

**RADICAL POLITICS IN ORISSA :
A STUDY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA,
(1936-64)**

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C E R T I F I C A T E

Certified that the dissertation entitled "RADICAL POLITICS IN ORISSA - A STUDY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA, 1936 - 64" submitted by Rudra Narayan Kar in partial fulfilment for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other Degree of this or any other University. To the best of our knowledge this is a bonafide work.

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P R E F A C E

The Society and Politics in Orissa remained for long as a neglected field of research. Of late the social science researchers have ventured to explore their unaccessible field. Certain works relating to political parties, political development and political coalitions have been done. But the field of radical politics in Orissa is still unexplored. During the days of national movement Orissa set its record of radicalism. Its peasantry, the students and the youth community not only fought against British imperialism but also against the decadent feudalism for the restoration of freedom and civil rights. Even after independence, these sections of the society fought against the State power to secure their just demands and to assert themselves in the political system. The study of political development in Orissa must take cognizance of these facts. The radical politics as a field of enquiry has fascinated me much.

Originally the scheme was designed to study the Radical Politics in Orissa and the involvement of Left Wing Parties in it. Due to lack of time and resources the study of undivided Communist Party of India was only undertaken. Even the chapter on "Communist Party and the Youth Movement in Orissa" could not be included as sufficient materials could not be collected. I hope to undertake the study of the Left-wing Radicalism in Orissa for future research.

The major difficulty in undertaking this piece of research was the inaccessibility of sources. Hence, I have to rely much on the secondary documents, autobiographies, recollections and personal interviews.

I have tried to be objective as far as possible under the circumstances.

I have received much help and inspirations from different corners without which the work would not have seen the light of the day. I am deeply indebted to my supervisor Dr. (Mrs.) Kiran Saxena, who has taken keen interest and extended unreserved help for the preparation of this dissertation. The present work is an outcome of her affection and endeavour.

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I am also thankful to the typist A. Parthasarathi, who readily accepted the responsibility to type the script within a very short period.

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(RUDRA NARAYAN KAR)

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

By Radical politics we mean one practical critical political activity that sets, for its goal, the fundamental transformation of society.

'Radicalism' has been defined by the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences as "Concentration of the focus of relevance on a particular principle, at the expense of the traditionally sanctioned regard for the complexities of context. In its positive sense, radicalism represents a tendency implying a projection of a completely new version of human life and experience. In its negative sense it implies a threat to all aspects of on-going life. The overthrow of the existing order is part of the radical agenda."¹

Radicalism has a rationality of its own- an intellectual generalisation about human society and its transformation. Radicalism has a world view about man, society and state. Radicalism can be of the left as well as of the right variety. Left Radicalism believes in the principle of human emancipation through social revolution. It states that each social epoch represents a progress over the previous one (qualitative progress) and the transition is through class struggle (which is also a political struggle). The progress of the society is dialectical and it only ends with the

1. International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, 1966,
vol.13.

achievement of an egalitarian society. Left radicalism clearly defines the strategy to bring about the revolutionary changes culminating in a classless society. It aims at the elimination of all status quos, all privileges and all classes. Hence the strategy moves around the principle of organised class struggle. Left radicalism does not believe in any kind of unorganized violence, adhocism or adventurism which finally leads to the destruction of its own. On the other, Right radicalism is a defender of the status-quo, anti-change and anti-revolution. It is a defence of conservative reform, an apologist of the existing traditions of the class society. Its ideology is retention of class privileges and institutionalised inequality. Right radicalism can best be described as reaction and social decay. Lipset has discovered the roots of radicalism in the displeased strata of society.² The appeal of Left radicalism is always to the working class and to the lower rung of the society. The appeal of Right radicalism is to the declining structures of power such as caste and religious groups in society.

Very often radical politics is equated with agitational politics although it is not. Agitational politics can, at best, serve the function of a tactic designed in specific situations for the realisation of defined goals. Radical politics is a much broader term and has a wider

2. Lipset, S.M., "Political Man", Bombay, 1959, p.117.

connotation in the sense that it is ideological whereas agitations are interest oriented. In the present scheme of things we treat radical politics as it takes place due to the performance of political actors such as radical political parties. Political parties are here viewed in the context of a liberal democracy. The political sociologist's definition of politics is 'a struggle for power'.³ In the struggle we see not individuals but political parties compete for the capture for power in a democracy. The political parties are organisations representing the interest of a class or a section of a class, developing definite structures of support and professing an ideology to which they are committed. The parties are not just the organisations for power, they are the vehicles of social movement and provide a mechanism for social development. Political parties may be rightist to the extent that they proclaim to uphold the existing status quo; they are radical to the extent that they seek to overthrow the existing status and eliminate the inequitous social order either through violence or through peaceful transition. The radical parties pledge to act as the vanguard of the strata of society which is long exploited and long oppressed. Very often a classification of political parties as left, right and centre is offered by Duverger⁴ but it fails to distinguish between radicalism and conservatism. The criteria

3. Allan R. Ball: Modern Politics and Government, Macmillan, London, 1976.

4. M. Duverger, Political Parties, Mithuen & Co., 1967.

which one can employ to obtain a classification of the political parties in India as radical and conservative are: the commitment to a radical ideology and the programme of action to realise it.

India had a one-party dominant political system⁵ till 1967 when the so-called monolithic structure of the Congress collapsed under pressures from within. The Indian National Congress evolved during the days of freedom struggle and was also instrumental in the achievement of India's independence. After independence, the Congress Party's identification with the nationalist movement secured the allegiance of the diverse sections of the society including the minorities and held its sway over them till 1967. Despite all socialistic pronouncements Congress Party patronised the business, commerce, industry and landed interests and developed the Indian economy along a capitalist path. It believes in the concept of Welfare State.⁶ Congress pledged to preserve and abide by the fundamental laws of the land that aims to secure "Justice: social, economic and political" and "Equality of status and opportunity" to all its citizens. The Congress Party believes that this liberal constitutionalism provides the ways and means to better the

5. On the characterization of Indian political parties and party system, one can see Rajni Kothari : Politics in India Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1970; N.D.Palmer : Indian Political System Ed.1, Boston, 1961. Rajni Kothari : The Congress System in India and Gopal Krishna : "One Party Dominance in Developments and Trends" in Kothari and others : Party System and Election Studies, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1967.

6. N.D.Palmer : Op. Cit., p.191.

lot of the oppressed section of the society. It believes in incrementalism in social change and progress and keeps firm faith in the existing political system. With its faith in a consensual politics it does not favour any radicalism in its agenda; hence it cannot be called a radical party.

On the other extreme, there is the rightist Jana Sangh⁷ (presently Bharatiya Janata Party) professing faith in the ideology called Gandhian socialism. This political party is a representative of the trading class and higher caste combine of Indian society. It has faith in the existing constitutional frame-work and hence participates in various elections to impart it a degree of legitimacy. In economic front, Jana Sangh supports welfare State and encourages private investment and capitalist path of economic development. But at present it has accepted the existence of a giant public sector as a practical necessity and adjusted with it. Further such a rightist party believes in one culture theory and flouts the concept of Hindustan that implies the 'Hinduisation' or cultural assimilation of the other minority communities into the Hindu mainstream. With a degree of religiousity, Jana Sangha argues that India is not fit for a violent social revolution and further social transformation has to take place in a slow and gradual process. When it disfavours any working class militancy it respects militant nationalism. It is not a radical party.

7. M.A. Kishore : "The Jana Sangha Ideology and Policy", Indian Journal of Politics 1(2) and 1(2): July-December, 1967 and January-June, 1969, pp.153-78.

Then there is the Communist Party of India which has, over the years, split not into two but into many Communist and Marxist-Leninist parties in India as the tendency towards polecentrism has entered into the monolith of international communist movement. These communist parties are based on the principle of Marxism-Leninism and are adherents of the Marxist-Leninist science of social development. Their ideology is the ideology of the working class that aims at the fundamental transformation of society in the direction of communism. It is an ideology of human emancipation that can be realised through class struggle and revolution. The communist parties of India regard it as a faith and renew their belief in it from time to time. While the ideology and the objective have remained the same, the strategy and tactics to realise the same have changed several times in-as-much-as the objective situations in our society need their change. These parties have emerged out of the mass movements and have created their base in the workers, small and marginal peasants, landless labourers and urban proletariat. The identification of their base has proved to be the most critical activity and is the cause of much ideological debate and theorisation and the consequence of it is the split in the Communist Party of India. At one time, the party has rejected the parliament and democracy of 'the Westminster Variety'

as 'bourgeois parliamentarism' but now it has accepted it as one road to realise the 'peaceful transition to socialism'.⁸ While it has participated in the parliamentary process, it has carried out extra parliamentary struggle to raise the working class' consciousness and radicalise the peasantry so that along with the crisis in capitalism the road to revolution and socialism would be clear. Very often, this has been criticised by a section of the communists as reformism or revisionism, but sooner or later, it has become an accepted fact for all the communist parties in India.

During the period of nationalist upsurge the Socialist Party of India also took its birth. The history of the Socialist Party was a history of split, merger, alignment and disintegration. Like Communists, Socialists of different varieties emerged in India; ideologically they were all committed to socialism. Socialist parties belong to the axis of left radicalism but, on principle and strategy, are opposed to the communist parties in India and their principle of Marxism-Leninism. They believe that the present social crises are due to the capitalist system of exploitation and capitalist domination. So they spurn the capitalist path of development and propagate the cause of nationalism, socialism and democracy. The Socialist Party was born out of the

8. The Amritsar Congress of the Communist Party of India held in 1958 adopted the following resolution: "The Communist Party of India strives to achieve full Democracy and Socialism by peaceful means. It considers that by developing a powerful mass movement, by winning a majority in Parliament and by backing it with mass sanctions, the working class and its allies can overcome the resistance of the forces of reaction and insure that Parliament becomes an instrument

revolutionary mass movements and followed the strategy of agitations, and violence to secure its objective. But in the post-Independence period, it has accepted the principles of liberal constitutionalism and participated in the parliamentary process to secure legitimacy. It adopts a gradualist and democratic approach to the problems of social change and favours the reconstruction of the unequal social system on a sound basis through democratic participation of the masses. Its ideology is still radical and against the present status-quo and privileges.⁹ But in the cross currents of Indian politics, the socialist party has failed to stabilize itself. The problem of identification of a social base, adherence to a confused ideology and failure to formulate clear-cut programme of action has led to its final disintegration.

The foregoing discussion drives home one singular point, that is, the Communist Parties and Socialist Parties have retained their radical ideology. And, we identify them as radical political parties. The Communist Parties in India have the recognition of a national political parties but the Socialist parties are losing their separate entity. In the early years, the Communist Party of India organised itself in the provinces of Bombay, Bengal, Kanpur and Punjab but it is now entrenched as a political force in many States.

of People's will for effecting fundamental changes in the economic, social and state structure". (New Delhi, Communist Party of India, 1958) p.4.

See also A.S.Malhotra : What is the Communist Party? Communism Today-4, Communist Party publication, New Delhi, 1972.

9. See Sankar Ghosh: Socialism and Communism in India, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1973.

The researcher proposes to study the contributions of the Communist Party of India as an actor participant in the radical politics of Orissa. The area of study is Orissa where the Communist Party was formed in the year 1936 and till the late 1960s, the Communist Party continued to be a lesser political force. The role of the Communist Party is to be judged in a micro-political form and the researcher raises few questions and seeks answer to the questions in the course of enquiry. The enquiry raises the following questions.

1. What role does the Communist Party play in the struggle for national freedom in Orissa?
2. What contribution does the Communist Party make to the political awakening of the people of the princely states and the people's movement therein?
3. What radical role does it play in the rise of Kisans, workers, youths and the students and What were the radical strategies?
4. Does the social ecology of Orissa sustain the growth of the Communist Party in Orissa?
5. Finally, what future projection the study will suggest about the prospect of the Communist Party in Orissa?

The nature of the present study is exploratory as well as explanatory. It studies the political sociology of the communist movement in Orissa within a time frame. It studies in brief the various levels and stages of interactions between the Communist Party and the society of Orissa.

It analyses the impact of the Communist Party on the social and political processes in Orissa and the influence of the socio-political developments on the development of the communist party, its organisation, its leadership, strategy and programmes. The research emphasizes on the micro level study of the Communist Party of India for several reasons : Firstly, each province in India is a unique autonomous unit distinguished from other, by its culture, language and process of development. The specificity of each province has contributed to its own socio-political processes. Secondly, main ethos of today is socialism and for the achievement of such a goal, the Communist Party of India must broad-base, its organisation and leadership. A study of Communist Party at the provincial level will provide knowledge about the strength and weakness of that party. Thereby it will help the political strategist to correctly frame the guidelines. Thirdly, historians and political scientists in Orissa have either ignored or underrated the contribution of the Communist Party to the historical developments in Orissa. The present enterprise is to make a factual appraisal of the role of the Communist Party in various sectors of Oriya life.

The study of the Communist Party in Orissa has been confined to the period from 1936 to 1964. 1964 constitutes a turning point in the history of the Communist Party of India. Within the Communist Party ideological division had taken place as early as 1927-28 but the ideological division did not rock the party till 1964. As the detractors very often put it, the international situations and split in

the world communist movement might have been the causes of division but the split occurred due to the lack of clarity in the objectives, strategies and programmes of the Communist Party of India. The split did take place in Orissa and it was a set-back to the growing strength of the Communist Party in Orissa. The 1964 provides a divide line for the purpose of comparison and contrast of the strength of the communist party of India with the communist parties after the split. The study is on the monolithic communist party and its bases and supports.

For a proper appreciation of the role of Communist Party in the radical politics of Orissa, certain explanatory variables may be employed. These are (i) Ideology, (ii) Organisation, (iii) Strategy; and (iv) Leadership.¹⁰

Ideology refers to the world view a party has internalised in itself. It provides an alternative programme for social change. The distinction between the ideology and the programme must be taken care of. Ideology is translated through formulation of concrete programme. The ideology of the communist party is the establishment of a classless society, the programme the party pursues, consists in the radicalisation of the working class and their organisation and readiness for a revolution. Thus programmes transform the ideology to concrete action. The programme is formulated weighing both the objective

10. Mano Ranjan Mohanty in his "Revolutionary Violence: A Study of Communist Movement in India", New Delhi, 1977, has assiduously attempted to build up a model of radical politics in terms of these variables.

situations and subjective conditions.

Organisation provides the support element of a social movement. If a social movement is to continue for long, it must have an organisation and some organisational principles. It is the organisation that endows the movement with homogeneity and cohesiveness.¹¹ The socialist movement felt the imperatives of an organisation and the result was communist party of India. Through the organisation, membership system is created and the commitment to an ideology assured and reinforced. The Naxalite Movement in its inception collapsed because of its pre-organisational character. Hence, the researcher can study the organisation of the Communist Party in Orissa and the organisation of support structure also.

Also formation of strategy is a creative activity. A strategy is needed to carry forward the objectives of a movement. Strategy takes into account both objective situations and subjective perceptions and needs dynamism in order to be suitable for the purpose. It takes into consideration not only the ideology but also the environment of the movement. The strategy has a second function of social mobilisation. For the purpose of social mobilisation, a party needs the identification of its social base. The researcher studies the strategy of the Communist Party in Orissa in its organisation of workers and peasants, mobilization of youth and the students, in the nationalist struggle for independence and

11. See for details, Earnest Mandel - "The Leninist theory of Organization" in R. Blackburn : "Revolution and Class Struggle" (Ed.), Fontana, 1977.

struggle for civil liberty and self-government in the Princely States and in its participation in electoral politics.

