Congress government with that of Kernsky's government, that the present stage of the revolution [in India] is New Democratic stage, not Socialist stage, the middle peasant is a firm ally in the revolution who participates in the revolution. The rich peasant who has no feudal tails, can be neutralised as a class, but in areas like Telangana and Royalaseema, where feudalism is very strong, it is even possible to get sections of rich peasantry in the struggle (though vacillating).

Sundaryya, on the other hand argued that the present stage of revolution is a Socialist stage that, rich peasants are the main enemies and middle peasants can be neutralised.\textsuperscript{84} After this theses were sent to the Party, differences arose in the

\textsuperscript{82} See Jamin Jothne \textit{wajenko satra mehanat kahton ke hatmein} (in Hindi) Statement of the CC based on political Resolutionof the IIInd congress (Bombay : new Age Publishers 1948) pp. 13-15.

\textsuperscript{83} See special CC circular No. 6 Dec. 30, 1950 p.2 at ACHI.

\textsuperscript{84} See Draft Resolution by the Andhra provincial Committee (For discussion among Ranks) The CPI (on provinces-6) Bombay, 9-7-1948 at ACHI.
Source: Adapted from Manaku Teliyani Mana Charitra (In Telugu) edited by Gstre Shakti Sanghatana. (Hyderabad: Nabyuga Book House, 1986)
Party once again leading finally to the demand for the removal of Randive from the General Secretaryship of CPI. The Korean war in the early 1950s, secret visit of CPI leaders to Moscow, and other events finally led to the victory of "reformists".

Meanwhile Telangana peasants continued their struggle, now after the surrender of the Nizam and the Police Action in Sept-Oct 1948 against the remaining Razakars and the military the Andhra PC Secretariat decided for continuing regular armed guerilla war. The guerilla warfare, consisted of raids on police stations, landlords houses, etc. ambushing police parties so that they can secure arms, destruction of communication lines, and so on. For this purpose a 5-10 cadre-based "shock brigades" were formed. A review of its entire policy in the midst of this struggle showed the weaknesses and strengths of the Andhra PC. After the Indian military intervention, its organisational report; suggested, cadres and peasants in West Bhugvangiri, Jangam areas disbanded their armed units and started functioning as propaganda

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65 See CPI, "Report on Left-Sectarianism in the Organisation activities of the PB and the main organisational Tasks Before the CC and PB in Future" July 1950. at ACHI p. 39.

66 See Government of India, Communist Violence in India (1949 Sept). It is interesting to note in the booklet, the 19 incidents of violence mentioned were mostly against property persons, "law abiding" villagers, burning of village records, "loyal" villagers, congress workers, killing of those who have gone out of a local Deshmukh, and even an ex-president of Taluq Congress Committee. (pp. 67-70) See also VV Rao and VR Rao "India's Police Action Against Hyderabad" Deccan Chronicle, 13-3-1949.
squads thinking that the anti-Nizam struggle their struggle was over. But soon "the village oppressors raised their heads". Incidentally these were also relatively new struggle areas where the organisation was not built up strongly and as a result landlords, rich peasants have also crept in increasingly. The这些人 are the same people who either withdrew from the organisation, or became police informers and betrayed the party. In other areas also these elements sabotaged the party to an extent but the difference lies in the fact that village committees were under the majority of poor peasants and agricultural labourers as in Chittur, Cherukupalli zones of Nalgonda. ("This is one of our best areas in every respect") In the strengths of the movement, the report emphasised the increase in the form of peasant's resistance. As a result, landlords grain was confiscated, Deshmukhs driven out of villages. Despite heavy repression police camps were attacked and arms seized. Though lands were redistributed to peasants, due to faulty classification and improper implementation, discrepancies crept into this programme, but the increasing consciousness of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants made them to question even the level of ceiling imposed on the landlords and rich peasants lands. Another feature of this was the asseration of blacksmiths, carpenters, washermen, barbers and cobblers for higher wages based on the output of work performed rather than the previous emphasis on households and "mamuls". Debts were not paid for 1948-49 in the struggle areas, neither levy of grains
collected price controls were enforced, toddy was not extracted (except in Suryapet) though the organisation reconsidered this in order to win over the poor toddy-tappers, but without allowing the contractors into the villages. Altogether out of the 100 military squads during the anti-Nizam struggle days, they were reduced to 70 squads as a result of repression /desertion in the later years. Yet it still retained a party membership of 8000 to 10,000. Though it had contacts with the student bodies, trade unions, minorities etc. in Hyderabad, Warangal, Marathwada, these could not be utilised and spread the message of Telangana.

But of significance to the debate on rich peasants, etc, this report and the Self-critical Report, mentioning the wrong classification method for landlords and rich peasants and its harmful effects in the distribution programme, did take into cognizance the hesitation on the part of members with rich peasant background, etc in implementing land distribution and higher agricultural wages. These reports reviewed the situation and efforts were made to eliminate these pitfalls by removing these sections from the village committees, etc. As a result in many areas "agricultural labourers and poor peasant PMs [Party

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See Political and Organisational Report (Andhra - Telangana after the Police Action) 1948 Inner CC No. 6. CPI at ACHI. Government's intelligence reports suggested an increasing activity among the CPI members to expand into students, railway workers, Singareni collieries mine workers, Muslims, the depressed castes, women and so on.
Members] came out as the vanguard of the movement; PHs from upper classes who have not declassified walked out".88

Thus this rich peasant factor was not the major factor which resulted in the defeat of the struggle after 1951 when it was decided by the new leadership to withdraw the Telangana Armed struggle. The reason for this defeat should be searched elsewhere. For instance, at crucial movements the national as well as the Andhra PC wavered, discussed the issues but finally failed to give a decisive course of action. When at the same time the Chinese Communist Party was marching ahead, the CPI was following suicidal policies. Though in about 2,000 villages the "Dual power" was established by distributing land amounting to about 10 lakhs acres in Telangana districts, the repression was also heavy with about 2,000 peasants youth killed, 50,000 arrested 3 lakh people tortured and so on. There was no effort on the part of the central leadership to spread the movement through all-India workers strike, etc. These were almost none in this period: the peasants movement confined to Telangana, Kerala Bengal, Tripura.