CHAPTER III

Conditions in Telangana
And
The Role of the Communists
The celebrated Telangana Armed Struggle of peasants against the tyranny of the autocratic Nizam's rule constitutes one of the glorious chapters in the history of Nizam's State of Hyderabad and its freedom movement. This dramatic story has been told by different groups of people namely the Communists, the academics and even the feminists. We have even first person accounts of the Communist leaders of the struggle, memoirs of nationalists, historical accounts based on primary documents, sociological analysis of the insurgent villages and oral histories. Despite the difference in perspective, most narrators agree that the revolt was an understandable and admirable struggle of poor villagers against the tyrannical and oppressive system of landlordism¹.

Before we go into the discussion on the movement led by the Communists, it is important to study the nature, character and economic condition of the erstwhile state of Hyderabad.

Biggest of all the 600 odd princely states, agricultural farming was the mainstay of 60-70% of the people. But micro-level studies of different areas revealed that yields of all the principal crops turned out far lower than expected or even when compared to distant British provinces resulting in a low standard of life.

The politics of the state of Hyderabad was built on a combination of the economy, autocracy and religious communalism.

¹ According to Raj Bahadur Gour "Telangana was a land of 'Jhecls' (lakes and tanks) and jagirdars of deshmukhs and their destitutes. From a plane of the 'Deccan Airways' of those days, one could see the chain of tanks fitted like diamonds on earth. But walking on earth, he could across the terror of the tyrant and the misery of the toiler" in his foreword in the book *Telangana Struggle- Memoirs* by Arutla Ramachandra, translated from Telugu by B. Narsing Rao Reddy, New Delhi 1924. P III
The Telangana area was covered with vast forests and underdeveloped countryside. The communications had always been poor and the region as a whole could be called neglected.

The Telangana region suffered the tyranny of the feudal regime of the Nizam. The power structure was a pyramidal one with the British imperialists on top, next to them the Nizam and under him a line of subordinates - jagirdars, Zamindars, deshmukhs, patels and patwaris. Down below, crushed by the weight of all these officials were the common people of Telangana.

The ruling class in Telangana was based on Jagirdari system of the Mughal Empire. Jagirs were given to nobles and other leading servants of the ruling dynasty. Although they were supposed to be transferable, they soon became hereditary. Their administration was uniformly inefficient due to the system of absentee landlords and scattered nature of the Jagirs. Later this initiative was snatched away by another landlord group called the deshmuklis and they became the main rural base of the rural economy. They owned thousands of acres of land. Most of their land was either let out on tenancy or remained fallow. The deshmukhs combined money lending with landlordism. The deshmukh system of allocation of whole villages to some was introduced by the Nizam when Salar Jung I was the Prime Minister on the advice of the British after the 1857 Revolt, sometime in the 80's of the 19th century. This was to be an instrument to keep the peasant under control and create a social class wedded to the

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2 According to the report of The Agrarian Reforms Committee, 1949, Hyderabad. "The jagirdars of Hyderabad do not have any right to the soil. They are entitled only to revenue accruing due from the land. A jagir is a free grant of one or more villages as a reward for some conspicuous service rendered or for maintaining the status and dignity of the grantee. P 3
new colonial system and prepare to defend it in its own interests. This role of the deshmukh became more important at the end of the 19th century with the introduction of the requirement that land revenue must be paid in cash.)

Viewing the deplorable conditions, Kesava Iyengar wrote a letter to B. Abdy Collins, an ICS Officer serving as Director General of Commerce and Industries in the Hyderabad government. He stated,

"In Warangal I find that the rural economy is dominated by tyrannical, short-sighted landholders oppressing the landless tenant or penniless serf (baghela). I find that if I have to record the truth as such, and incorporate all my data with the report, it is bound to throw light on the discreditable ways of these big landlords individually. And these with their influence and sway would try their best to discredit their enquiry."

Eledroos, who was appointed as the Commander-in-Chief of the Hyderabad State forces was approached in late 1946 to send out the military to bring the situation in Telangana which was under the grip of the Communists back to normal.

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In Warangal land amounting to 3,80,000 acres though cultivable was not taken up for cultivation, it was all cultivable waste" due to the defective policy of land distribution and land allotment followed by the state. The absentee and disinterested persons or organizations were given thousands of acres for land development which yielded poor results. Other reasons like poor application of improved seeds, manures, pesticides and methods of cultivation, meager funds for agricultural development and irrigation which resulted in low crop yields. Thus according to him, it was the improper utilization of vast resources resulting in low yields and standard of life which led to the Telangana "peasant uprising in 1946, for details see V. Ramakrishna Reddy's paper entitled "Agricultural production in the former Hyderabad State - 1911-50 - A micro study" presented at the national seminar conducted by the Department of History, OU in March 2002.
He explains that it is necessary to know the policy of land distribution in Hyderabad State. The first type of land is called Sarf-e-khas or Nizam’s private estate and it was mainly around Hyderabad city or the Atraf-e-Balda (literally meaning around the city. The administration of these lands was done by officials who were paid from the Nizam’s treasury and had nothing to do with the state governments. The second type of land was Dewani. It was state land where District Collectors and Revenue Officers were appointed as in the rest of the Indian Dominion and all taxes and revenue went to the State treasury.

The third type was the Samasthas and Jagirs. The samasthas were old Hindu ruled principalities. The owner had rendered military services to their rulers. They paid a nominal tax to the Hyderabad government. Along with these were the Jagirs which were owned both by Muslims and the Hindus. These were allotted to various families from ancient times for court or military services rendered or expected to be rendered but the Jagirs paid no land tax or revenue to the government and all income went to the Jagirdars. There were also 'Paigahs' which means household crops, originally created for raising corps of troops to be at the disposal of the ruler, but with passage of time and the land grants made, they acquired a feudal and hereditary nature. These Paigah Ameers had their own civil administration and even kept small armies.