Much debate has taken place on the role of individual in history. The materialist interpretation of history recognises the role of individual personality and leadership in history, specifically during revolution. The personality and the orientation which an individual has is much the result of the process of socialisation. Individual dynamism and perception are the subjective factors which influence the occurrence of events and their management. Emphasizing the role of leadership, Lenin said that he and his party performed the task of so many decades in so many days only.¹² E.H.Carr sums up the role of leadership thus : "What seems to me essential is to recognise in the great men an outstanding individual who is at once a product and an agent of the historical process, at once the representative and the creator of social forces which change the shape of the world and the thought of men."¹³ The researcher studies here the social profile of leaders and their involvement in the Communist Party and the ability of the leadership in guiding the party through critical periods.

Over the years a number of scholarly works and essays have emerged on the Communist Movement, Communist Party

12. Quoted from Amritav Banerjee : Historical Materialism, K.P.Bagchi & Co., Calcutta, 1978, p.52.

13. E.H.Carr: "What is History?" Penguin, 1964, p.55.

and Communist Politics in India. The literature available on the subject can broadly be classified into three categories: (i) Literature on the history of the Communist Movement; (ii) Literature on Communist Politics and (iii) Literature on theoretical aspects of the Communist Movement.

On History:

Books both Marxist and non-Marxist in character, highlight the historical development of the Communist Movement. L.P.Sinha's "Left Wing in India"¹⁴ and Satyabrata Rai Chowdhury's "Leftist Movement in India (1917-47)"¹⁵ belongs to the first approach. The first two books analyse the factors leading to the growth of a left movement in India. They examine the role of Communist Party in the national liberation movement, in the trade unions and in peasant front and its relation with other left parties. They also deal with the ideological issues raised in the party and factionalism within it. The two books conclude the following: Communist Party was "a radical militant revolutionary anti-imperialist movement. Marxist Socialism was its avowed goal. It regarded national movement more than a mere political movement. It was a movement for the emancipation of masses from all sorts of exploitation. Hence, the Communist Party formulated a systematic agrarian programme to take up

14. L.P.Sinha : Left Wing in India, Muzaffarpur, 1965.

15. S.R.Rai Chowdhury : Leftist Movement in India (1917-47), Minerva Associates Publication, Calcutta, 1977. Among the other available literatures, one can see G.M.Adhikari: Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1974; S.N.Tagore: Historical Development of the Communist Movement in India, Calcutta, 1944; Victor M.Fic : Peaceful Transition to Communism in India, Nachiketa Publication, Bombay, 1969; and Sankar Ghosh : Socialism and Communism in India, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1973.

the cause of the peasantry and landless proletariat. The books noted that the left parties along with the Communist Party could not exert a decisive influence on the national struggle for independence in India.

The book by M.R.Masani¹⁶ is a critique of Communist Party's strategy and politics. It regards the party as an agent of the Communist International and an agent of the Moscow Communist regime. Masani examines the role of the Communists in the freedom struggle and arrives at the following conclusions: Firstly Communist Party was born in Moscow and grew up being financed by it. The Party's policies were dictated by the International Communist Movement and hence very often unnationalistic. Secondly the Indian Communists made a shift in politics from extreme 'Left' to extreme 'Right' "at the behest of Moscow". Thirdly, the Indian Communists "have been shown by the record to be a disciplined and devoted body of men and women who have made the best of a difficult task". Finally, the activities and fortunes of the Communists were not inspired by the conditions of Indian people, their poverty and philosophy; they were indifferent to the interests of Indian people. Their activities were inspired by the "Fortunes of Soviet dictatorship of which they are an appendage."

Then, there are few books of non-Marxist character by David Petrie¹⁷ and Overstreet and Windmiller¹⁸ on

16. M.R.Masani : The Communist Party of India, Derek Verschoyle, London, 1954.

17. Sir David Petrie : Communism in India (Edited by Mahadeb Prasad Saha), Editions Indian, Calcutta, 1972.

18. Overstreet and Windmiller : Communism in India, 1960.

"Communism in India". These books discuss the historical growth of the Communist Party and the policies it pursued. The following conclusions are reached from these two books: The Communist Party was born out of the terrorist movement in India. It alternated between 'left' and 'right' policies, that is, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist strategies. The goals of Indian Communism have been conditioned by the goals of International Communism. Rampant factionalism within the movement lay at the root of all deviations from the formal official C.P.I. Policy. Finally, the C.P.I. has shown extreme dependence on International Communist guidance. It has been specifically loyal to the aims of Soviet Foreign Policy.

On Politics:

On the role of Communists in Indian Politics, the books by Bhabani Sengupta¹⁹, Marcus Franda²⁰, Paul R. Bras and Marcus Franda (Edited)²¹ and T.J. Nossiter²² may be considered. Except Sengupta, the other three books are studies in micro communism. Sengupta holds that over the years the Communist Party is engaged in solving the three problems of acceptance, identification and independence. He says, the Communist Party has acquired legitimacy after its switch over

19. Bhabani Sengupta : Communism in Indian Politics, Young Asia, New Delhi, 1978.

20. Marcus Franda : Radical Politics in West Bengal, M.I.T. Press, 1971.

21. Paul R. Bras and Marcus Franda : Radical Politics in South Asia, M.I.T. Press, 1973.

22. T.J. Nossiter : Communism in Kerala : A Study in Political Adaptation, Oxford, RIIA, 1982.

to parliamentary communism while it is independent of Moscow's pervasive influence, it has postulated its strategies in clearer terms by identifying its social base. He concludes that after the split both the Communist Parties have gained in strength. The book highlights the communists' capture of power in Kerala and West Bengal, the social bases of these parties and the strategy of social mobilisation. His submission is that the strength of the communist parties in different regions emerge from their identification with the regional issues and the dominant groups. The emergence of a 'monolithic' all-India Communist Party under a charismatic leader is difficult to conceive. The external communist power may hinder rather than help the future growth of Communism in India.²³

The other two books study the organisation and leadership issues of Communist and Socialist Parties in the context of electoral politics. "Radical Politics in West Bengal" examines the social profiles of communist leadership, factional conflict within the party and the split, the assumption of power by C.P.I. (M), and its attitude and relations with the Maoist movement etc. To Marcus Franda, the success of Bengal Communism are regional, intimately connected with the Bengal's search for identity and political dominance.²⁴ The Bengal Communist Movement has been

23. Bhabani Sengupta : Communism in Indian Politics, p.439.

24. Marcus Franda : Op. Cit., p.268.

wrecked by intense factionalism and its influence on the national politics is very much marginal. The book "Radical Politics in South Asia" contains a series of articles by foreign scholars on the growth of left radicalism in India specially. It relates many variables such as economic development, modernization, social profile of political leadership to the growth of the Communist Movement. In the essay on Bihar, one sees an analysis of the organisation, strategy, tactics, leadership and ideology of the Communist and Socialist parties which are regarded as radical political parties of the left by Paul R. Bras.²⁵ T.J.Nossiter has also studied in his book the growth of the Communist Party in Kerala in a similar vein.

On Theoretical Formulations:

Certain theoretical questions have been raised regarding the growth of left radicalism and particularly the Communist Movement in India and its relation to different explanatory variables. A selective discussion of few authors also helps the researcher's understanding on the Communist radicalism in Orissa. S.M.Lipset in an article "Election : Democratic Class Struggle"²⁶ establishes that there is an inverse relationship between increasing modernization and the support for the Communist Parties in Europe

25. Paul R. Bras : "Radical Parties of the Left in Bihar" in Bras and Pranda : Radical Politics in South Asia : M.I.T.Press, 1973.

26. S.M.Lipset; Political Man, Bombay, 1959, pp.220-260.

and America. The lower the level of income, the greater the degree of modernization, the more is the likelihood for voting for socialist or moderate parties. Benjamin and Kautsky in an article "Communism and Economic development"²⁷ argue that the relationship between the levels of economic development and the strength of the Communist Party is one of curvilinear. "It means the strength of the Communist Party is lowest at the lowest stage of development, increases with economic development, crests at a fairly high level of such development and then declines sharply at the highest level". Paul R. Bras fits this model to the Indian situation and gets the following conclusions : Communist Movement is very weak when there is high concentration of workers in agriculture but low productivity. The movement is strong in those areas where a considerable proportion of workers are engaged in non-agricultural sectors. However, he fails to come to a broad generalisation as several other indicators of economic development do not relate them to the communist radicalism.

Donald S. Zagoria in an article "The Ecology of Peasant Communism in India"²⁸ argues that peasant unrests are widespread in those areas where irrigated food crops are cultivated and heavy rural population concentration, tenancy and uneconomic dwarf-holdings are seen. These are

27. R.W.Benjamin & John H. Kautsky, in American Political Science Review, 1968, March, Vol.62, No.1.

28. Donald S. Zagoria, in American Political Science Review, 1971, Vol.65, pp.144-160.

the areas where the communist strength is more as it relies on peasant unrest. He says, ecological factors play a critical role in determining the uneven strength of communist party in the different regions of the country. Further, he explains that landlessness and high rural popular density account for increase in the communist's votes.

Selig Harrison²⁹ points out two factors for the strength of the Communist Party in India. First, they are strong in areas where they have successfully identified with regional forces and politically strategic castes. Second, communists are strong in those regions where the influence of the Congress is very weak. Even in their pockets of dominance, the Communists face threat from the Congress.

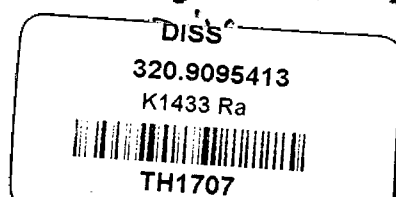
Plan of the Paper:

The researcher, having stated his objectives, likes to plan out the scope of the paper in the following way. The first section deals with the socio-economic settings of Orissa in which the Communist Party took its birth. An analysis of the historical situations leading to the formation of the communist party in Orissa shall be attempted. The second section of the research deals with the Communist Party as a radical movement. Here, the organisation, ideology and leadership of the Communist Party in the context of nationalist-movement, in the freedom struggle in the

29. Selig Harrison : India : The Most Dangerous Decades, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1960.

princely states has been evaluated. The section also analyses the Communist Parties organisation of the peasantry, the workers, the students and the youth till 1964. Finally, the third section is about the bourgeois parliamentary experiment and the involvement of the Communist Party in it. In this context, Party's electoral performances, its role as opposition within the Assembly, its role in the maintenance of balance in the government and organisational problems and split has been discussed. Here, the assessment is of the contribution of the Communist Party in Orissa to the democratic political process. Radical politics, of course, implies many more things than a mere discussion of one political party. But the obvious constraint of time and resource forces the researcher to confine it to the Communist Party politics upto the period of 1964.

Keeping the scope of the research in view, the researcher proceeds to collect the data. Data have been collected again keeping in view the historical, descriptive and analytical nature of the research. The data collected are both historical and empirical in nature. Yet, they do not lead to a general formulation of theory except that certain conclusions can be drawn from the narrations. The scarcity of material poses the real problem before the researcher. There has hardly been any work on the political parties and political development in Orissa. Few books and journals highlight the contemporary political



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process in Orissa but do not specifically cover any political party nor any political movements. Few books in Oriya language have been published by those freedom fighters and Congress politicians actively involved in Orissa politics. Their adherence to the Gandhian ideology and Congress System has steered clear the objectives of the books in that direction. So nothing remarkable on the leftist movement is to be found. As regards primary documents, those documents classified as 'secret' are inaccessible to the researcher and most have been destroyed. As the few Communist leaders claim, their residences have been raided time and again, all important party documents have been seized and destroyed. Hence the researcher has to base his research on party publications, party newspapers and interviews. Very often official documents and party publications of the Communist Party are couched with rhetorics. So for an objective analysis the researcher has to proceed with a cautious approach.

The field work was conducted in the month of September and October of 1981 and again in January 1982. The data were, thus, collected in two phases as few prominent leaders made them available to the researcher in January. The researcher met party leaders and activists who were mainly stationed at Cuttack and Bhubaneswar for organisational work. He has to collect informations through informal interviews about their social profiles, their area of activities, their perception of the ideology and the

party progress. The researcher verifies the factual truth of each information through cross questions and interviewing the cross sections of the political leaders in Orissa. However, indifference of political leaders to social research and disorganisation and non-availability of documents due to lack of academic interests were the twin problems the researcher faces in Orissa. Yet, by a method of comparison and critical analysis, he tries to give his research a degree of cohesiveness and objective truth.

CH. 1

THE BACKGROUND

- (A) The Birth and Growth of the Communist Party of India.
- (B) Social Ecology of Orissa.
- (C) Historical Antecedents.

A) THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA:

Political institutions are the real actors in the political and social processes of a social system. But the functioning of these actors is conditioned to a great extent by the process of their historical development. No less responsible is the environment both external and internal to the political institutions. Thus the Communist Party has developed and sustained itself in the social ecology of Orissa but an objective assessment of it would presume that the growth of the movement in Orissa is a part of the Communist movement taking place as a force in the whole of India in the days of nation's struggle for independence. Hence the ^{researcher} ~~author~~ likes to focus light on the growth of Communist Party of India in general.

Communism came to India as a body of ideas intended to provide an ideological basis to India's liberation movement.¹ The revolutionary terrorists were the first group of radical nationalists to be impressed by the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism in which they could find out a solution for the national liberation movement. They found their terrorist strategy inadequate before the organised criminal

1. S. Rai Chowdhury : Leftist Movement in India (1917-47) ,
Minerva Publication, Calcutta, 1977, p.37.

action perpetrated on them by the British imperialism. Indeed, Marxism brought to them a systematic theory on capitalism, imperialism, class-struggle, revolution and socialism. Secondly, a section of radical nationalists who could not appreciate the revolutionary tactics were also equally losing confidence on the Gandhian leadership. With the sudden withdrawal of Non-cooperation Movement, these nationalists felt betrayed and lost faith in the Gandhian technique of Non-violent struggle. M.N.Roy observed, "If India will not have freedom conquered by violent means, she will have to go without it".² And M.N.Roy was perhaps, the first Communist critique of Gandhian leadership and Gandhism. And the first book of M.N.Roy "India in Transition" written in the year 1922 was an attempt to explain the contemporary Indian situation by the laws of historical development formulated by Marx.³ In the third place, economic crises leading to price rise and unemployment convinced the young radicals from Bengal and Punjab that Communism might show them some other organised path to liberate the country from imperialist rule. Finally, the most tremendous impact on the Indian nationalists came from the October Socialist revolution of U.S.S.R. in 1917. It was an eye opener to the rest of Asia. It taught the Indians that socialism could be achieved by overthrowing the burdens of feudalism and imperialism and socialism was

2. R.P.Dutt : India Today and Tomorrow, Delhi, 1955, p.122.

3. M.N.Roy : India in Transition, Geneva, 1922.

the right path to ameliorate the hungry millions of Asia. All these factors cumulatively cleared the ground for Communism to take its root in India.

There exists a lot of controversies regarding the formation of the Communist Party of India. Muzaffer Ahmed suggests that the Communist Party of India was formed towards the end of 1920 at the Tashkent Military School and was affiliated to the Communist International in 1921.⁴ M.N.Roy who was first a revolutionary terrorist in India and later accepted Marxist and also became a member of the Mexican Communist Party formed the Communist Party of India with the help of few Muslims known as Mujahirs. After the Khalifat conference, these Muslims went to Moscow for seeking help for the redressal of their grievances. M.N.Roy says, these Mujahirs had very scanty ideas about nationalism and democracy what to speak of Marxism.⁵ Hence, they had to undergo training at the Communist University of Toilers of the East before they accepted Marxism as their creed and formed the Communist Party of India. Rafiq Ahmed who did not join it during its formation states that Mohammed Shafiq was the Party's first secretary and Muzaffer Ahmed, Abani Mukherjee and M.N.Roy were its active members. David N. Druhe gives a different account of the formation of the Communist Party of India. According to him, the Communist Party of India was formed by some students of "India House" in Tashkent in early 1921.⁶ However, Muzaffer Ahmed suggests

4. Muzaffer Ahmed: Communist Party of India and Its formation Abroad : National Book Agency, Calcutta, 1962, p.7.
5. M.N.Roy : Memoirs, Bombay, 1964, p.462.
6. David N. Druhe : Soviet Russia and Indian Communism; New York, 1959, p.34.

that the date of the Party's foundation, if it was not 1920, could not have been later than early 1921."⁷

The most noted among the Indian Communists was M.N.Roy. In 1920, the second congress of the Communist International was held (from July 19 to August 7) to formulate the ideological tactical line for Communist movements in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. Lenin presented the theses on the National and Colonial questions to the Congress for consideration. As a delegate of the Mexican Communist Party, M.N.Roy attended the congress where he presented his thesis on the class-character of nationalist leaders and the character of the struggle in colonial countries and the attitude Communist International should adopt towards the bourgeois-nationalist movement.⁸ There was a sharp disagreement between Lenin and Roy's theses in regards to these questions. Lenin suggested active support to the national liberation movement in colonial countries. M.N.Roy putforth the suggestions that the nationalist movement was ideologically reactionary and the success in the nationalist movement would not usher in a bourgeois-democratic revolution.⁹ He spoke of the existence of two separate movements in the colonial countries : One, a bourgeois democratic movement and second, a mass movement organised through revolutionary parties. These revolutionary parties were the vanguards of the

7. Muzaffer Ahmed : Communist Party of India and Its Formation Abroad, Calcutta, 1962, pp.87-88.

8. See for details, M.N.Roy's Memoirs, Bombay, 1964 and also Lenin : The National Liberation Movements in the East, Moscow, 1957.

9. M.N.Roy : Memoirs, Bombay, 1964, p.379.

working class in their respective countries and they must be provided with necessary moral and material support.¹⁰ However, after prolonged deliberation both M.N.Roy and Lenin's theses with modifications were adopted in the second Congress of the Communist International. The Third Congress of the Communist International which was held in Moscow in 1921, emphasized on the necessity of forming the indigenous communist parties in countries where there were none. Roy had the mandate of the Communist International and hence he contacted the Indian revolutionaries in India. In India several amorphous groups identifying them as Communists were operating in different parts of the country. S.A.Dange took the leadership of the Bombay Communists, Muzaffer Ahmed guided the Bengal Communists, Malayapuram Singaravelu Chettiar organized and led the Madras Communists group. In the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress (1922), Chettiar moved the resolution on National Independence. In Lahore, Ghulam Hussein and in U.P. Shaukat Ushmani were the moving force for the Communists.¹¹ In response to Roy's call for organising a revolutionary party, Singaravelu Chettiar issued a manifesto in February, 1923 calling upon the Indian Communists to meet in an all-India Conference. However, the attempt was an exercise in futility as confusion was the only consequence. The Conference was never to take place as the British-India Government cracked down upon the noted Communists launching Cawnpur Conspiracy Case in the year 1924. The charges were levelled against four communists such as S.A.Dange, Muzaffer

10. Ibid, p.379.

11. S.A.Dange : Why Communists Differ? Indian Institute of Socialist Studies, Bombay, 1976, p.4.

Ahmed, Nalini Gupta and Shaukat Usmani on the ground that a conspiracy was hatched to establish a branch of the Communist International in the British-India "with the object of depriving the King of the Sovereignty of British-India."¹² However, these four charged with the acts of sedition were sentenced to four years rigorous imprisonment. This event had its telling effect on the growth of the infant communist movement in India but could not uproot it.

In the same year on September 1, 1924 Satyabhakta "announced in the newspaper that he had formed the Indian Communist Party"¹³ at Cawnpur. Satyabhakta himself was the Secretary of the party. He also formulated the objectives of the Indian Communist Party as follows : attainment of complete Swaraj and the establishment of a socialist society on the basis of the common ownership and control over the means of production and distribution of wealth in "the interest of the whole community of India."¹⁴ Satyabhakta also declared that it would be a nationalist party. Satyabhakta also convened a conference of the Indian Communist Party on 26 December, 1925, the day on which the Indian National Congress also held its congress at Cawnpur. Prominent communist leaders arrived to attend the Communist Conference. Sharp difference arose as to

12. S. Rai Chowdhury : Leftist Movement in India : 1917-47 Minerva Associates Publication, Calcutta, 1977, p.69.

13. Muzaffer Ahmed : Communist Party of India : Years of Formation, Calcutta, 1959, p.17.

14. S. Rai Chowdhury : Op. Cit.. p.71.

the naming of the party and its relationship with the Communist International. A leading figure of the legal Communist Party was Singaravelu Chettiar who declared "Indian Communism is not Bolshevism... We are not Russians.... Indian Communists are with the world communists but not with the Bolsheviks". This was not to the liking of M.N.Roy, who did not attend the congress. However, he was losing his grip over the Indian Communists. He was critical of Chettiar and Satyabhakta's 'uncommunistic' attitude who were trying to form a nationalist communist party. Roy wrote from Europe that those who favoured such points of view were 'the veritable enemies of the Indian working class.' Dissatisfied with the view point of other communists, Satyabhakta left the Communist Party of India only to form a "National Communist Party".¹⁵ Commenting on the Kanpur Conference, Muzaffer Ahmed observes : "Anyway, I think that the Communist Conference in Kanpur was a disgraceful affair".¹⁶

By the year 1926-27, a few British Communists visited India to influence and control the Indian communists. The noted figures were George Alison, R.P.Dutt, Phillip Spratt and Benjamin F. Bradley, all of whom were the dominant members of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The Communist Party of India was yet to be affiliated to the Communist International, for as M. Ahmed opines

15. Sankar Ghosh : Socialism and Communism in India, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1973, p.297.

16. Muzaffer Ahmed : Myself and the Communist Party of India (1920-29), National Book Agency Pvt. Ltd., Calcutta, 1970, p.43.

"the party was a small one". But it was receiving due recognition from the Communist International. However, the hold of M.N.Roy on the C.P.I. was on the decline. The Communists while working under the influence of the Communist Party of Great Britain began to defy his authority. The Communist Party met in several secret sessions during the period of 1926-29 and it was affiliated to the Communist International only in the year 1930. In the year 1928, September 1, the 6th Congress of the Communist International passed a resolution on the issue of Communist Party's objectives and programme of action in the colonial countries. The suggested guidelines for India and other colonial countries were firstly "to build up the Communist Party and the Trade Union Organisations of the proletariat; secondly to win over the masses towards the Communist Party and against the reformist policy bourgeois-national Congress; and thirdly, to join the anti-imperialist forces without merging the identity of the Communist Party."¹⁷ It also criticized Gandhism as a radical petty-bourgeois ideological movement collapsing into a bourgeois-nationalist-reformist movement. In accordance with this policy it was decided that "the communists must unmask the national reformism of the Indian National Congress and oppose all the phrases of Swarajists, Gandhists, etc., about passive resistance."¹⁸

17. See L.P.Sinha : Sixth Congress of the Communist International for discussions in details on this issue.

18. M.R.Masani : The Communist Party of India : A Short History, London, 1954, p.42.

During the period 1926-29, a noteworthy event took place in the Communist movement in India. There was marked a sudden mushroom growth of the workers and peasants party in different regions of India. The first Peasants and Workers Party was founded in Bengal on November 1, 1925, by Kazi Nazrul Islam, Qutubuddin Ahmed, Hemanta Kumar Sarkar and Samsuddin Hussain. Originally it was known as the Labour Swaraj Party of Indian National Congress. On February 6, 1926 a peasants conference was held at Krishnagar, Bengal where the name of the party was changed to Peasants and Workers Party. But in another conference the party's name was transformed to Workers and Peasants Party. The Communist Party worked out its programmes conveniently from the platform of the Workers and Peasants Party.¹⁹ In Bombay, the Workers and Peasants Party was formed in February 1927, under the leadership of S.S.Mirjakar, who was also the Secretary of the party. The Punjab Workers and Peasants Party was organised by Abdul Najeed, Sohan Singh Josh, Santosh Singh and Bhag Singh Canadian. In U.P., the party was formed at a conference of the Mazdoor and Kisan Sangha held in October 1928, which was also attended by Muzaffer Ahmed, Abdul Najeed, P.C.Joshi and Phillip Spratt. In the year 1928 Indian Communists met in an All India Conference of the Peasants and Workers Party at Calcutta where the All-India Workers and Peasants Party was formed. It was attended by 300 communists from different regions as

19. M. Ahmed : Communist Party of India : Years of Formation, Calcutta, 1959, p.23.

delegations of the regional workers and peasants party.²⁰ The Sixth Congress of the Communist International hotly debated the raison d'etre of the WPP and the merger of Communist Party in it. However, as S. Rai Chowdhury observes, "the Workers & Peasants Party of India continued to operate as a projection of the Communist Party until it was virtually disintegrated as a result of the Meerut Conspiracy Case in 1929."²¹

The British India Government launched the Meerut Conspiracy Case in the year 1929 against some Indian and British Communists. The charges were that the accused in connivance with the Third International were conspiring to dispossess the British Emperor of the sovereignty of India and to form a government in India on the line of Soviet Union. The case was registered in the month of March, 1929, and continued till late 1933 and the convicts were Phillip Spratt, Benjamin Bradley, S.A.Dange, Shaukat Ushmani, Muzaffer Ahmed, S.V.Ghate and S.S.Mirjekar, etc. The nationalist leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru sympathised with them and collected funds to fight for them. Finally, these communists were sentenced to long term imprisonment. Nehru criticized this act of British rulers as a deliberate design to wreck the labour movement in India that had grown over the years. As S.Rai Chowdhury comments, "the Meerut Conspiracy Case far from stamping out Communism from India, made martyrs out of the Communists and gave them a unique niche in Indian Political life."²²

20. Ibid, p.23.

21. S.Rai Chowdhury, Op. Cit., p.84.

22. Ibid.

In 1930 the International Press Correspondence released the 'Draft Platform of Action' a detailed document prepared by C.P.I. enumerating in details the political situation in India and the programme of Communist Party of India. The Draft Platform characterized the action of Congress as one of the compromise and collaboration with the British Imperialism. Analysing the class character of Congress, it lamented that Congress has become a fortress of defence for the landlords, money-lenders, native princes, the "junior partners of British imperialism". The Draft appealed to the Indian Communists to mobilise the masses under the banner of the Communist Party and to bring about an anti-imperialist agrarian revolution in India. They must create the United Front of the toilers from below, on the basis of a definite proletarian revolutionary demands and activities.²³

In these years of inception from 1920 to 1934 till the Communist Party was declared illegal, the Communists had tried to build up a mass base for it. But in this decade the Communist Party had remained mostly a party of the radical middle class intellectuals. The party was yet to take away the banner of the national movement from the hands of the Congress leaders despite its slogan for a mass movement. For Congress had already turned itself an organisation of the masses and could make its appeal more broad-based.

23. G.M. Adhikari : Indian Communist Party Document 1930 to 1956, Bombay, ¹⁹⁷⁴ p. 8-9.

Compelled by the force of circumstances the communists organised the peasantry under the banner of workers and peasants party. Its appeal was not only to peasants but to landless labourers and factory working class. The Draft Platform of Action called for an armed resurrection under the leadership of C.P.I. and advocated the policy of land confiscation without any compensation. In the Trade Union front, the Communist Party systematically formulated its policy and organised the factory workers. The consequence of it was the split in the trade union movement in India and the formation of Red Trade Union Congress in 1931. At least within these years, the Communist Party consolidated its position in the peasantry and the trade unions, although it was not yet able to wage a revolutionary mass movement.²⁴

Between 1930 and 1934, the Communist Party was in a state of disarray; most of its leaders were inside the prison. The country swung into a revolutionary mass action as Gandhi launched the Civil Disobedience Movement. The Communists kept themselves away from the "well spring of the Indian political life". This was in pursuance of the guide lines of the Sixth Congress of the Communist International. However, it was a tactical error on the part of the Communist Party of India which was recognised in 1967 by

24. A discussion on the role of the Communist Party of India in the Peasant and Trade Union Movement can be found in N.G.Ranga - Kisan and the Communists, Bombay (n.d.) Sukomal Sen - Working Class Movements in India; History of Emergence and Movement : 1830 - 1970, K.P.Bagch & Co., Calcutta, 1977.

Dr. G.M.Adhikari. And Communists were met with a severe slump in their organisational activities. Muzaffer Ahmed says "chaos and disintegration in the party all over the country appeared in an acute form".²⁵ Few regional groups functioned in Bombay and Calcutta whereas the party centres in U.P., Punjab and Madras were almost non-existent. To save it from its imminent collapse, few communist leaders appealed to the Comintern and Comintern sent few emissaries to India but it was of no avail. However, as the Communist leaders who were imprisoned in Meerut Conspiracy Case were released from jail in the year 1933, a fresh effort was made to organise a conference, in Calcutta in December. This conference adopted a new statute of the Communist Party and a Central Committee was formed under the General Secretaryship of Dr. G.M.Adhikari. The Communist Party worked as a section of the Third Communist International.

But soon after its formation, the Communist Party was declared illegal by the British India Government. In the mean time the seventh Congress of the Communist International which was held in Moscow on August 1, 1935, issued a new guideline advising the Indian Communists to join the Congress Socialist Party in order to oust the reactionary-bourgeois leadership of the National Congress and transform it into a mass platform of anti-imperialist national revolutionary movement. Wangming, a Chinese Communist, criticized

25. Muzaffer Ahmed : Communist Party of India in years of Formation, Calcutta, 1959, p.37.

little earlier the Indian Communists for their committing "left sectarian error".²⁶ In February 1936 R.P.Dutt and Ben Bradley jointly published an article titled "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front in India" known as Dutt-Bradley thesis. They suggested the formation of a United Front for national struggle against British Imperialism. The Dutt-Bradley thesis cleared the way for the Indian communists to join the Congress Socialist Party and thereby to influence the Congress policy. The same year, on the recommendation of Jay Prakash Narain, the C.S.P. decided to admit the Communists to its membership. And the Communists seized upon this opportunity and came in large numbers to the fold of C.S.P.