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4 The Sarf-e-khas land was the property of the Nizam. These lands comprised of 1,961 villages covering an area of 8,000 square miles. These lands were merged with Diwani in February 1949.

El doros "Hyderabad of the Seven Loaves pp 154-156"
The following table will give an idea of the analysis of a Jagirdari area.

Table No. III - 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Name of the District</th>
<th>Diwani</th>
<th>Sarf-e-Khas</th>
<th>Exempt Jagirs</th>
<th>Non Exempt Jagirs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Atraf-e-Balda</td>
<td></td>
<td>573</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Nizamabad</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Medak</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Baghat</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Mahboobnagar</td>
<td>698</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>1431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Nalgonda</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>1256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2855</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>1193</td>
<td>5520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


One of the main problems in the field of agriculture in the Nizam's state was its excessive dependence on rainfall. When the labour census was taken in 1935, there were 12,34,883 cultivators occupying 2,17,43,309 acres of land. It works out at 17.6 acres per head while in the year 1928 each cultivator had 19.2 acres as his holding. Thus agricultural holdings were slowly getting smaller and smaller. With the small size of holdings and the cultivation of only rain-fed crops, the cultivators have to leave

their fields during the off-season and serve as agricultural laborers etc, as their holdings were not sufficient to support them and their families throughout the year\(^7\).

The Sarf-e-khas or Crown Lands brought the Nizam the untaxable income of Rs.2,50,00,000 annually and the area was 8,109 square miles. Besides Paigahs, Samasthans (Hindu princes) and Jagirs comprised 25,629 square miles and the people who lived in these areas were directly under the rule of their overlord or of the Nizam himself\(^8\). The administration report of the government in 1939 says that the average rainfall was below normal. Hence Kharef and Ali were seriously affected and the yield was disappointing\(^9\).

The government in its reports lay many claims to the efforts made by it in the field of agriculture to improve the produce and to better the condition of the agricultural laborers. A Hyderabad Farming Association was formed which published its quarterly magazine "The Hyderabad Farmer". This journal was very popular. At a request from the association, the government sanctioned an amount Rs. 10,000 during the year 1931-32 for giving grant in aid to deserving farmers with a view to help them in improving and equipping their farms according to the advice of the department\(^10\).

Agricultural research also continued on a regular basis and in the year 1939-40. Plant breeding work was carried out on five of the most important crops (rice, castor, wheat, cotton and Jawar) with the object of evolving plants that would give an increased output of better quality. Demonstrations were given to cultivators. As a result

7 Ibid 17  
8 Sadat Ali Khan, Brief Thanksgiving, Madras, 1959  
9 Report n the Administration of HEH, the Nizam's Dominions for the year 1349 F. (1939-40) Hyderabad 1942, p (vi)  
10 Annual Administrative report of the Department
the total area under new and improved varieties of crops increased to 9,04,415 acres in 1939 according to government reports. The budget grant of the agricultural department for the year 1939 was Rs. 10, 28,900".

Wide publicity by the government was also given to the three Debt Relief Regulations namely the Land Alienation Regulation, the Debt Conciliation Regulation and the Money Lenders Regulation. The year 1938-39 was the first year of the working of these measures and the government watched with anxiety their effect on rural credit. It was found that the Sowcars who were antagonistic to these measures stopped lending money with the result that the agriculturists were put to much inconvenience. It was quite natural that the credit should shrink as a result of the Debt Relief measures. As a matter of fact, the government found these shrinkages to be in the long run in the best interest of the agriculturists, as it would promote thrift and self help and greater independence among them.

Efforts were also made by the government to bring the administration of the jagirs in line with the Diwani administration with the cooperation of the Jagirdars. The Government made the following progress in that direction: -

Compulsory Settlement of Jagirs:- The Legislative Council passed the Bill for amending the Land Revenue Act in order to enable the government to introduce the Survey Settlement in the jagirs and grant patta rights to holders of land in those areas but its final sanction and enforcement was held up due to the Jagirdars submitting memorandums to the government requesting reconsideration of some of its provisions. The matter therefore was under consideration of the government for a considerable

Report on the Administration of HEH, the Nizam’s Dominions for the year 1349 F. (1939-40) Hyderabad 1942, P 77-78

Report on the Administration of HEH, the Nizam’s Dominions for the year 1348 F. (1938-39) Hyderabad 1941, p 18
period of time\textsuperscript{13}. Discussions were also in progress to arrive at a settlement in respect of recovery of land revenue in Jagirs and administration of nation-building activities in jagirs\textsuperscript{14}.

The government also proudly published a report on the agricultural publications in the year 1938-39. The thrust seemed to be on making remarkable progress in high quality agricultural production and all round prosperity. The following was the list released by them.

\textsuperscript{1} Report on the Administration of HEH, the Nizam’s Dominions for the year 1351 F. (1941-42) Hyderabad 1945, pp 20-21

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid p 21
Table showing the Report on Agriculture Published by the HEH Nizam's Government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Where it was published</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Annual Administration report of Department of Agriculture of 1345 F</td>
<td>Issued by the Department of Agriculture</td>
<td>Department of Agriculture, Hyderabad Deccan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Annual report of research Experimental work of Department of agriculture</td>
<td>- do -</td>
<td>- do -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Red Hairy Caterpillar (Urdu leaflet)</td>
<td>- do -</td>
<td>- do -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chemical Examination of Samples (English leaflet)</td>
<td>- do -</td>
<td>- do -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>'Hyderabad farmer' (Quarterly)</td>
<td>Issued by Hyderabad Farmers Association</td>
<td>- do -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Annual Administration report of Department of Agriculture for the year 1347 F (1937-38), Hyderabad, 1939. p 47

Unfortunately, in spite of the high sounding efforts of the government in the form of research, publication and regulations, the benefits could not filter down to the ordinary peasant and he looked to a more dynamic force to provide the solution to his problems.
World War II had devastating effects. Total victory, unconditional surrender and destruction of one's opponents were the war aims of 1939-45. Certain sections of the economy were developed to meet the special needs of the war while others were allowed to decay.