But this honey-mooning of the Socialists and Communists did not continue for long. During 1937-39 the Communist Party operated semi-legally within the Congress; in 1938 it started its all-India Weekly Journal 'National Front'. The socialists allegedly blamed the communists that the communists were criticizing the socialists as un-Marxists and that a programme is afoot to convert the socialists to communism. In 1938 M.R.Masani published a pamphlet titled "The Communist Plot against C.S.P." which revealed that the communists were making use of the 'United Front' to promote communists interests. Even Jay Prakash condemned the communists claiming that the communists were all out to break the unity in the party. In March 1940,

26. Sankar Ghosh : Socialism and Communism in India, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1973, p.308.

the national executive of the C.S.P. resolved to expel the Communists. The communists made the maximum capital out of the United Front as they captured the important posts in the National Congress, in AITUC, in the AIKS and the Student Federation. The policy of collaboration all but finished the C.S.P.²⁷

Thus the communist party of India gained its strength and began branching out in all direction. During the war years when the C.P.I. supported Russia along with the allied powers the communists were all released from the prison and the party was declared legal. During all these years, the political scene of Orissa also saw the emergence of the communists in it. The Communist Party of India did the work of an ideal for them. A handful of youths attracted by the revolutionary hiatus of the communists in India formed their regional group in Orissa. The course which the C.P.I. strenuously followed so long also vitally influenced the direction which the communists in Orissa were to take. The communist movement in Orissa functioned along the broad frameworks laid down by the Communist Party of India. Hence to avoid unnecessary confusion the details of development of the Communist Party policies and programmes shall be referred to contextually whenever required. It is a fact to be admitted that the Communist Movement in India has played a historically decisive role in the organisation of a systematic communist movement in Orissa.

27. Ibid, p.314.

B. SOCIAL ECOLOGY OF ORISSA

The socio-economic forces of a society at a given period have a historically determining role to play in shaping the political processes. They work as the endogenous factors in the origin and development of social movements and institutions. Specifically in a developing society like ours, there is an intermeshing of social and political institutions and it is very difficult to identify and separate the social from the political. However, political institutions grow to fulfil the specific interests of a section or of the whole society. And as the institutions function within a society, an analysis of the political institutions depends on the understanding of the social forces in the society. The growth of communist ideology in Orissa can only be judged against its historical antecedents. Its growth follows a dialectical process as initially it has grown as a consciousness of few Oriya middle class intellectuals. But its operation and transcendence from a movement to that of a party can be seen only against the socio-economic forces in operation in Orissa.

The State of Orissa is situated in the eastern part of India, it has Bihar in its north, Madhya Pradesh, on the west and Andhra Pradesh in the South, West Bengal on the North-east and Bay of Bengal to its East. It has an area of 155,832 square kilometres. The province of Orissa

was created with 6 districts in the year 1936 and finally the Greater Orissa was carved out in the year 1949 with the merger of 26 princely States. It occupies 4.8 per cent of the total area of the country.

Historically Orissa was a dismembered State. Prior to 1936 at different times its different parts were governed by separate administrations. Because of its dismemberment and late political unification Orissa could not develop an integrated economic structure.²⁸ Hence, it is commented although Orissa is rich in natural resources, with poor people. "It has the vast coast line, dense forests, wide rivers, deep mines, large mountains, high water falls, extensive plains and hard-working people, yet it is economically backward, and politically frugal."²⁹

Geographers divide Orissa into four natural regions such as hilly areas of the west and north-west, the eastern ghats, the central and western plateau and finally the coastal plains. Three-fourth areas of Orissa (46,052 square miles) are covered by a mountaineous region which forms a part of the Indian Peninsula. From the view point of the operation of political dynamics Orissa can broadly be divided to two sub-divisions, hilly regions of western Orissa and the coastal plains. The coastal division has an area of 14,075 square miles and is consisted of Balasore, Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam. The coastal region is densely

28. Lal Mohan Patnaik : Resurrected Orissa, Goswami Press, 1941, p.39.

29. S.B.Jena : Orissa : People, Culture and Polity, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 1981, p.15.

populated and 46% of the total population settles down in a plain that covers less than 25% of the State's territory. The population of the hilly region is 54% of the total population of the State and occupy more than 75% of the territory. The regional diversity in Orissa has a bigger impact on its political development. Political factionalism in Orissa is always marked along the line of hilly and coastal division.³⁰

As per the 1971 Census, the population of Orissa as on April 1971 is 21,934,827 and it is 4.01% of the total population of India. The growth rate of the State's population in the decade 1961-71 works out to 25.05% as against 24.75% in India. Orissa is characterized by high birth-rate and low death rate. This is symptomatic of its backwardness and the transitional character of its economy. Again in the population of the State 19.79% belong to scheduled castes and 20.08% belongs to the scheduled tribe. Again 80% of the scheduled tribes live in the western Orissa whereas 50% of the coastal population are scheduled caste people.³¹ The demographic composition of Orissa shows that 98% of the people in Orissa speak Oriya. The literacy rate in Orissa, according to 1981 Census is 34.8% which is close to the national average. Again, Orissa is a Hindu dominated land; in 1961 the percentage of Hindus was 97.57 but it declined in 1971 to 96.25. Simultaneously the Buddhists,

30. Manoj Ranjan Mohanty : "Orissa : Politics of Stagnation" in Iqbal Narain's State Politics in India, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1978.

31. B.B.Jena : Op. Cit., p.16.

Muslims and Christians have increased their percentage over the years.

The state of backwardness in Orissa can be assessed from the slow pace of modernization taking place. Against the all-India proportion of 19.91% of urban population, Orissa has only 8.4% although there is a rise from 6.3% in 1961. By 1971, the number of towns was fixed at 81 with 4 cities, whereas these were only 59 in 1961. Orissa has then become the lowest urbanised State in India with 91.73 per cent of its population still living in 51,639 villages.³² Taking the level of work force into consideration, one can see that the number of workers constitutes 31.6 per cent of the total population whereas the available all-India figure for the same period stands at 33.54 per cent. Out of the total work force, cultivators, agricultural labourers and other residual workers respectively account for 48.5, 27.8 and 23.7 per cent. Cultivator and agricultural labourers taken together constitute 76.3 per cent of the total working population. Again the rate of dependency on the working people is very high. In the age group of 0 - 14 and 55 - above, 46.1 per cent of the total population are dependent.³³ The twin factors high pressure on cultivation and high dependency rate speaks of the degree of economic development in Orissa. The seriousness of Orissa's economic backwardness can be judged from the fact that only 24.1 per cent of the total work force are engaged in mining trade, manufacturing and government service.

32. Balaram Mohanty : Introducing Orissa ; Cuttack, 1978, p.8.

33. B.B.Jena : Op. Cit., p.19.

If land holding is an indicator of economic development, Orissa projects a very dismal condition in that regard. In Orissa per capita land for cultivation is only 0.83 acres. In 1921 it was 1.16 acres and in 1951 it reached 0.83 acres and during these years it must have further declined. The average size of land holding in Orissa is reported to be 5.1 acres and 46% are small land owners with less than 5 acres of land. Economic survey report suggests that small holdings less than 6 acres constitute the 76 per cent of the total number of holdings. It implies that excessive fragmentation of land in Orissa has made it uneconomic. The survey report suggests that 33 per cent of the agricultural population are without any land, 8.4 per cent own more than 10 acres of land and rest own less than 10 acres and 11.4 per cent of the agricultural population possess less than one acre each. However, the Government has fixed the land ceilings at 10 standard acres but its implementation has been beset with enormous difficulties. The stagnancy in agricultural production in Orissa has been due to another problem. It has been found that 9.7 per cent of the total land-owning families rent out some land. Total of 14.4 per cent of cultivable lands are leased to the tenants and 28 per cent of the total land in the coastal districts are cultivated on a lease basis. On the other hand, these leased lands are cultivated by 32 per cent of the cultivating families.³⁴ This indicates that the problem of tenancy, share-cropping is of enormous

34. Land Tenure and Land Reform in Orissa : 1962 (Board of Revenue, Cuttack-7.

magnitude and the party which pledges to support these land-hungry tenants' cause would make sufficient in-road to politics. The peasantry has a tremendous impact on the political configuration of the State and the Communist Party has tried to realise this fact and grapple with this situation. The economic backwardness of the peasantry in Orissa has provided the fertile ground to the communist ideology to develop and entrench itself. The ~~author~~ ^{Researcher} shall deal with the peasantry and the communist movement in a separate chapter.

The problems of the Oriya peasantry is a legacy of the British system of land-settlement introduced in it. Land reform in Orissa has been long overdue. But an effective alliance between the peasantry and land-owning interests in politics has stalled any genuine move for land reform. However, British administrators' wrong understanding of the Indian village tenure system has caused a scattered and fragmented land-holding in Orissa. The dislocation in the economy of Orissa is greatly attributed to the different land tenure systems prevalent in different regions of Orissa. Three major land tenure systems were marked in Orissa such as (a) Permanent and Temporary land settlement (b) Ryotwari system, (c) subsidiary alliance system.³⁵ The districts of Balasore, Cuttack, Puri and Sambalpur were having permanent or temporary land tenure system where the British government settled the land revenue with the Zamindars either for a

35. K.C.Jena - Socio-economic conditions of Orissa, Delhi, 1978, p.82.

long-period or a short-period. In most of the cases, the Zamindars were non-Oriya revenue officials who gradually transferred themselves into Zamindars. The non-Oriya zamindars from Bengal were the intermediaries who constituted a class of exploiters and were responsible for all the distress of the peasantry in Orissa. Secondly, Ryotwari system was prevalent in parts of Ganjam where proprietary right on small pieces of land were directly given to the peasants who had to pay certain amount of rent to the government. In due course, a class of rentiers developed in Ganjam variously known as Inamdars and Mustadars, whose primary occupation was collection of rents. In the third place, subsidiary alliance was developed with the princely states which had altogether different types of land tenure system. These princely states had to pay a certain sum of money to the British Government and maintained a section of British army spending from their own exchequer only to maintain autonomy of their own. When the British Government protected the class of Zamindars by alliance and land tenure system, the zamindars served the British interest.³⁶

The whole of Orissa under British regime turned to be an archives of feudalism. These feudal relations have played a greater havoc in the Orissa politics in the post-independence days. Much of the instability, and stagnation in political development can be attributed to the role of the forces of feudalism in Orissa. The western Orissa which is said to be the fortress of feudalism was indeed the

36. K.C.Jena : Op. Cit., p.37.

fortress of conservatism and much of the defections, factionalism and instability can also be seen in terms of the regional diversities that exist between the coastal and western Orissa in terms of social and political process. The system of land tenure in Orissa during the period of 1942-44 can be seen from the following table:

T A B L E - I.

Sl. No.	Category of land system.	Area in million-Acres.
1.	Permanently settled Estates.	9.13
2.	Temporary settled Estates.	5.16
3.	Revenue-free Estates.	0.32
4.	Ryotwari and Khas Mahal.	5.92

Source: Government of India : Abstract of Agricultural Statistics of India (1936-37 to 1945-48).

Poverty and Orissa have been mostly synonymous terms. In the year 1961, 35.4 per cent of the population were below the poverty line but the percentage has gone up thereafter unimaginably. By 1971 the percentage of population below poverty line was 71.1 and in 1981 it was fixed at 90. N. Mohanty in his study of "Some aspects of Orissa Fifth Five Year Plan" states that nearly 64 per cent of our population live below the nationally accepted poverty line defined at Rs.15 per capita income per month for the rural population at 1960-61 prices.³⁷ The enormous poverty of Orissa also counts for the political passivity of the people and is a counter-force for the radical outlook in them.

37. N. Mohanty : Some Aspects of Orissa Fifth Five Year Plan in Orissa Review : 1975, No.1.

Radical political parties fell here to raise the people from their prolonged passivity.

Study of social ecology is incomplete without a reference to the caste configuration of Orissa as the interplay of caste and politics has been the present day trend retarding the process of political secularisation in India. This is a problem posed before all the secular political parties and movements to tackle effectively. Orissa is a caste ridden Hindu Society; the upper castes constitute 8 per cent of the total population, backward peasants and artisans constitute 50 per cent and scheduled castes 15 per cent and scheduled tribes 23 per cent respectively. In the upper castes are included Brahmins, Karans and Khandayats and they all dominate the coastal Orissa whereas the Western Orissa is overwhelmingly represented by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. With the introduction of commercialised agriculture and representative institutions, the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes have been drawn into the stream of political life. They have been represented in the Parliament, Assembly and in jobs but for political purposes they never constitute a 'power-bloc'. They are all scattered and divided among several political parties. As to the upper caste, the general complaint is that while Brahmins dominate the academic institutions and bureaucracy, the Karans dominate the political life of the State. This has been the

impression given to us by F.G.Bailey.³⁸ The argument that there is a conflict between Brahmins and Karans to dominate Orissa Politics is yet to be substantiated. But it is a fact that the elites of these two upper castes compete among them as they have excelled in the economy, politics and education. The class of people who are at the helm of affairs in the State, irrespective of their caste affiliation, come from the rich peasantry and the professional middle class. Hence the competition in Orissa Politics is seen between the backward peasants and artisans on the one hand and the wealthy upper castes on the other hand.³⁹ The nature of competition is secular. Communal violence and open caste conflicts in all their ramifications cannot be marked in Orissa.

The social ecology of Orissa has decidedly determined the nature and course of political development and the growth of political institutions in Orissa. Orissa has been first and foremost the fertile ground of coalitions.⁴⁰ The coalition is due to the divergence between coastal and western Orissa. The composition of major political parties has been non-ideological, amorphous and heterogenous. Hence, rampant factionalism and defection has become the regular

38. F.G.Bailey : Politics and Social Change ; Orissa in 1959; Berkeley, California University Press, 1963. Manindra Mahapatra in his study of social composition of the State Cabinet in Orissa from 1952 to 1972 has also observed that the two higher castes have an overwhelming representation in the State Cabinet. It has been also noted that the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes representation is not proportionate to their strength in the State's population. See Manindra Mahapatra : "Dimension of Social Representation in a State Cabinet in India : A case study of Orissa Ministries (1952-72)", Interdiscipline, 9(4), Winter, 1972.

39. & 40. See next page.

feature of the politics in Orissa. Even the communist party of India has not been spared. Although peasantry are the determining factors in Orissa Politics, the character of political leadership is always urban and elitist. The grip of feudalism has declined but the influence of wealthy class still remains in tact. The political passivity of Orissa people have given rise very often to "Personality Politics", the glowing examples being Dr. H.K.Mehtab Biju Pattanaik and Mrs. Nandini Satapathy and Pabitra Mohan Pradhan. Very often regional political parties based on regional aspirations and ideologies have emerged to play their part in the State Politics, the example being Gana-tantra Parishad, Jana Congress, Utkal Congress and Pragati Dal; however, sooner or later, they have lost grounds to the national party like Congress and Janata or to their coalitions. Till 1970, the regional political parties were a force to be reckoned with.

39. Jagannath Pathy, Political Elites of Orissa : Unpublished Ph.D.Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in 1978.

40. A detailed analysis is given in S.Nanda's, Coalitional Politics in Orissa, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1979. In this book, Nanda tries to build up a coalition model for the analysis of political development in Orissa since 1952 to 1972. However, he fails to clearly identify the goals and perspectives of his paper and he loses the direction of his arguments in the midst of behaviouralist jargons.

C. HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

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Leftism, as a force, emerged from the matrix of the nationalist movement carried on in Orissa. It was not imposed from above by the leaders of the communist movement of other states, although they had a definite influence on its course. As G.C.Patnaik, the only living founder member of the Communist Party in Orissa observes,

1) { "Leftism evolved on the soil of Orissa as an indigenous force. It emerged out of the mainstream of social struggles receiving their essence from the land."⁴¹

According to Gobinda Chandra Mohanty, another noted com-

2) { munist, "the birth of communist party in Orissa was a result of the long organised struggle against feudalism".⁴²

Even Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani is of the view that the

3) { Communist Party has grown out of "the fold of Congress in

its struggle against British Imperialism for the attainment of national independence".⁴³ The fight against

British imperialism was not an isolated phenomenon; it

was a part of the Indian Freedom Struggle. The nationalist

41. G.C.Patnaik : "Birth of Communist Party in Orissa," published in Nua Dunia, Cuttack, 1975, Special Issue, p.6.

42. G.C.Mohanty's article, "on Struggle against Feudalism in Orissa and the Role of the Communist Party" in Nua Dunia 1975, p.47.

43. Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani : Itihasara Padakshepa : (Footsteps of History), Cuttack, 1977, p.27.

struggle for independence was rather late in Orissa; it also delayed the emergence of the left movement in Orissa. However, the historical evolution of the national movement here will throw light on the nature and direction of the communist movement within it.

The growth of national consciousness was rather late in Orissa. Towards the end of nineteenth century there emerged a middle class in the Oriya society. The introduction of English education and Press contributed to the rise of middle-class intelligentsia which later became the vehicle of political consciousness. The amalgamation of Orissa with Bengal and the Bengali opposition to Oriya language prompted leaders to demand for a political unification of Orissa. The main leaders behind the movement were Madhusudan Das, Gauri Shankar Ray, Bihari Lal Pandit and Janakinath Bose.⁴⁴ By 1882, Utkal Sabha was organised to foster the political consciousness of the fragmented provinces of Orissa. By 1866, Gauri Shankar Rai initiated the publication of 'Utkal Dipika', the first newspaper from Orissa. Under the leadership of Madhu Sudan Das, a Graduate Association was organised to safeguard the interests of educated Oriyas in the field of employment. But it was the Utkal Sabha which was sending delegates to the annual conferences of Indian National Congress.

44. S.N.Patnaik : Orissare Swadhinata Andolan : Cuttack, 1972, p.5.

At the end of nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, Orissa was a politically dismembered province; its different parts being annexed to different geographical units on the pretext of administrative convenience. This political dismemberment had a telling effect on its culture, language and development. Orissa was ruled mainly by a set of intermediary exploiters from Bengal who had the virtual control over Orissa economy. The Bengali Zamindars became the "intermediary ruling race" in Orissa.⁴⁵ Politics in Orissa since 1903 revolved round the vexed problem of unification of Orissa and the formation of a separate province. In the year 1903, Madhu Sudan Das, an eminent legislator and lawyer organised the Utkal Sammilani to launch the movement for a separate province. The other nationalist leader who spearheaded the movement was Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das. Both the leaders were from the progressive section of the Oriya bourgeoisie although majority leaders of the Utkal Sammilani were hailed from the class of aristocracy and Utkal Sammilani was a fortress of the Zamindars who very often had conflicting interests.⁴⁶ Disappointed by the conflicting pulls and pressures over the organisation Gopabandhu resigned from the Conference

45. F.G.Bailey : Politics and Social Change : Orissa in 1959
Berkeley, 1963, p.125.

46. Radhakanta Barik : "Gopabandhu and National Movement in Orissa," Social Scientist, May, 1978, vol.6, No.40.

in the year 1919 and joined the National Congress. The progressive elements in the Sammilani were represented by Radhanath Ray, Gopal Chandra Prahraj, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Baikunthanath Dey and Biswanath Kar etc. The Utkal Sammilani maintained cordial relations with the National Congress for some period but it opposed the Congress as the Congress opposed the Bengal partition. When Swadeshi Movement was spreading in the lightening speed to the nook and corners of India, Orissa was preoccupied with its Oriya regionalism. The Swadeshi Movement was yet to have its entry into Orissa. But in other parts of the country, it took a serious turn. Few young revolutionaries who had lost faith in the Congress's moderate and formal politics resorted to terrorist tactics.

In West Bengal, terrorist activities were organised under the leadership of Jatin Mukherjee who was the guiding force behind Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar Samiti. These terrorists were involved in the isolated act of political assassination and political dacoity but they expanded its scope to a province-wise revolt. They operated during the world war and Jatin Mukherjee selected Balasore of Orissa as a location for secret operation. The arms coming from Germany were to be received by the terrorist revolutionaries at the sea-port of Balasore. However, the operation turned out to be a fiasco as Jatin's group were

suspected and attacked by the police and Jatin was killed in an encounter known popularly as 'the battle of Balasore'.⁴⁷

An act of considerable political importance for Orissa is the Chainipur dacoity case. On 14th September 1914, there was one political murder committed in the village Chainipur near Jajpur of Cuttack district. Sadei Sahu whose possessions were looted by the terrorists was murdered. The terrorists were Surendra Chandra Dhar, Kshitish Chandra Chaudhury, Govinda Chandra Ray and Jatindranath Nandi, all from Bengal, Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya, a resident of Cuttack, Lakshmidhar Das of Gunudaspur and Bairagi Charan Tripathy, all three from Orissa. The Oriyas who were convicted in this dacoity case were Atal Bihari Acharya, Lakshmidhar Das, Bairagi Charan Tripathy and Govinda Mishra.⁴⁸ However, as Dr. H.K.Mahtab suggests, the terrorist movement of West Bengal could not influence the direction of political development in Orissa due to the political dislocations suffered by it.

It was Gopabandhu Das who brought National Congress to Orissa. After the formation of Bihar-Orissa State Gopabandhu was elected to the Bihar-Orissa legislative council. A good organiser as he was, he could unite the workers, landless farmers and intellectuals all in one platform to fight for the cause of Indian Nationalism. For the

47. H.K.Mahtab : History of Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.III, 1955, Cuttack, p.20.

48. Ibid, pp.42-43.

generation of national consciousness among the Oriyas, he established a High School at Satyabadi and much later in the year 1919 he published the weekly 'Samaj'. Gopabandhu welcomed the 1917 October Revolution in Russia and Lenin and was full of praise for the socialist set up established there and was shocked to listen to the death of Lenin, the hero of the Revolution and the founder of Communist State in Soviet Union. In the year 1916, for the first time Gopabandhu attended the Congress Session at Lucknow as a representative from Orissa and on his return, he made an all-out effort to popularise congress in Orissa.

In 1919, Gandhiji declared Satyagraha against the Rowlet Act and it brought immense inspiration to Oriyas. The youth community in Orissa became interested in the programmes of National Congress. Gopabandhu Das, Harekrushna Mahtab, Niranjan Patnaik, Jadumani Mangaraj, etc., attended the Nagpur session of the Congress where Congress resolved to launch a Non-Cooperation Movement against the Britishers. On return, they organized the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee in March, 1920.⁴⁹ On the 24th January 1921, Gopabandhu Das gave a call for the Non-Cooperation Movement in a meeting at Cuttack. In Orissa, students, teachers, government servants, lawyers and businessmen left their positions and work places to plunge them in them in the movement. The branches of National Congress were opened in the districts

49. S.N.Patnaik, Op. Cit., p.38.

of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore and the leaders took the movement to villages. The leaders were Gopabandhu Das, Bhagirathi Mohapatra, Raj Krishna Bose, Mukunda Prasad Das, Doctor Atal Bihari Acharya, etc. To suppress the movement in Orissa the police force was employed everywhere and the prominent Congress leaders were arrested and jailed. Dr. H.K.Mahtab writes, "the pressure of public opinion was so great against Government services particularly in the Police Department that the entire armed constabulary of Cuttack resigned en bloc".⁵⁰

In Orissa along with the middle class intelligentsia, the landless and the small peasantry also awakened from their passivity to fight against the feudal oppression. Kanika peasant agitation in 1922 added further to the popularity of Congress. The Zamindars of Kanika, a large estate in the Cuttack district, resorted to extraction of several illegal taxes from the peasant tenants. The overwhelming burden of the taxation forced them to unite and agitate against the Kanika Raja and zamindars. The subjects were demanding the liquidation of the arrear taxes and abolition of the arbitrarily imposed taxes. The non-payment of taxes was construed to be a part of the programme of non-cooperation against the British Government.⁵¹ Hence, prohibitory orders under article 144 was clamped around Kanika and notices were

50. H.K.Mahtab, Vol.III, Op. Cit., p.21.

51. S.N.Dwivedi : Mo Jivan Sangram : Ardhasatabdira Samajbadi Andolanara Itihas (My Life's Struggle : The history of the Fifty Years of Socialist Movement) Granth Mandir, Cuttack, 1984, p.51.

served on the Congress leaders mainly on Gopabandhu Das and Bhagirathi Mahapatra. But later on Gopabandhu Das Bhagirathi Mahapatra, Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya, Gobinda Chandra Mishra and Jadumani Mangaraj were arrested for their allegedly fanning of discontentment among the peasants of Kanika and inciting them to participate in non-cooperation movement. They were all convicted and imprisoned ranging from one to two years. On the other the reign of suppression was unleashed in Kanika, two people were shot dead, many injured, their homes were looted and burnt and 150 were arrested.⁵² Besides Kanika, the peasantry rose in revolt in Bamra, Dashapalla and Nayagarh during the same period protesting against the oppressive laws and functioning of the government. Through active involvement in these agitation, the Congress leadership in Orissa could make it broad-based and turned it to a mass organisation.

After the Chauricheura incidence, the non-cooperation movement was withdrawn by Gandhi but when Gandhi was under prison bar there was a conflict among the Congress leaders on the issue of entry into Legislative Councils. On the one side there were Chittaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru, Madan Mohan Malavya who supported the entry whereas Chakrabarty Rajgopalachari and Rajendra Prasad and Ballava Vai Patel opposed the move. In Gaya Congress, Deshbandhu Chittaranjan resigned from Congress Presidentship and organised "Ewaraj Party" in 1923. Orissa followed suit by forming a

52. H.K.Mahtab : Sadhanara Pathe (1899-1950), Cuttack Students Store, Cuttack, 1972, pp.60-67.

"Swaraj Party" by the pro-changers. On Swaraj Party manifesto, Bhubanananda Das and Pandit Nilakantha Das were elected to the Central Assembly and Godabarish Mishra, Jagabandhu Sinha, Radha Ranjan Das and Bhagbat Prasad Mahapatra were elected to the Orissa-Bihar Legislative Council. The split caused an erosion of strength in the Congress in Orissa; however, with the death of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, the Swaraj Party was thrown into confusion and chaos and in Orissa it was brought under Congress control.⁵³

In the year 1927-28 Hindu Mahasabha was organised in Orissa under the patronage of Pandit Gopabandhu Das. During the same period, youth organisations sprang in many places of Orissa under the inspiring leadership of Subash Chandra Bose, Raj Krishna Bose and Bansidhar Mishra. A weekly paper "Yubaka" was published from Cuttack. In 1928 Simon Commission came to India to assess the future governance of India and to assess the views of political leaders. The Congress vehemently boycotted it. Orissa also organised protest movement against the Simon Commission. The year 1928, saw again the launching of peasant agitation in Bardoli under the guidance of Ballava Vai Patel. As its news spread to Orissa, it influenced the youth here. The youth associations started sending contributions to intensify the agitation and make it a success.⁵⁴

53. H.K.Mahtab : Dashebarshara Orissa, Cuttack, 1954, p.41.

54. Ibid, p.49.

With a climactic suddenness Gandhiji returned to active politics. In the Lahore session of the Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru with his characteristic leftist approach tabled the economic policies and programmes of the Congress and a resolution demanding the complete independence for India. It was decided that January 26, 1930 would be observed as "Purna Swaraj Day". Accordingly a remarkably new awakening was found in Orissa on that day. In the towns of Cuttack, Balasore and Puri and in most of the villages, the day was observed with great enthusiasm.⁵⁵ Then the Congress declared the civil disobedience movement against the British empire and Salt Satyagraha was chosen as the appropriate strategy for it. On 6th March, 1930, Gandhi started his Dandi visit in a procession to prepare salt from the sea. Next to Gujurat only Orissa could turn the civil disobedience movement to a full-scale mass movement. Inchudi village in Balasore district was chosen as the first venue for salt satyagraha and later on it spread to various centres. The main leaders were Hare Krushna Mahtab, Gopabandhu Chowdhury, Rabindra Mohan Das, Pranakrishna Padhihari, Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya, Naba Krushna Chowdhury, Raj Krishna Bose. The young activists who participated in this mass struggle and were disappointed by its outcome latter accepted Communism were Gati-krishna Swain, Gobinda Chandra Mohanty, Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani, Pranenath Patnaik, Baidyanath Ratha, Banamali

55. A detailed account of it is seen in S.N.Patnaik's Odisha Swadhinata Andolana, Cuttack, 1972.

Das, Mohan Das, Gurucharan Patnaik, Parshuram Padatik Rai and Gangadhar Mishra.⁵⁶ The salt satyagraha was indeed proved a training for them in the art of mobilising the masses specifically the peasantry.

When the Communist Party of India as a tactical-ideological line criticized the the Civil Disobedience Movement without participating in it, Orissa was yet to have a formal organisation of the communists. The failure of the Civil Disobedience Movement and the decline of Gandhi's influence on the Congress brought a shock wave to a section of progressive leaders of Congress in Orissa. Simultaneously another incidence took place in Bengal which is popularly known as "Chittagang Armory Raid". Revolutionary terrorism was back again on the Indian national scene. A group of young nationalist revolutionaries raided the Chittagang Armory, looted huge mass of arms and amunitions and set fire to the camp. There was an encounter between the revolutionaries and the police force. The battle took place till 1933 and in that year Surya Sen and Tarakeswar Dastidar were caught and hanged. The terrorists in their operation spread over to Orissa. One Satyen Guha came to Puri to spread the revolutionary zeal among the young Oriya radicals. As Banamali Das in an interview explained, he had maintained contact with such a group of revolutionaries operating from Kharagpur of West Bengal.⁵⁷ Gokul Mohan

56. Ibid, pp.72-74.

57. Collected from an Interview with Banamali Das, President of C.I.T.U.

Rai Chudamani, another communist speaks of his link with Satyen Guha. Even Gurucharan Patnaik admits that the communists of Orissa were influenced by these Bengal Terrorists in the 1930s who were in internment in Orissa. They were a source of inspiration to the radical youths as they were distributing terrorist literature including Marxist texts and were teaching terrorist tactics.⁵⁸

Few of these Oriya radicals organized a hotel named 'National Hotel' at Puri to work among the peasants. The participants were Jagannath Mohanty, Lokanath Rai, Parshuram Padatik Rai, Gatikrishna Swain, Balaram Paikrai, etc. They were all influenced by Marxist literatures and the idea of communism. Two noted communists Gurucharan Patnaik and Bhagebati Panigrahi met these organisers of National Hotel and taught them the ideas of communism and class struggle etc.⁵⁹ Another Bengal Communist Brajen Pal came to Puri and contacted those social workers at National Hotel and taught them the ideas of Marx and Engels, Lenin and the character of Indian politics and Indian National Congress and the designs of British Imperialism. These served as the ground work for organising a communist movement in Orissa.