The Communists found the situation created by the war as an opportunity to emerge and carve a niche for themselves. A split began to occur in the Hyderabad State Congress with the emergence of the new brand of Communist leaders. Ravi Narayan Reddy, the hero of the 1938 Satyagraha, when released from prison came into close contact with the communist leaders of Andhra region. Differences began to appear between nationalist leaders like M.Rama Chandra Rao and Ravi Narayan Reddy. These difference though very mild at the beginning created a split between the two groups. By the 8th conference of Andhra Maha Sabha in Chilkapur in 1941, the tussle between the two factions became more basic and fundamental. The Communists looked upon the World War II as the people's war and struck a different note from the Congress while the non-Communist groups were persuaded towards the Quit India policy of the Indian National Congress, the Communists were openly helping the war effort. The Hyderabad government, trying to protect its own interests, patronized the Communist workers and enlisted their services for the war efforts.

Another prominent Communist leader was Mukhdum Mohiuddin. The leaders established contact with the Communist Party of India which seized the opportunity of winning a separate Andhra state as a potential communist province, an Indian Yenem where from to liberate the entire country.¹⁵

K.M.Munshi in his book, *End of an Era*, describes the Communist technique as the Trojan horse technique. The objects of the Comrades association formed in 1940 in Hyderabad was so vague that many nationalists which included the Congressmen and the Muslims were blinded and walked into the Comrades parlour. According to
The hardships faced by the peasants provided a convenient ground for the Communists to assume leadership\textsuperscript{16}. One of the gory practices that began was the grain levy during World War II. The government started collecting a grain levy which affected every village in the state. The revenue collectors entered each village with a stipulated quota of grain to purchase at below market prices and they had to meet the quota or face disciplinary action from their superiors. Centralized locations were marked out where the peasants at their own cost had to carry the grain and supply the required amount. The wealthy villagers bribed the revenue collectors not to collect from their hands, hid their surplus grain underground and sold it in the black market. Thus the collection would fall hard on those villagers who could at least afford to supply grain\textsuperscript{17}.

The woes of the peasants were enormous. The number of taxes they had to pay only kept increasing. Small disputes which are quite normal among people in villages was an additional source of revenue for the landlords. The parties had to pay dispute tax to the landlord and also a bribe for the settlement of the same. The tax even chased the men to their cremation, which otherwise would be a permanent release from their him, the Communists in Hyderabad first endeared themselves to the progressive leaders of the Andhra Maha Sabha. Ravi Narayan Reddy, once elected as president of the Maha Sabha secured ascendancy, persuaded those members who had State Congress affiliations and drove them out of it. Pp86-87.

A delegation of World Federation of Democratic Youth visited Telangana in 1946. Olgo, the Soviet representative in the delegation is reported to have remarked after what she saw in Suryapet "Now I can see what Russia would have looked like in Czar's time." Arutla Ramachandra Reddy op. cit. p iii

"The landlord's exploitation of the people and their mute sufferings pained me and evoked a feeling of disgust. I was looking forward to an opportunity to serve and liberate them from this oppression." Said Ravi Narayan Reddy in \textit{Heroic Telangana}, Delhi 1973, p 5

John B Roosa's article titled "Nationalism painted red" which appeared in the Indian Express, 15\textsuperscript{th} August 1997, states that the Hyderabad government continuing the grain levy even after the war provoked the continuation and actually expansion of the Communist part's campaign in Hyderabad State. According to him, the Communists projected themselves as a popular front against the British rule in which all nationalist forces could function.
burden. The body cannot be reduced to ashes unless a tax is paid. Along with these penal dues, the people were subject to many cruel punishments like running in the front of the landlord's cart, standing in the sun for hours with heavy stones on the back etc. Taxation was so heavy that people were unable to pay and gave up their lands.

The lands that were given up in lieu of the debt invariably went into the hands of the deshmukhs who were also the moneylenders. Of all the Deshmukhs, the most hated was Ramachandra Reddy of Jangaon in Nalgonda who owned 40,000 acres of land in 40 villages. He made the peasants do forced labour in his field and extracted Nazrana (presents in cash or kind) for births, marriages or deaths in the family. He had a local court where the only way to get a favourable judgement was a bribe. He built himself a fine house for Rs.2 lakhs. In one of the incidents, a peasant called Bandangi stood up against him when he tried to interfere in a land dispute and inspite of his brother using Ramachandra’s help, Bandangi after several years, actually won the case. But on his way back home, he was murdered. This further increased their hatred towards the Deshmukhs and the local people erected a shrine where Bandangi fell and offerings are made to this day^{18}.

The Bhagela's condition was most miserable during this period. The origin of a baghela was typically that of a landless member of one of the lower castes, often from an untouchable caste who would be obliged to offer her or his labour as security for debts and work for the creditors till the debt was paid. The wages for this work would be deducted as loan. But the wages were so low and the interests so high that the debt remained unpaid. When the Baghela died, the debt was inherited by his heir, so there was a generation of agricultural labour giving totally unpaid labour to the

^{18} Barry Pavier, Telangana Movement (1944-51), New Delhi, 1981. p 6
Deshmukhs . Vetti - forced or compulsory labour - was demanded without notice or payment from the villagers who were not sufficiently wealthy to resist the Deshmukh's demands. Another group of cultivators were the Asami Shikmis who were tenants at will paying rent either by agreement or according to what was paid the previous year.