COMMUNISTS WITHIN THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY:-

By 1934 few prominent leaders of Congress were disappointed to witness the unceremonious burial of the

58. G.C.Patnaik's article in Nua Dunia, 1975, special issue, pp.8-9.

59. Amulya Krushna Mishra : Aliva Sikha (Oriya), Grantha Mandir, Cuttack, 1982, pp.17-19.

civil disobedience movement which was then an utter failure. Moreover, they were disenchanted by the drift, it was making. Congress had already with it an organization of right-wing conservatives. The progressive section of Congress thought that the Congress must be given a radical image if it was to act as an instrument for change. Hence in May, 1934, Jay Prakash Narain, then an ardent socialist by conviction, organized an all-India Socialist Conference at Patna. Leading personalities in the conference were Jay Prakash, Achyut Pattabardhan, Ashok Mehta, M.R.Masani, S.M.Joshi, etc. These leaders during their stay in jail laid the foundation of Congress Socialist Party. They propounded the theory of class-war and the abolition of all private property. Their programme of action was the progressive socialization of all the means of production, distribution and exchange, the elimination of feudalism and kingship and bettering the lot of the peasantry.⁶⁰

In the year 1933, as Surendra Nath Dwivedi argues,⁶¹ Orissa Congress Socialist workers League was founded. Naba Krushna Chowdhury was the main inspiration behind the organization. S.N.Dwivedi was an activist. This was the first socialist organization in Orissa. Its members took the oath- (1) Not to acquire and accumulate private property in any form; (2) Every member shall contribute, whatever he has, to the League. And accordingly Naba Krushna Chowdhury

60. Sankar Ghose : Socialism and Communism in India, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1973, pp.261-262.

61. S.N.Dwivedi's article, "The Place of Pranatanath in the Socialist Movement in Orissa", Nua Dunia, Pranatanath Special, 1978, p.12.

contributed his small estate for the management of the League. This was spent in publishing the first socialist weekly newspaper "SARATHI". And soon in 1934 the All-India Congress Socialist Party was formed and the Orissa League merged in it. A conference was organized in the residence of Naba Krushna Chowdhury to decide on the issue of organizing a branch of Congress Socialist Party in Orissa. Pran Nath Patnaik delivered a speech on capitalist exploitation, class-war and socialism. The conference decided in favour of creating a Congress Socialist Party in Orissa. The Gandhians within the Orissa Congress vehemently opposed its creation on the ground that the idea of class-war and class-organization would breed violence and bloodshed. On the other hand, the Congress Socialists thought Gandhian leadership and Gandhian principles of non-violence would not be able to bring about independence of India. For a complete socio-economic revolution they needed new ideas, new ideology, new leadership and new strategy and new programmes.

58- However, as S.N.Dwivedi suggests the Congress Socialist Party was organized in May, 1934 in Orissa. Pran Nath Patnaik was elected the President of the Congress Socialist Party and Naba Krushna Chowdhury and Bhagabati Panigrahi were elected its two secretaries.⁶² Bhagabati Panigrahi translated Karl Marx's 'The Communist Manifesto'

62. S.N.Dwivedi : Mo Jivan Sangram, p.65.

in Oriya under the title of "Baigyanik Samyabad". The other members of the Congress Socialist Party were Malati Chowdhury, Manmohan Chowdhury, Sudhir Chandra Ghosh, Surendra nath Dwivedi of Cuttack, Rabindra Mohan Das and Gauranga Chandra Das of Balasore, Gatikrushna Swain, Mohan Das, Purunananda Swain, Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani, Gangadhar Paikarai from Puri and Gobinda Pradhan and Benamali Maharana from Ganjam. The programmes of the Congress Socialists in Orissa were: (1) To bring out a socio-economic revolution in the country; (2) To end feudalism and to ameliorate economic conditions of the peasantry of the country; (3) To socialize all the means of production including agriculture, industry and financial institutions; (4) Redistribution of lands among the landless peasants; (5) To ensure an equitable distribution system throughout the country; (6) To ensure effective participation of the workers in the management of industry.⁶³ Since Orissa was industrially backward and was overwhelmingly dominated by small peasantry the socialists were advised to organize the peasants and propagate among them the ideals of socialism and communism. A Congress Socialist Party branch was organized in Puri under the leadership of Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani. By 1936, a literary association known as 'Nabajuga Sahitya Sansad' was founded. Poets and writers such as Sachhi Routray, Ananta Patnaik, Guru Charan Patnaik,

63. G. Rai Chudamani : Itihasara Padakshepa (Oriya), Cuttack, 1977, p.49.

Bhagabati Panigrahi and Kalindi Charan Panigrahi were the patrons of this association. It published "Adhunik" as the progressive literary journal in the year 1936. The trend in the literature was the development of humanist thinking and socialist tradition in people. It projected the misrule of feudal lords, the weakness of the collapsing feudalism and the oppression and disasters of the wretches of the earth. The Sahitya Sansad worked as the mouth-piece of the Congress Socialist Party. In the year 1935, Acharya Narendra Deo, a founder member of the Congress Socialist Party came to Orissa. He was a teacher on socialist thinking and he encouraged the leftists in Orissa through his inspiring speeches on socialism, communism and nationalism in Orissa. This was an encouragement to the Socialists.

The Communists emerged on the soil of Orissa by the end of 1936. It was in the form of a small cell consisted of Bhagabati Panigrahi, Guru Charan Patnaik and Pranath Patnaik. During this period, the all-India Communist Party had been declared illegal and hence it was functioning within the Congress Socialist Party. The Communist Party of India aimed at working within the Congress along with the Socialists forming a broad United Front to fight against British Imperialism. In Orissa, the Communists had no separate existence; they are primarily a

part of the Congress and the Congress Socialist Party, later on (as the Communist Party was declared illegal) they wanted to create a legal Communist Party while retaining their positions within the Congress Socialist Party. It was, of course, this handful of communists who were instrumental in the creation of a socialist organization and dissemination of socialist thinking.

As Guru Charan Patnaik observes in his article, "Fifty Years of October Revolution": "Towards the end of 1936 work started to constitute a legal communist party in India at Cuttack."⁶⁴ As Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani recalls, Guru Charan Patnaik, Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi and Pranenath Patnaik were the three organizers as well as the founder members of the Communist Party in Orissa. In the same year in September Guru Charan Patnaik became a member of the Bengal Communist Party. Pranenath Patnaik and Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi subsequently became the members of the Bengal Communist Party on 30th October 1936 and 9th December 1936 respectively.⁶⁵ It was indeed a very small cell and Bhagabati Panigrahi was its General Secretary. However, as Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani suggests: The members of the newly created communist party in Orissa in 1936 were Guru Charan Patnaik, Ananta Patnaik, Baidyanath Rath, Pranenath Patnaik and Bhagabati Panigrahi.

64. Nua Dunia, 1967, p.33.

65. G.C.Patnaik in Nua Dunia, Special Issue, 1975, p.47.

The Communist Party resolved to create a communist society on the basis of Marxism-Leninism. It accepted Marxism as a scientific principle for social change and progress. It resolved to bring about a classless society where equality would be the guiding force and it would be a non-exploitative and non-oppressive social set-up. It would end the bourgeoisie-imperialist domination and would be the weilder of the national movement in Orissa. It would organize the workers, agricultural labourers and the peasants on the basis of class struggle to establish the supremacy of the working class. As the Communist Party was illegal, it resolved to work remaining within the Congress Socialist Party of Orissa. While it would retain its identity, it would use the Congress Socialist Party as a forum for organizing the Krishaks, Workers and Etudents.⁶⁶

In the year 1937, the first district branch of the Communist Party in Orissa was systematically organized in Puri. Gangadhar Mishra, Parshuram Padatikarai, Damodar Mishra, Purna Chandra Mohanty, Pranath Patnaik and Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani were the founder members. The first conference of the Puri District Branch of the Communist Party was held at Khurdha towards the end of 1937.

The Communist Party grew in strength by the year 1938 and its membership rose to 50. The noted communist

66. G. Rai Chudamani, Op. Cit., p.63.

workers who joined the party were Banamali Das, Rama-krushna Pati, Gangadhar Paikarai, Baishnab Charan Patnaik, Gatikrishna Swain, Sarat Patnaik, Sadhu Charan Mohanty. Although the Communist Party was launched in 1936, its first state level conference was held in the year 1948. During the period 1936-43, Bhagabati Panigrahi remained the General Secretary of the Communist Party and from 1943-49 Sarat Patnaik remained in the post. Within these periods communist party was organized in different centres. The Communist Party was organized in Nilgiri under the effective leadership of Banamali Das, in Balasore under Giridheri Panda. In Cuttack it was organized under the leadership of Kripa Sindhu Khuntia, Sarat Patnaik, Ram Chandra Mishra, Man Mohan Mishra, Selim Ahmed, Durga Charan Mohanty, etc. In Ganjam District, the Communist Party was organized by Gobinda Pradhan, Aparna Patro, Narsyan Fani, Harihar Das, A. Suryanarayan Achary, and Jagannath Mishra, etc. In Mayurbhanj, the Communist Party was led by Girish Chandra Rai and in Sambalpur District Kripe Sindhu Khuntia became the main force behind it. In Dhenkanal District, the Communist Party was organized by Baishnab Charan Patnaik and a scheduled caste peasant leader Madan Behera.⁶⁷

In Orissa, all these communist leaders were influenced by a study of Marxist literature, specifically the works of Lenin and Marx. For few scholars graduating from Banaras Hindu University, Acharya Narendra Dev was

67. Gobinda Chandra Mohanty's account of the growth of Communist Party in Orissa in Nua Dunia : Bhagabati Special, 1978, pp.17-23.

the spiritual leader. His critical analysis of Marxist theories and his brilliant estimate of British Imperialism was another important factor. Few Bengali leftists such as Fanipal, Brajen Pal and Satyen Guha impressed those leaders on the communist ideology. Within the Indian National Congress the leftist postures of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subas Chandra Bose, JayPrakash Narain inspired the young Oriya leaders within the Congress to be converted into communism. When those leaders accepted communism as an ideology they found the discontentment in the peasantry as the right element to be given due considerations. The Oriya peasantry provided the catalytic agent for the expansion of the Communist Party to the different centres of Orissa.⁶⁸

The main architects behind the organization of Communist Party in Orissa were Bhagabati Panigrahi, Guru Charan Patnaik and Pranath Patnaik. Bhagabati Panigrahi belonged to the village Biswanathpur in Puri District. He was born to a high caste Brahmin family. His father was a landlord. He graduated from the Premier College of Orissa, Ravenshaw College and obtained M.A. Degree from Patna University. But he did not join any government service. Bhagabati joined the Indian National Congress and participated in Salt Satyagraha. He was inspired by the Marxist literatures and the facts of social progress achieved by the Socialist Russia within a short span. He was the main

68. G. Rai Chudamani : Itihasara Padakshepa, Cuttack, 1977 pp.47-52.

personality behind the organization of the Congress Socialist Party in India. He worked in the peasant front organizing the poor peasants and landless labourers of Puri. He died in the year 1943 while he was working hard in the drought situation in Puri. He was a social worker, a socialist writer and good organizer. He translated Karl Marx's 'The Communist Manifesto' and was a leading member of Naba Juga Sahitya Samsada. He published the socialist newspaper "Sarathi" and "Adhunik".

Prananath Patnaik was born to a higher caste Writers (Karan) Family in the Khurdha Sub-division of Puri. He belonged to a lower middle-class family and his father was a land owner. He joined the Kashi National Vidyapitha and obtained his M.A. Degree. He was greatly influenced by Acharya Narendra Dev the then Principal of Kashi Vidyapitha. Prananath did not join any government office, rather he plunged into the stream of national movement. He joined the Congress and actively participated in the civil disobedience movement, launched by Mahatma Gandhi. He was the Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party. He organized the peasantry of Khurda and on his being elected to the legislative assembly in 1937, he prepared a 'Khurdha Charter of Demand'. He aroused the warriors of Khurda from their apathy and organized them to fight against British Imperialism. Bhagchash Movement in Khurda division was organized by him. He was

not only a Communist politician but also a writer, a parliamentarian and an educationist. Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani says the history of half a century active life of Prananath is the history of half a century's change and development of Khurda.⁶⁹

Sri Guru Charan Patnaik, the only living founder member of the Communist Party was born to a high caste writer family in Chanahat village of Puri District. He belonged to landlord family who suffered a lot due to the British land settlement policy. He studied at the Kashi Vidyapitha and was influenced by the Principal Acharya Narendra Dev. As he writes, he was also inspired by the terrorists of Bengal who resorted to Chittagang armory raids. He was a member of the Congress Socialist Party and was organizing the peasantry. He was a victim in the Communist Conspiracy case. Guru Charan Patnaik was also a member of the Congress and participated in the Salt Satyagraha of Gandhi. He write pamphlets such as Agei Chal (Walk Forward), 'English Rule in India', etc. and known for his Marxist criticism.⁷⁰

The social profile of the few other noted communists would throw light in the nature of the organization of the Communist Movement. One prominent personality among

69. G.C.Rai Chudamani : "Pranar Manisha (Man of my heart)", in A.K.Baral; Prananath Smarana (In memory of Prananath), Khurda, 1971, p.3.

70. Collected from an informal interview with Sri Guru Charan Patnaik.

the communists in Orissa was Banemali Das. He belonged to a landlord family and was peasant by caste. He passed out Matriculation from Patna University. He joined the Congress at the age of 14 and later organized the communist party in Balasore. He was actively associated with the terrorist group operating from Kharagpur and accepted Communism being influenced by Communist literature.⁷¹ Rama Krishna Pati, another communist from Cuttack came from a Brahmin rich peasantry family. He graduated from Ravenshaw College, Cuttack and was a student leader and after completion of study joined the Freedom Struggle. First he was a Congress activist and inspired by Soviet achievements he joined Communist Party in the year 1938. He wrote a pamphlet titled "Congressra Gati Keunade" in Oriya (Where the Congress leads to?) and a booklet on "Capitalism". He organized the peasantry and the factory workers and was elected as M.L.A. to the State Legislative Assembly. Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani belongs to a feudal landlord family who suffered a set back due to British land policy. He studied in Ravenshaw College but left it only to join the Salt Satyagraha. He organized the Puri Communist Party and was a peasant leader from Puri. Sadhu Charan Mohanty of Puri was from a land-lord Karan family. He studied in Ravenshaw College and worked in a Co-operative, for some time. He joined Congress and participated in the Civil

71. From WHO IS WHO, 1967, Orissa Legislative Assembly, Government Press, Cuttack, 1969.

Disobedience Movement. He left Congress to join the Communist Party in 1938 and organized the Kishan Andolan in Puri and Ganjam. For long, he was the President of Ganjam Krishak Sabha. He was a good organizer of the Communist Party in Puri and Ganjam Districts of Orissa.⁷²

It reveals few broad conclusions : Firstly the members of the Communist Party were all recruited from the higher castes of the Orissa Society. The members were recruited from the economically rich sections of the society specifically from the landlords family.^{Secondly} all accepted politics as full-time profession because of their abhorrence to the imperialist domination. Thirdly, all members were from the educated community. Fourthly, they were all members of the National Congress and they had prior training in the organization of movements before they accepted Communism. Finally they were all radical youths aiming at capturing the peasant population in Orissa. In fact, all these are inter-related facts. In Orissa, during this period only higher caste people had access to education and the educated higher caste people were from the landed gentry section of the society as they could afford to send their children for higher education. All the members of the Communist Party came from Congress as the later was the only organized force taking the lead in the Freedom Struggle.

72. Ram Chandra Mishra : "Sadhu Babu and Ryot Andolan in Ganjam" in Nua Dunia : Party Special, Cuttack, 1976, p.13.

Finally, as Orissa was yet to have any industrial base, the question of any working class simply did not arise. So, the members found it strategically sound to organize the peasantry.

The formation of the Communist Party in Orissa was looked with suspicion in different circles. The Communists' resolved to drive away the British Imperialists from India was sufficient ground for the British administrators to express their hostility. The British Government resorted to repressive measures, such as arresting the communists, seizure of the documents and booklets published by this small party in Orissa. In 1938-39 the Communist Conspiracy Case was launched against these communists to nip the movement in the bud. Even the National Congress expressed its unfavourable attitude towards the Communists. Of course, the Communists' characterization of the Congress that it was a handmaiden of the Indian Bourgeoisie and hence did not reflect the aspirations of the masses was viewed seriously by the Congress. The Congress in Orissa was sustaining factionalism; yet the different factions treated communist party with indifference. Dr. Hare Krishna Mahtab was very much critical about the Communist Party as the latter entered into the peasantry in Orissa and snatched away its leadership from Congress. Other noted members of Congress Naba Krishna Chowdhury, Surendra Nath Dwivedi were also critical of the party as the Communist Party emerged as a rival organization before them. As

G.C.Patnaik says, Congress leaders denounced its anti-feudal and anti-capitalist stand and its ideas of class-struggle and revolution, for Congress was a broad institution bringing into its fold the princes, landlords, rich peasantry, capitalists, factory workers and farm labourers.⁷³

73. G.C.Patnaik in Nua Dunia, 1975. p.48.

CH.2

COMMUNIST PARTY

AND THE

NATIONAL MOVEMENT IN ORISSA

The national movement for India's independence was carried under the patronage and leadership of the Indian middle class. The same middle class in Orissa were influenced by the inspiring leadership of Indian National Congress. Of course, Congress came to Orissa rather late, only in 1920 and Orissa joined the national life by participating in the non-cooperation movement launched in that year. The British Government unleashed the force of repression to lower down the revolutionary zeal of the Oriyas but it was of no avail. Orissa again participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement and stood out as a burning example to the whole of India by effectively carrying out Gandhi's programme of Salt Satyagraha. Another event of historic import was Gandhi's Harijan Movement in the year 1934. It was a reformist mission which aimed at the 'Temple entry' of the Harijans and Puri Jagannath Temple was chosen as one such field. The temple entry could not be effected but he went triumphantly as he was joined by thousands of Oriya patriots in his 'Pada Jatra', to the villeges of Orissa.

In the early thirties, the National Congress leaders in Orissa had two goals in view. First, the country had to attain its independence if the teeming millions of Indians were to have a decent life. And they adopted the strategy of non-violence of Gandhi, believers as they were in the peaceful and gradual political and social change. Second, they wanted that a politically unified Orissa should emerge which would preserve the language and cultural homogeneity of the Oriyas. They thought this would be possible within the framework of the national movement. National movement would not only snatch power from the British colonialists but also provide the Oriyas their own cultural viability and identity. And, thus in January 28, 1930, Oriya leaders observed the "First Independent Day" in Cuttack in the press campus of a Congress activist Raj Krishna Bosh.¹ In 1931, along with Salt Satyagraha, in Balasore the movement for non-payment of taxes started under the leadership of Gokulananda Mohanty and Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani. The Srijanga village of Balasore district would occupy a glorious place in the history of freedom struggle in Orissa for waging a determined and relentless struggle against the imposition of Chawkidari tax.² The police repression and brutality at Srijanga is a clear cut testimony of the character of colonial administration of the British Government. While

1. S.N.Patnaik : Op. Cit., p.69.

2. Ibid, p.83.

Utkal Congress was the guiding force in all these movements, it also took up the cause of a unified and integrated Orissa to mitigate the sufferings of Oriyas in different provinces. However, the Congress could not cooperate with the Utkal Sammilani as the later was under the effective control of the feudal landlords who supported the British administration.

CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY:

It has been stated earlier that a section of the Congress workers with a leftist leaning formed a Congress Socialist Party in the year 1934 which was to operate within the framework of Congress. The ideology of the Congress Socialist Party was not only the attainment of national independence but also to ameliorate the masses from their poverty. The short-term objective of the Congress Socialist Party was to radicalise the Congress organisation and make it more mass-oriented. Negatively, this organisation wanted to salvage the congress of its orthodoxy. However, it did not want to go away from the Congress. In Orissa, few educated middle class leaders trained in Marxist ideology preferred the Congress Socialist Party platform to forming an independent communist party for all over India. Communist Party was then declared illegal. The Communists in Orissa worked within the Congress Socialist Party. During the year 1937-38, they were hardly few in numbers yet the study of national politics cannot be said to be complete without a reference to them.

The general election of 1937 provided the first phase of victory to the Communists in Orissa. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the British India Government decided to hold elections to the State Legislative Assembly and Congress decided to make its entry into the provincial assemblies. On the 1st April, 1936, Orissa was granted provincial autonomy and in 1937 Congress leaders decided to participate in the election, even though the rival opinion was expressed for not contesting in the election by leaders such as H.K.Mahtab, Pt. Godabarish Mishra and Mandhate Gorachand Mishra. Pt. Nilakantha Das was the President of the Utkal Provincial Congress and he effectively organized the election for the Congress. The province was divided into 47 constituencies and Congress contested all but two seats. In the provincial Congress Committee meeting at Berhampur the seats were allocated and the Khurdha Constituency was allocated to Pranath Patnaik, one of the founder members of the Communist Party in Orissa, then a founding member of the Congress Socialist Party. He was contested by Brahmananda Mohanty, a noted advocate of Puri, on behalf of the Raja of Kanika. The Raja of Parlakhemundi also nominated Madhusudan Mohanty to contest from Khurdha Constituency. The Socialist leaders like Harihar Das and Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani, Naba Krushna Chowdhury, campaigned for Congress. And Pranath

Patnaik was the first communist leader to get elected on a Congress ticket in the face of all threats from the British Government. By the year 1937, the Puri District Branch of the Orissa Communist Party was organized. In the year 1937, election was held to the District Boards, and Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani, President of the District Branch of the Communist Party of India was elected to the Puri District Board.³ The infant Communist Party regarded it as of no mean achievement.

Alongside electoral victory, the communists started expanding their organizational base. They entered into the peasantry and formed the Kisan Sabha to achieve their avowed goal. S. C. De states that "the socialists made sustained effort to organize their party on a sounder basis and to secure people's support towards them. They created branches all over the province. Leaders like Prananath Patnaik, Gatikrishna Swain, Gangadhar Mishra appealed to the people through party press to rally round the socialist banner. However, the communists faced stiff opposition from the Congress as the former wanted to convert the Congress to a forum of the farmers and workers. The rightist section of the Congress leadership Pt. Godabarish Mishra and Chintamani Mishra opposed this move and campaigned against the socialist leaders."⁴

3. G.Rai Chudamani : Op. Cit., p.77.

4. S.C.De : Diary of Political Events in Orissa, 1936-47, Cutteck, 1964, p.13.

During the period of 1938-39, the Utkal Provincial Congress entered an era of crisis marked by all dis-sension. In Orissa, a Congress Ministry was formed under the prime-ministership of a landlord Biswanath Das. But very soon the Biswanath Das Ministry got into disrepute as the corruption charges were levelled against him. In the provincial congress committee meeting, the group led by Pt. Nilakantha Das picked up a quarrel with the group led by Biswanath Das. Pt. Nilakantha Das organized a parallel Congress organization in Orissa.⁵ But in the year 1939 January, Nilakantha Das succeeded in getting himself elected as the President of the Utkal Provincial Congress. The conflict arose between the provincial congress committee and the ministry. The conflict in Orissa coincided with the conflict taking place between the rightists and the leftists within the Indian National Congress. In the year 1938 Subash Chandra Bose was elected President of the Indian National Congress. Radical as he was, he intended to induce some degree of militancy into the Congress Organization. But his radical programme of action and utterances were resented by the conservative section, of the Congress and its leader Mahatma Gandhi. Because of the differing perception and view point Mahatma Gandhi could not appreciate Subash Bose in the Congress Presidentship. Subash Bose sought a re-election against Pattavi Sitarayya and got elected, the victory of Subash Bose was

5. Balaram Mohanty : Orissara Rajanitika Itihas (Political History of Orissa) Cuttack, 1979, pp.53-54.

considered a moral defeat by Gandhi. The working of the National Congress came to a halt and Subash Bose resigned disheartened and Congress was once again captured by rightist elements.

DISSENTION WITHIN THE CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY:

If the Congress was in trouble the State of affairs within its radical wing, the Congress Socialist Party, was no better. Although there was an alliance between the socialists and the communists to work unitedly and there was an understanding that both would work from a common platform towards a common goal, such an alliance was destined not to last long. In the year 1938 S.S.Battliwala, a prominent communist leader from Bombay visited Orissa to propogate the principles of socialism and communism. He addressed meetings at Cuttack, Khurdha and Puri and the lectures delivered were on "Socialism in India".⁶ In the same year a no-tax campaign was launched in the estates of Khallikote, Athagada and Biridi by both the socialist and communist groups. The socialists and the communists started organizing the peasants of Sambalpur, Balasore and Cuttack and the leading activists were Naba Krishna Chowdhury, Pranath Patnaik, Benamali Das, Gati Krishna Swain. However, with the assumption of Congress office by Gopabandhu Chowdhury, he emphasized on the programme of cleansing the Congress Organization of the

6. S.C.DE : Op. Cit., p.15.

socialist elements and developing the congress on the basis of orthodox congress ideology. Dr. H.K.Mahtab gives a different interpretation of the situation. As he says, the Communist remaining within the Congress Socialist Party started fomenting troubles in the agrarian community. He says, this was a deviation on the part of the socialists from the adopted policy of the Congress towards the agrarian problem and the socialists lent themselves to the ideology of Subash Chandra Bose. The Communists captured the rank and file of the Congress Socialist Party in Orissa.⁷ It may be stated here that the Congress in Orissa wanted to gain the support of the farmers and workers only as a passive community. Their rising could be possible due to their organization by the communists. The communists imparted to them a sense of self-dignity and identity which they started asserting. The congress organization could not evolve suitable objectives and strategies to tackle the problem of agrarian tension and hence accused the communists. This is where again the alliance between the socialists and the communists proved to be the weakest. The socialists along with the Congress leaders wanted to save their organizations from communist influence.

In 1937 tension surfaced between the Congress Socialists and Communists in Orissa over the issue of the

7. H.K.Mahtab : History of Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.IV, Cuttack, 1957, p.34.

publication of party paper. The Congress Socialists insisted that the title of the party paper should be 'Krishak' as it would arouse the peasants to consciousness. The Communist group, on the other hand, wanted that the paper should be called 'Mazdoor' as it would comprise not only peasants but also the wage earners in land and factory. They argued, the title 'Mazdoor' carried much broader significance than 'Krishak' and would secure the solidarity of Kisans and Workers. However, finally it was decided that the party paper would be called 'Krishak' and it would focus the conditions of the peasants and workers, awaken them to the state of their exploitation and would present their grievances to build up a successful protest movement of the peasants and workers.⁸

The alliance between the socialists and the communists at the all-India level also was not all smooth. There was a simmering discontentment in the socialists circle as it was reported that the Communists were asserting that that the Congress Socialist Party had not developed along true Marxist path. The National Executive of the party also suspected that the Communists were allegedly trying to convert the socialist members in communism. At the National Executive meeting at Patna in 1937, a clash occurred between the two groups over the allegations levelled against the Communists. Although the National Executive did not initiate any disciplinary action against the

8. S.N.Dwivedi : Mo Jivan Sangram, Cuttack, 1984, p.93.

Communists, resolved not to take any Communist in its rank any further.⁹

In the year 1938 M.R.Masani published a book under the title "The Communist Plot Against the C.S.P." It contained the secret plan of actions of the communists and their bid to take over the organization of the Congress Socialist Party. It revealed the Communists attempt to indoctrinate the socialists to bring them to "the fold of the Communists"¹⁰ party. This document also contained the report on the organizational strength of the communists in each state.

This event also put the united front experiment of the Socialists and Communists in Orissa into the web of confusion. M.R.Masani sent a copy of the booklet to Naba Krushna Chowdhury, the founder-member of the Congress Socialist Party. The booklet revealed that Bhagabati Panigrahi was the General Secretary of the Orissa Communist Party. And as the secretary of the Congress Socialist Party he was spreading communist influence in the party and expanding its base at the expense of Congress Socialist Party. It showed that in Orissa out of 40 members of C.S.P., 6 really belonged to it and 34 were communists. The note further stated that the communists bitterly criticized the parent party as anti-socialist and anti-Marxist and aimed at liquidating the later.¹¹

9. M.R.Masani : Communist Party of India - A Short History, London, 1954, p.68.

10. Jay Prakash Narain : Towards Struggle, Bombay, 1946, pp.172-74.

11. G.Rai Chudamani : Op. Cit., p.80.

This booklet could serve as an instrument to create a rupture in the Congress Socialist Party. Naba Krushna Chowdhury, Malati Chowdhury, Surendranath Dwivedi, Gaur Chandra Das and Gauranga Charan Das formed the socialist group and Bhagabati Panigrahi, Pranatanath Patnaik, Gurucharan Patnaik, Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani, Banamali Das, Ananta Patnaik, Baishnab Patnaik etc., went to the side of the Communists. In March, 1938, Jay Prakash Narain came over to Orissa and held a meeting of the Congress Socialists in the residence of Naba Krushna Chowdhury. He strongly criticized the peasant agitation led by Phani Pal, a noted Communist from Sukinda Division of Orissa. Finally he appointed Naba Krushna Chowdhury, the leader of the Congress Socialist Party in Orissa. Mr. N.K. Chowdhury dissolved the Congress Socialist Party and the 'Krishak Sangha' as the later was dominated by the communists.¹²

COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE WAR PERIOD:

The second world war started on 1st September, 1939. Hitler of Germany attacked Poland on that day. On 3rd September, England declared war against Germany and English colonies were forced to join the war on the side of England. Accordingly, India joined the World War II. Although she had a responsible and representative government, the representatives were not consulted for such a decision. In protest against the arbitrary decision of

12. H.K.Mahtab : Op. Cit., Vol.IV, p.34.

the imperialist British Government, the Congress Ministry resigned on 4 November, 1939. On the same day the Biswanath Ministry in Orissa also tendered its resignation. The Congress openly denounced the actions of the Governor-General of British India for his forcible entanglement of India in the war. But the Congress wanted to tender conditional support to the British war effort. The Congress asserted that India can help the forces of democracy in their war against fascism only if India was declared free or more effective power put in the Indian hands. The British Government refused to accept the demands of the National Congress. Although the Congress opposed the British actions in India, it did not intend to embarrass the British participating in the war. Hence, Mahatma Gandhi declared his programme of limited Satyagraha- known otherwise as 'Individual Satyagraha'.

But the Communist Party branded the World War II as an imperialist war. The communists in India thought that the imperialist countries were fighting for economic spoils. The party pamphlet 'Proletarian Path' issued illegally in 1939 putforward the programme for nationwide mass movement. It launched anti-war protests and strikes all over the country. In Orissa, the Communist leaders were unequivocal in their slogan of throwing away the British imperialists from India. Leaders like Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani, Pranatanath Patnaik, Purna Chandra Mohanty, student

leaders like Durga Charan Mohanty, Ram Krishna Pati, Man Mohan Mishra, etc., vigorously campaigned against the British war effort and appealed to the people not to cooperate with the British.