When the condition of the Bhagela's deteriorated, the government intervened and restricted it to annual contracts by a regulation known as "Hyderabad Bhagela Agreements Regulation" which received the assent of His Exalted Highness the Nizam on 1st Shaval 1345 (23-3-1345). The Tahsildars were asked to give publicity to these regulations. The social workers also worked hard to publicize it. But there were many difficulties in its implementation. In most of the Taluqs, the landlords were very powerful and the indebted labourers too timid and backward to complain.

The government realized in 1938 from the previous year's report that the Bhagela regulation introduced by the government was not effective in its existing form, the question of amending it could be discussed in a committee of selected officials and non-officials. Thus a committee was formed under the Additional Revenue Secretary and a Bhagela Agreement Bill, which was a great improvement on the Regulation, was passed.

It was also during this year that the Record of Rights was promulgated in Aurangabad, Vijapur and Crangpur Taluqs. A tenancy committee was also formed to make a detailed enquiry in the condition of tenantry.

19Ibid p.6
This was passed in the year 1935, Mazhar Hussain, Report on the Labour Census 1935, Hyderabad, 1937, p 46.


21Ibid p 21
In addition to the existing woes of the peasants, the Second World War aggravated the situation. The impact of World War II on the state was felt only after 1942. The financial position was not disturbed during the first three years of the war and the revenue in the shape of the excise, customs and forest wealth increased considerably. The developmental activities also increased. However the years following 1942 recorded a different trend in the Communist finances. The government was faced with an increase in expenditure on "war measures" including civil defense maintenance of internal security and food supply. The continuous rise in price level and consequent measures to control the supply of essential commodities and their prices involved the government in serious administrative difficulties in successive years. The financial policy of the government during these years was governed by the principle of providing as much assistance as possible to war measures. No effort was spared in utilizing all available factories and mills for war purposes. The Hyderabad state provided not less than Rs.9 crores in the form of direct and indirect payments for war expenditure. The financial help rendered by means of investment in Government of India loans, which stood at over Rs.50 crores in 1945 was in no way negligible. The finances of the state were governed by the exigencies created by the war. The following table shows the way in which the state's debt started increasing between the years 1938 and 1950.
The state debt from 1938-39 to **1949-50** was as shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Debt (Rs.Crores)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>7.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>7.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>7.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>10.00</td>
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<td>1942-43</td>
<td>9.73</td>
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<td>1943-44</td>
<td>9.64</td>
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<td>1944-45</td>
<td>18.36</td>
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<td>1945-46</td>
<td>23.16</td>
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<td>1946-47</td>
<td>27.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-48</td>
<td>38.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>54.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above table shows the marked increase in state debt during the year **1949 - 1950**

The Communist Party of the State of Hyderabad came into existence in 1939. Leading members were sent by the Andhra Communist Party to guide the destinies of the Communists in Telangana. They realized that the Communists could become a force to be reckoned with only if they concentrated on villages where the feudalistic abuses were rampant. The leading members of the Andhra Sabha with leftist leanings
like Ravi Narayan Reddy, Baddam Yella Reddi, V.Alwar Swamy, Devulapatti Venkateswara Rao developed close personal contacts with Andhra Communist leaders like P.Sundrayya, Chandra Rajeswara Rao, M.Basavapunnaiah and others.

When the Congress launched the Civil Disobedience Movement during 1930-32, a number of young men from Telangana including Ravi Narayan Reddy went to the coastal Andhra districts of Madras Presidency and participated in the movement. They returned greatly influenced by Nehru's ideal of socialism.

As a part of their perspective, the Communists managed to take over by 941 the Andhra Maha Sabha. They organized campaigns like "Education Week", "Anti-forced Labour week" etc. The most important was the grain levy campaign. They brought out leaflets explaining what the levy was and how people were fleeced by corrupt collectors. Thus, they got themselves known all over Telangana as people who fought for the peasant's interests.

The Communists were able to rise to prominence because the Congress had been suppressed and by taking hold of the Andhra Maha Sabha it earned credibility for itself. By organizing its base in the villages it was able to defeat the Arya Samaj, something which even the Congress failed to do. Their programmes were very clear and agrarian-based. They worked for abolition of forced labour, illegal eviction and return of illegally seized lands. The branches of the Andhra Maha Sabha which was now fully under Communist influence established branches popularly known as ‘Sangams’ or associations.
One of the unique characteristics of the struggle was the spontaneous participation of the masses of rich, small peasants, tenants and landless labourers united against the oppressive feudal Jagirdars and the government of the Nizam under the leadership of the CPI. Under Communist leadership the rich and middle peasants organized the poor peasants, tenants and landless labourers. By the end of July 1946, the struggle spread to 300-400 villages in Nalgonda, Warangal, Khammam and Karimnagar districts. All the villages in Nizam's government stopped functioning and they were replaced by Sangams.

The government in the latter part of 1946 banned the Andhra Maha Sabha and arrested thousands of Communist workers. The landlords with more reinforcements of Police, entered the villages and found that people refused to perform vetti, while the small farmers refused to give their part for compulsory levy. The coercive efforts of police and officials failed. The agricultural laborers and tenants did not agree to be evicted from the occupied lands.

At a crucial juncture, in July 1946 when India was on the threshold of freedom, the Nizam's government was preoccupied with a number of things. It was hatching plans to declare its independence and convert the state as a bastion of Muslim power.

According to K.M.Munshi in his book, *The End of an Era*, the sangams grew very strong and took violent action against those who came in the way of their activities, particularly the village officers. Whenever the Nizam's government tried to take action against them they went underground or crossed over to Vijayawada from which place they continued to direct their operation. The police raids were common. In Devarupula, 1000 men from Reserve Police and army in thirty trucks encircled and raided the village. They dragged men out of their houses with rope. Three hundred were arrested. From the neighboring Kadavendi village, 2000 people arrived under leadership of M.Somi Reddy. They asked the army and police to leave and there were heated exchanges and arguments. The police fired at Somi Reddy who fell on the ground and died and 350 people were arrested. Such was the ferocity and intensity of repression.

On Independence Day, people were not even allowed to hoist the National flag. There was tight political security around the office of the State Congress and the Hyderabad Student's Union. They had to hoist the flag at 10 am but ten minutes before ten, hundred students came out of the University Office with the slogan "We demand responsible government. Join the Indian Union." The police was taken by surprise. Yashoda Ben, the
Naturally it could not pay any attention to the development in the interior of the villages of the state. The Communists fully exploited this situation to their advantage. By championing the cause of peasants, they became popular with the masses who were incidentally all Hindus. Therefore the Communists became saviors not only of the landless peasants but the entire Hindu community.

It was also during this time that much brutality was inflicted on the villagers by the Razzakars. The harassment of the Razzakars became unbearable in the villages. The State Congress party, which was mainly urban based, was unable to render any help to the villages. Therefore the peasants and workers under the leadership of the Communists organised into groups of volunteers called Dalams to fight Razakkars. Parallel governments were set up in 3,000 villages by establishing village republics. The Communists by governing the sympathy and support of the villages tried to foster their ideology among the masses. The Communists decided to launch an armed struggle on a three-point strategy. First, to create guerilla squads to launch simultaneous attacks on all enemies of the peasants. Second to create, "Grama Rakshaka Dalams" or village protection forces consisting of sympathizers of the party to fight the harassment of the Razzakars. Third, was the creation of the “Vidhvamsaka

Communist women’s leader of Hyderabad addressed a gathering of women in the city and hoisted the flag. In a gathering in Begum Bazar which hoisted the flag, the police appeared an brutal lathi charge followed. The brute police officer rushed to Brij Rani, who was delivering the address but a slap came from the brave woman. The police officer apologized to her but she was sentence to six years imprisonment. With police brutality rising, the youth showed new signs of determination to fight to the last ditch. Glorious Telangana Armed Struggle, R.B. Gour, Delhi 1973. p 10.

5 When the repression intensified, the party reviewed the struggle and formulated a policy and programme of action. 1) Those who collaborate with the Nizam’s government or engage in attacks on the people are enemies and their properties are to be confiscated and distributed among the poor. 2) Small landlords, if they cooperate with the people, can be considered allies and 200 acres can be left to them. 3) Enforce complete non-payment of taxes and levy grain to the government. 4) Protect people from police raids by guarding the villages. 5) The village leaders should not sleep in the villages during nights. 6) The programme of training in guerilla warfare for defense of villages and self-defense should start. 7) Leadership to be built at village level. see for details, A.Ramachandra Reddy’s Telangana Struggle, New Delhi 1984. p 58

D.N Dhanagare, op cit, p.p.198-199
Dalam" or destruction squads to destroy bridges and culverts to hamper the movement of the government forces and the Razzakars, who usually traveled in jeeps and other motor vehicles. The main scene of activity was confined to Warangal and Nalgonda.

Dr. Raj Bahadur Gour one of the leading Communist leaders gives a picture of Hyderabad and the events leading to the Telangana Armed Struggle.

"The peculiarity of Hyderabad State is that in the Asafjahi period it was virtually the 'Prison of the People'.

The Asafjahi kings were faithful to the British and depended on them for their very survival. They broke up the Telugu territory for the purpose. Northern Circars were surrendered to the French for keeping their armies in Hyderabad. The British took them over from the French later. The Rayalaseema districts (known as Ceded Districts) were ceded to the British for affording protection to the Asafjahi rulers.

As if the British were not enough, Salar Jung created in the eighties the Zamindari system, and now the jagirdars, the deshmukhs and the Zamindars were the props of the Asafjahi rule. Eleven hundred and odd jagirdars ruled over 37% of villages, and one-third of the population of the state, the total population being 18 million. Sarf-e-khas' - Nizam's personal jagir - comprised 40% of the area of the state and included very fertile land.

Thus the three currents of people’s struggles - the cultural, the democratic, political and the agrarian combined in one powerful strain that explains the abandon with which the people fought.

The Communists in Andhra Maha Sabha were building up mass struggles under their banner to the embarrassment of the liberals. In the year 1941, the movement against 'vetti' (begar-forced labour) started under the leadership of Andhra Maha Sabha. The

War had thrust its own miseries. The forced collection of levy grain was challenged and resisted by the Andhra Maha Sabha, in particular the Communists.

The 1941 Chilkur Session of Andhra Maha Sabha was a turning point. Ravi Narayana Reddy was the President.

It was in 1943 that the struggle in defence of kauldars (tenants) cultivating landlords' land on rent, began. The issue was that the kauldar must own the produce of his labour on land. The centres of this struggle were the villages of Daopadu, Noorjahanpuram and Bhaktalapuram in Suryapet taluqa. And the comrades who were organising this movement were provisionally expelled from the Andhra Maha Sabha by the then leadership of liberals. And the government arrested these comrades and sentenced them (Corns. Tirmala Rao, Raghavender Rao and Subba Rao etc.,) to various terms of imprisonment. This was the first shot.

The next phase was re-occupation of the land, illegally occupied by the landlords.

The third phase was occupying the surplus land of landlords. Here we had to face the problem of determining the ceiling of land to be left to the landlords. We drew a lesson from the decision of the Vietnam Communist Party in this regard. In their struggle against the French Imperialists, they fixed quite a high ceiling to draw or even neutralise sections of landed gentry in the anti-imperialist struggle.

We fixed the ceiling at 200 standard acres. Quite high from any standard, but very essential in the great struggle against the Nizam, for democracy, for cultural advance and to initiate the agrarian reforms.

1944 was the year when the Andhra Maha Sabha's eleventh Session was held at Bhongir. Ravi Narayana Reddy became the President, defeating the right wing liberal candidate.
Then followed the great upsurge. The struggle for democratic rights, combined with anti-feudal struggle for land, and for the crop raised.

It was in February 1945 that the first Palakurthi Conspiracy Case was foisted on comrades Arutla Ramachandra Reddy, D. Subba Rao and others. The government obliged the Deshmukh, Vishnur Ramchandra Reddy, by foisting and attempt to murder case on these comrades.

Then came the Khammam Session of Andhra Maha Sabha in April 1945. Com, B. Yella Reddy was elected President. But he could not attend as he was interned in his village. Ravi Narayana Reddy presided over the Conference. It was here that we passed a resolution demanding a constituent assembly to determine the future of Hyderabad. The strategy worked out was that our comrades in Andhra area would demand Visalaandhra and we, in the State, will ask for a constituent assembly to include Marathwada and Karnataka too, in the battle.

The movement for land also continued assuming new heights. In November 1945, was launched the famous struggle for protecting the crop raised by Ailamma in Mundrai (Suryapet Taluqa) on the tenancy land of Vishnur Deshmukh, whose goons were preparing to rob her of her labour. Youth from neighbouring villages were mobilised. And the second Palakurthi case was foisted on our comrades.

Then we enter 1946, the year of great upheaval. Vishnur goons attack on the people in Kadavendi in July 1946 and Com. Doddi Komarayya was martyred.

Then followed in November the event in Pata Suryapet where our comrades clashed with Nizam's police and Com. Sarsa Narsaiah was killed. In the same month Devaruppala Village saw the people clashing with Nizam's armed forces and two comrades laid down their lives. In Kamareddygudem the Nizam's armed forces faced people's resistance.
Pulgilla Jagirdar called to his rescue the state army and a pitched battle ensued.

In December 1946, the great struggle of Mallareddygudem took place where three women laid down their lives resisting the Nizam's army.

This was the time for a formal decision to task to arms and resort to guerrilla war. 1947 saw a lull in the struggle, but in reality this was the time to prepare for launching their right royal battle and making the necessary arrangements for the assault. Then came in September 1947, the call for armed resistance in the form of a joint statement by Com. Ravi Narayana Reddy, Baddam Yella Reddy and Makhdoom Mohiuddin.

On November 23, 1947, took place the battle of Pallepadu first of its kind against the police. One policeman was killed and the arms were snatched by our squad. On November 28, 1947, some five thousand people marched with Reddy Flags and the Tricolour in Alair. The police fired at the demonstrators killing six and injuring some fifty seriously.

On December 28, 1947, a historic fight took place at Addagudur with the people and our squad on one side and the police on the other. Two policemen were killed and Com. Sayanna and two other comrades were martyred.

But 1948 was the year of great resurgence of Telangana peoples' struggle.

On January 2, the Ravulapenta fight, where two of our comrades laid down their own lives was waged. On February 2, of Renukunta took place the fight. One February 20, took place the Ragipadu fight were our valiant fighters smashed a gang of 8 Jawans and seized their arms. On 1st April, our comrades fought and smashed a Razakkar camp and seized the arms.

These are only some of the events of the period. But the movement has spread to Nalgonda, Warangal (including the present-day
Khammam), Karimnagar and Adilabad districts, with some echo in Medak, Nizamabad and Hyderabad districts.

The struggle was sustained by distribution of surplus land to the landless and the land hungry.

It must be noted that over 5,000 villages were liberated and cleansed of Nizam's hordes. The local merchants and cultivators cooperated and saw to it that essential supplies were maintained.

During this struggle about 25,000 of our cadres and ordinary people were arrested, and 4,000 of our cadres and ordinary people were arrested, and 4,000 of our comrades were killed. We could liberate about 5,000 villages, and about 10 lakh acres of land was distributed.

But what has to be emphasized is that the impact of this struggle projected into the future also, and influenced the government policies after 1952 elections.

The Tenancy and Agricultural Land Reforms (Ceiling on Agricultural Holdings) Act that was passed in Hyderabad Legislature was unique in the country. About 40 lakh acres of rented land became the property of the cultivators under Section 38-E of the Act. Most of the protected tenants became owners of the land they were tilling.

Bulk of the land distributed by us during the Struggle was retained by the beneficiaries. In some cases, the landlords compromised with the tillers and sold the land away to them on easy terms.

Thus, the Telangana Struggle is a book in itself of evolution of tactics of struggle in accordance with the experience and preparedness of the masses. The party had to provide the leadership and the wherewithal to conduct the struggle. The sweep of the movement was the outcome of the three currents - the cultural, political and the agrarian. The party provided leadership to all its components, and we see the result — the Telugu people are united, democracy is established and we reap the fruits of whatever agrarian
reforms have been secured. Much more has to be achieved - and this experience must inspire us to take the steps forward.²⁸

Suravaram Pratapa Reddy, a noted journalist explained that the communists created,

"A magic and radically transformed the Slavish people to heroes, creating great heroes from nothing, from inert mud."²³

The Communists made extensive use of cultural programme to propagate their ideas and establish their hold. They propagated through burakatha, golla suddulu, vuyyala pata, kolatapu pata, Bhajans and dramas. There were about 120 songs sung under the title of 'Telangana Porata Patalu'. The Communists also influenced the Andhra Praja Mandali (A.P’s theatre association) and they produced a very popular play ‘Ma Bhoomi’ written by Sundara and Vasi Reddy. Another work, Prajala Manishi by Vettikota Alvaraswamy also became very popular.

Among all the cultural activities the Burrakatha was very popular. It could be staged easily as the presenters were few and they did not need any backdrop for their stage performances. One such Burrakatha presented read as the following. There are two actors.

One of them says,

"As the sun shines equally on all mankind, so shall the workers inherit equally the earth".

Another actor,

²⁹ P. Sundarya, op.cit p.114
"The rich and the proud shall be butchered like goats and the horny feet of the toiler shall splash in the blood of kings."

Chorus:
"March comrades, to cast down your oppressors." 30

Possessing modern weapons, the Communists never lacked funds. In case of need they could always replenish their war chest by a raid or two on the houses of the wealthy in the rural areas. Their squads were strictly organised and led by trained personnel some of whom were discharged ex-army men.

After the state was liberated by police action in 1948, law and order was re-established. Many of the communist leaders went underground to intensify the movement and to establish communist rule by force. But once the Government of India deployed the armed forces and hardened their stand against the Communists, they gave up their Armed Struggle and agreed to participate in the democratic process of the country. Ravi Narayan Reddy who was arrested in September 1951 was released on 5 December, 1951 to enable him to participate in the first General Election under the constitution of India. The people in the villages were also in a quandary after the Police Action, over continuing the backing to the Communists as they perceived the Union government as a people's government. This led to a gradual fall in the common man's support for the guerilla movement. In 1951, the Communists voluntarily surrendered arms and thus ended a glorious chapter of Telangana Armed Struggle.

30 Barry Pavier, The Telangana Movement 1944 -51, New Delhi 1981. p 101. The Communists made a new pledge for their comrades. It read thus, "I, a citizen of glorious Telangana and a son of the great Andhra people, pledge not to lay down my arms till the destruction of the Nizam's rule over my motherland is achieved...I will revenge myself against the Nizam's hordes mercilessly and without hesitation...I'll shed blood for blood and take life for life...I promise that I am prepared to die in battle against the enemy rather than live while my people and I
It is noteworthy to make a special mention of the contribution of Makhdum Moinuddin in the following lines.

Makhdum's multi-dimensional personality was well described by Abbas, when he said:

"Makhdum was a glowing flame as also cool drops of dew"
"He was the call of revolution as also the soft-tinkling of the payal."
"He was knowledge, he was action, he was wisdom"
"He was the gun of the revolutionary guerrilla and also the sitar of the musician."
"He was the odour of the gun powder and also the fragrance of jasmine."
"It is this pleasant combination that makes up the man - Makhdum."

Born on February 4, 1908, in Andol, a village in Medak district of Telangana area of Andhra Pradesh, Makhdum's childhood carried the deep impressions of rural poverty arising out of feudal exploitation.

His forefather, Rasheeduddin, came to this part of the country from Azamgarh, along with Aurangzeb's armies. His grandfather from his mother's side, Syed Jafar Ali, came to Deccan in 1657 from Shahjahanpur. Makhdum lived a life of utter penury, when in school in Hyderabad. A tandoori roti' and chalona' (a sort of cheap curry) - all in three paisas of Nizam's currency – was his breakfast-cum-lunch.

are slaves under the bloodthirsty tyranny of Nizam.” for more details see Rajendra Prasad, The Asaf Jahs of Hyderabad Their Rise and Decline, Delhi 1984.
Later when he joined college, he was staying in the basement of a mosque in Sultan Bazaar (Hyderabad), along with a friend of his and sold pictures of actresses and the like to earn his bread.

It is this poverty that made him the mellow and the militant - the gentle colossus - that he was.
He wrote in his famous poem ‘Haveli’ (The Balance).

"There is a long darkness and ruin all around,
How frightening and deep dark are these wide
Cracks in the wall;
Where in live snakes and scorpions
Which shelter the rich and the mahajan’ the Brahmin and the
Mulla."

Here Makhdum lashes out with full force of satire at the decadent feudal system of murder and robbery, of death and devastation, and with a prophetic self-confidence calls out to life to assert muster and mobilise, and raise the banner of liberty' on the ruins of this sinful society.

"This phase of his life coincides with the rise of a group of youth in Hyderabad city, inspired by socialist ideas. They founded the Comrade's Association. Makhdum was associated with this organization right from its founding. With the turn of the decade, in the beginning of forties, the pent-up anger of workers stirred by the war-time spurt in prices, led to a wave of strikes and large scale unionization.

On August 16, 1946 the All-Hyderabad Trade Union Congress was founded, with Makhdum as the President. The movement in Hyderabad started with humble beginnings against forced labour and included tenants refusing to quit and reoccupying lands illegally taken over by Deshmukhs. This led to clashes between peasants and the Deshmukhs' goondas combined with Nizam's police. Arrests, beatings, and firings were everyday news of the period.

In October 1946 came the blow - C.P.I. was banned. All of us had to go underground not knowing what it meant — 'Glue to Earth' was the Central Committee instruction from Com. P.C. Joshi.

On 11th September 1947, the Party decided to launch the Armed Struggle as the last resort. There was no option left.
This was also the view of the then Left in the State Congress. They organised armed attacks on border posts in Marathawada area.

It was in Bombay that he wrote his* famous poem on Telangana.

"The sons and daughters of the forests,  
The mountains and the fields;  
Have risen, swords in hand, with  
All their mighty indignation.  
The sickle is shining,  
The plough is rising high,  
The foundations of feudal rule are shaken,  
The palaces of the rich are tottering,  
The cruel rule of the Halakus  
And the Tsars is crumbling.  
The king, the Seventh Asafjah  
Has started fainting under the heavy  
Blows on his forehead."

He then came away to Hyderabad and took over the Secretaryship of the communist party. He was arrested in 1949. In the jail he wrote the famous poem Qaid’ (Captivity) -

"The aspirations of a captive youth  
Go to sleep,  
Shackled in chains,  
The tinkling noise of the chains,  
(of captivity) when  
Changing sides (in the bed)  
Points even in sleep to the surging  
Life within.  
My only regret is that the vast treasure  
Of my valuable years of life  
Was spent in the four walls of the prison,  
And not offered to the cause of  
Breaking open the prison,  
That my country was."

95
In 1952 he was released to contest in the elections. He lost the parliamentary seat, but won the assembly seat in a by-election from Huzurnagar.

In 1956, he whole-heartedly worked for the unity of Telugu territory and formation of Andhra Pradesh against those who wanted a separate state of Telangana.

This was Makhdum who saw both the dawn mixed up with the remains of darkness and also the smiling future which could be reached through gallows and sacrifice.

Makhdum. He lives through our history and our literature.”

Thus the Communists were a great pressure group who made a great impact in the region of Telangana. Nothing succeeds like success and the Communists had proved that especially in the villages of Nalgonda and Warangal. The efficiency of the Nizam and danger of the Razzakars caused not only harm but also gave scope to the communist by bringing them general support of the public.

After the integration of Hyderabad State to Union, the new administration in Hyderabad issued the Jagir Abolition Regulation in August 1949 and Agrarian Enquiry Commission to recommend comprehensive land reform legislation. They did it mainly to neutralize the communist influence.

To curb the armed revolt of the Telangana Peasants, a number of false cases were booked. The changes leveled against them were attempt to murder, dacoity and arson.

31Raj Bahadur Gour, Random Writings, Hyderabad, 2002. P.p 1-11
In the year 1950 the Telangana Defence committee was formed at Bombay. Dr. NM. Jayasooriya was elected its President. The committee besides arranging the defence of the Telangana peasants was also raising funds. They also formed a Hyderabad Peoples Defence Committee with V.K. Dhage as President in defence of Telangana Peasants and youth involved in Telangana Struggle.

In the year 1953 there were 325 criminal cases pending in Hyderabad. 75% were for charges of murder and 25% for attempt to murder, dacoity and arson. The committee provided legal defence to almost all cases.

As a result of these efforts twelve of the accused sentenced to death got the reprieve. They were

1. Janardhan Reddy
2. Magi Venkiah
3. Manumantu
4. Raghupatty Reddy
5. Kuluru Yeliah
6. Ghullam Dastagiri
7. Vadla Paiah
8. Adipudi Mallah
9. Chinasetty Reddy
10. Dasi Reddy Nariah
11. Kurma Lingiah
12. Mungala Samuel
On this occasion the vice President of All China Federation of Labour wrote one letter to Mrs. Latifi, the Secretary of Telengana Defence committee.

"We have received your letter dated May 7th from which we learned that due to efforts by you and your committee and the support of lovers of justice and democracy throughout the world the reprieve of these twelve prisoners has been secured. We express our joy over this event and request that you will convey our wannest consolatory regards to them."[12]

"Armed Struggle lost the wind in its sails for many reasons. During the later part of the revolt the rich and the middle peasants in 1946 withdrew their participation. But the poor peasants continued the struggle inspite of failure of leadership, for there was no choice left for them between starvation and slavery and armed resistance. They had to select a path of their own choice. There was also no attempt to link the organised struggle of workers in factories and mines with the peasant movement Therefore, this weakened both the struggles because the Nizam's regime never faced the combined force of the organised working class and the peasants.

The tragedy of the Telangana revolt was that the poor villagers who struggled against an oppressive system of landlordism were never integrated into the nationalist movement and their gains were not respected by the post-Independence Congress leaders, who ordered an anti Communist war of counter insurgency after the police action that victimized many villagers. Those villages where Sanghams were active were attacked by the Razzakars and if a village stayed clear of CPI then it remained undisturbed. With the lot of the peasants remaining vastly unchanged, the youth of the villagers in the present day are a picture of cynicism and outrage." What can we do?" they ask in despair. But the spirit has not yet faded among the old warriors. They say,

"We are ready to take up another Armed Struggle and put an end to corruption and anti-people governments, but it should be a mass movement." 

The communists thus rose to prominence seizing the opportunity created by the economic conditions prevailing in Telegana at that time. There were a number of grievances for the communists to thrive and become popular, they acquire a hold over many areas comprising many the districts of Nalgonda and Wamgal, they took up issues that caused concern, they made extensive use of cultural programmes to propagate their ideas. They truly were looked upon as saviours for the people. They established parallel government in the villages where they had a strong hold, but their hold weakened after the police action. The people were also in a dilemma over continuing their support to the communist as they looked up to the new government as the people's government. The communist also gave up arms by 1951 and joined the main stream. Thus they added a glorious chapter in the liberation struggle of Hyderabad.

The next chapter deals with the rise of the Razakkars.

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33 Deccan Chronicle dt August 15th 1997 p 9, Reporter - N.Vami Srinivas