Four noted Communist leaders from Orissa, Sadhu Charan Mohanty, Purna Chandra Mohanty, Gokul Rai Chudamani and Pranatanth Patnaik were arrested on 11, November, 1939 for their alleged anti-British propaganda and support to Germany's Fascist forces.¹³ The case was presented in the court of Mr. Ramman, I.C.S., Khurda Sub Divisional Magistrate by Government for hearing and disposal. A Defence Committee was organized in Khurda under the supervision of H.K.Mahtab, Bhagabati Panigrahi, Guru Charan Patnaik and Gangadhar Mishra to collect funds to bear the legal expenses. A retired Judge Raj Kishore Das took the responsibility to fight the case on behalf of the 4 arrested communist leaders. Rai Bahadur Lokanath Mishra was appointed Advocate on behalf of the Government. Hundred witnesses were called for, the speeches of those communist leaders were put forward against them. However, the court awarded one year of rigorous imprisonment to Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani and Pranatanth Patnaik and one and half year to Sadhu Charan Mohanty and ten months rigorous imprisonment to Purna Chandra Mohanty. The four of them appealed to the High Court for reconsideration of the punishment. However, by the time the case was disposed by the High Court for reconsideration of the punishment. However, by the time the

13. G.Rai Chudamani : Report in Nua Dunia, Cuttack 1978, p.18.

case was disposed in the High Court and the victims were acquitted they had already been in jail at Anugul for two years each. ¹⁴

During this period, Guru Charan Patnaik, the founder member of the Communist Party was also imprisoned for his publication of pamphlet "English Raj". ¹⁵ In July 1940, the infamous communist conspiracy case was launched against nine communists in Orissa. As the World War started the Communist Party in Orissa published a series of pamphlets decrying the British war policy. The pamphlets were "Banaverry" (War Trumpet), "War against War", "Sarbahaṛāra Patha" (Path of the proletariat), "France Prati Biswās-ghātakata" (Betrayal to French) and "Agei Chala" (March On). ¹⁶ The objective of all these writings was to arouse the nationalist sentiment among the masses and to prepare them against the war. Besides, the Communist Party was regularly receiving series of documents and instructions from the Communist Party of India which was functioning illegally from Bombay. Two Communists Siddheswar and Ganeswar working in the Sagar Soap Factory at Chhatrabazar of Cuttack were functioning as "Post Box" and channelising the documents for distribution among the masses. The informations regarding these alleged activities of the communists were collected by the C.I.D. Inspector Rai Sahib Manabodha Panda. He filed a case

14. Abani Kumar Baral : ^{L. Rai Singh} Pranānath Smerane , 1971, p.115.

15. Article by G.C.Mohanty, in Nua Dunia, Issue 38 and 39, p.49.

16. Ibid, p.42.

against nine communists on the ground of their hatching a conspiracy to dispossess the English Crown of its sovereignty over India.¹⁷ The accused in the case were Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi, Gurucharan Patnaik, Ananta Patnaik, Baidyanath Ratha, Banamali Das, Bijay Chandra Das, Durga Charan Mohanty, Ram Chandra Mishra, Eharat Patnaik.¹⁸ The case was heard and disposed off in the Cuttack Jail and H. Lal, I.C.S. was appointed as the Special Judge for the hearing of the case. Fifty people appeared as witness and hundreds of documentary evidences were submitted before the Court. Even the statement of ex-Home Minister Nityananda Kanungo of Orissa, as a witness against Bhagabati Panigrahi was tabled before the Court for consideration. On behalf of the accused, Rama Krishna Pati and Sadhu Charan Mohanty were witnesses. Dr. H. K. Mahtab, the leading figure in Orissa Congress lent his utmost help to the communists by organizing the Defence Committee and providing financial and legal help.¹⁹

The judgement was delivered on 3.12.1940. Durga Charan Mohanty and Rama Chandra Mishra, Siddheswar and Ganeswar were also acquitted in this case but were persecuted for some other cases. Bhagabati Panigrahi, G.C. Patnaik, Baidyanatha Ratha were awarded 18 months imprisonment, Banamali Das and Ananta Patnaik were given nine months imprisonment and fined and Bijay Chandra Das and

17. Ibid, 43.

18. G. Rai Chudamani, Op. Cit., p.90.

19. H.K.Mahtab : Sadhanara Pathe, Cuttack, 1972, p.211. (1899-1950)

Sarat Patnaik were awarded 6 months. The convicts appealed to the High Court and Justice Meher, I.C.S., delivered judgement on 3-12-1941. The punishment in the case of all the convicts were held up except that Siddheswar and Ganeswar were freed. All the convicts were jailed in Anugul.

In the beginning of 1940, Gandhiji launched "Individual Satyagraha" against the British participation in war. Pt. Prana Krishna Padhihari was appointed director to organize individual Satyagraha in Orissa on behalf of the National Congress. On 1st December, 1940 Biswanath Das was arrested for committing individual civil disobedience. On the same day, Dr. H.K. Mahtab delivered a speech at Remuna of Balasore against British Government and on 2nd December he was arrested and imprisoned for one full year at the Berhampur jail. Other Congress leaders like Nityananda Kanungo, Bodharama Dube, Naba Krishna Chowdhury, Jagannath Das, Radhakrishna Biswasrai, Jagannath Mishra and Prahlad Rai Rath were also arrested. The Communists were uncompromising in their stand against British Government. They were more radical in their action and differed from the orthodox congress on their strategy. However, they participated in the individual Satyagraha sponsored by Gandhi and their commitment was total. The communist leaders who participated in the act of civil disobedience were Pranath Patnaik, Gobinda Chandra Pradhan, Man Mohan Mishra, Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani,

Mohan Das and Banamali Das. All these leaders were arrested and jailed in Berhampur jail as second class prisoners.²⁰

In June 1941, the war took a serious turn; the fascist Germany attacked Russia. The Soviet Union entered into an 'anti-fascist coalition' with the allied powers, U.S.A., Great Britain and France. This was a crucial situation for the Congress as well as the Communist. The Congress declared that its sympathy lay with the victims of the fascist aggression, but asserted that only a free India could fully assist the democratic forces. The Communist Party of India, on the other hand, declared it as "People's War" and expressed that it was a war between the democratic and fascist forces. The Communists, of course, wanted that Soviet Russia, the only land of socialism, must be saved from the fascist clutch. Hence, they lent their support unhesitatingly to the British Government in India and put forward a programme of forming a National Government. The Communists on their part, were bitterly criticized by the Congress as the traitors. However, on the issue of support, the Congress's stand was delightfully vague. It stated that it would want the British to go out of India but in the event of Japan's attack, it would oppose Japan through peaceful means of Satyagraha and non-cooperation and would not surrender to Japan domination.²¹ As Japan joined the world war on the side of the fascist forces, it created imminent danger for India. The Japanese forces ran over the

20. S.N.Patnaik : Op. Cit., pp.182-83.

21. S.N.Dwivedi : August Biplab, Cuttack, 1972, p.26

East Asia and came close to the Indian boarder. The British Government freed all the Congress leaders to take stock of the changed situation and reconsider their stand. Gandhi suspended temporarily the individual civil disobedience movement. The British Government made all out effort to save India from Japanese aggression. It brought soldiers from England, America and Canada and concentrated them in India.

The Communists in India were ridiculing the gradualist approach of National Congress. It characterized Gandhi as "the defence shield of Indian Bourgeoisie". Communist Party believed that the individual Satyagraha would not be able to throw away British Imperialism. But the Congress took it as a prelude to the preparation for a mass struggle in India. The Congress prepared the ground for a Quit India Movement which was to take place on August 9, 1942. The Communists initially opposed such a move and extended the support to British participation in war. The Communist Party's support to British Government was conditional as the Communist Party of India wanted the victory for the democratic forces and victory for socialism. It never wanted the prolongation of imperialist rule in India nor did it criticize the anti-imperialist struggle of the Congress. The Communist Party thought when the world was over-run by the fascist forces, the prime task before the Congress was to support the democratic forces as any action

against the British imperialism would aggravate the situation and weaken the hold of allied powers. Consequently, the world would be subjected to the fascist forces and it would lead to further colonisation of the world and delay in the process of decolonisation. This estimation has been criticized by the Congress leaders as wrong but the communist party of India still believes it to be correct on the basis of historical evidence.²²

With the entry of Japan in the war, a new situation arose in Orissa. Eight M.L.As. in Orissa Assembly defected from Congress on the suggestion of Pt. Nilakantha Das and joined hands with Maha Raja of Parlakhemundi to form a coalition government. Pt. Nilakantha Das assumed the leadership of the Orissa National Front and the Maharaja of Parlakhemundi assumed the Premiership.²³ The objective of the National War Front was to support the British War effort and the communists supported it. The Congress in Orissa under the leadership of Surendranath Dwivedi prepared for a mass revolt. On August 7, 1942, the Indian National Congress passed the Quit-India Resolution and appealed for a last struggle for independence. The whole country was electrically charged by the morning of August 9, 1942, as Congress declared open rebellion and spread the slogan of "Do or Die". On the same day 26 leaders from Orissa were arrested. This created an uncontrolled situation in Orissa. The mass revolution sprang

22. See 'Leftist Movement in India' by S. Rai Chowdhury and Left Wing in India by L.P. Sinha.

23. Balaram Mohanty : Op. Cit. p.101.

up in Balasore, Cuttack and Puri. The people took to direct mass action in different places of Orissa.²⁴

The Communist leaders in Orissa were initially undecided. On 9th August 1942, they staged a large Krishak Sammilani at Cuttack where Sahajananda Saraswati the veteran peasant leader and socialist from Bihar delivered a speech. People from the distant places of Orissa such as Sambalpur, Berhampur, Balasore, etc., thronged upon to attend this meeting. On the same day, Bhagabati Panigrahi openly inaugurated the first legal communist office at Chandani Chowk of Cuttack. But by this time, the party had an organization, a red party flag with sickle and hammer and a party publication 'Mukti Yuddha'. On the issue of August Revolution 'Mukti Yuddha' editorial brought out an article squarely laying the blame on British Government for creating chaotic conditions in India and arresting the Congress leaders. The Communists in Orissa were much agitated over the arrest of Congress leaders, and demanded the immediate release of all political leaders. The Communist leaders who were outside the jail were again arrested and taken into custody. Prananath Patnaik and Durga Charan Mohanty were arrested on the ground of fanning tension among the peasants. As 'Mukti Yuddha' reported Sadhu Charan Mohanty, the General Secretary of the All-Orissa Peasant Association was arrested and jailed for one month on false charges. The Government arrested

24. A revealing discussion of the Quit-India Movement in Orissa is found in S.N.Dwivedi : August Biplab, Cuttack, 1972. However, Surendranath Dwivedi, as the

Banamali Das for carrying on struggle in the princely state of Nilgiri and his office was raided and all documents and letters were seized.²⁵

The Communist leaders in Orissa demanded the formation of a National Front as it would be a step towards the realisation of national independence. They launched the programme of Hindu-Muslim Unity. The Unity Week was observed all over Cuttack, Puri and Balasore on the first week of November. Besides Communists joined hands with Congress leaders in Orissa to fight against the collection of war tax from people and imposition of punitive taxes and collective taxes on the people on account of their participation in the August Revolution.²⁶ They organized meetings on 25th September, 1942, to observe Anti-Repression Day in protest against the Government repression. They urged the people to be united in order to resist Japanese aggression and for driving out the Japanese and then the British from the land.²⁷

During these periods, other leftist forces emerged on the political scene of Orissa and the Communist Party warned its members not to be sold into the hands of C.S.P..

leading architect of the Quit-India Movement in Orissa, bitterly ridicules the role of the Communists in his book August Biplab. He stated, when he was involved in organizing the movement operating from different parts of Cuttack (mostly remaining underground) his whereabouts and plans were known to the Communists who leaked it to the British Government. The British administration could arrest him because of the conspiracy of the communists. See August Biplab, pp.133-137.

25. Mukti Yuddha : 20 October 1942, p.6.

26. Ibid, 13 November, 1942, p.5.

27. H.K.Mahtab ^{op.cite.} Vol.IV, p.100.

Forward Bloc and Revolutionary Democratic Party. On August 5, 1940 Subash Chandra Bose came to Orissa and organised the Forward Block in Orissa. A standing committee was formed with 14 members and Jadumani Mangaraj was appointed its President. The Forward Bloc took active part in August Revolution and published the pamphlet the "War of Independence". But the Forward blockists went over to the fascist group as Subash Chandra Bose escaped from India and joined hands with Japan. The Communist leaders in Orissa criticized the Forward Bloc as Fifth columnists. The Radical Democratic Party was also formed in Orissa under the inspiring leadership of M.N.Roy, who was expelled from the Communist Party for his anti-communist profession. The Communists in Orissa regarded them as mere tools in the hands of British Imperialism. The Communists also denounced the Hindu Maha Sabha and Congress Socialist Party for impeding the achievement of communal unity in Orissa.²⁸

In October, 1942, a political training camp was opened at Calcutta by the Communist Party of India. P.C. Joshi was the then General Secretary of the Communist Party. Three members from Orissa, Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi, Guru Charan Patnaik and Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani attended this training camp. After returning from Calcutta, they opened a political training school at Puri under the guidance of Biswanath Mukherjee. The recruits to this school

28. Ibid, p.103.

were imparted training in guerilla warfare to meet the Japanese aggression. They were taught in the programmes like grow-more food campaign and setting up of youth leagues, etc.²⁹ In October 1944, Communists in Orissa decided to set up a 'Mukti Sena' to facilitate their contact with the people. They also opened a branch of "The Friends of the Soviet Union" at Berhampur. They organized a secret 'Defence Squad' to meet the challenges from Japanese aggression. The soldiers were recruited and trained in guerilla warfare. Rama Chandra Mishra and Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani led the defence squad. The defence squad operated near the coast of Puri and it consisted of youths from the villages of Kakatpur and Astaranga in the district of Puri.

By the middle of 1945, with the defeat of fascist forces, the British Government released all the Congress and communist leaders in Orissa. The Communists criticized the government of Maharaja of Paralakhemundi for its failure to tackle the post-war situation. However, an unwarranted situation arose in Orissa. The Communists rejoiced at the victory of Russia. The Congress Party activists attacked Communist offices at different places such as Khurdha, Cuttack and Balasore. The relation between the Congress and Communists further deteriorated as few members of Congress went over to the fold of Communist Party. In 1945, an all-party conference was held at Sakhigopal of Puri under the

29. S.C. De : Diary of Political Events, 1963, p.51.

leadership of Congress. The Communists, although they had legal existence, were still working within the Congress. The conference was led by Gopabandhu Chowdhury and Acharya Harihar Das. The Communists were not allowed to attend the meeting. The Communists organized a separate meeting at Sakhigopal and the conference was attended by 500 people.³⁰

In the year 1945, in October, election was held to the District Boards. Congress won all the seats in Balasore and Cuttack district boards. Communist Party captured 2 seats in the Puri District Board. In 1946, General election was held to the Orissa Legislative Assembly. The Orissa Legislative Assembly had 60 seats and Congress sought election to 56 seats whereas communist party in Orissa sought election to the single seat labour constituency. Baidyanath Ratha contested the election against the Congress candidate Maulavi Mahomed Hanif. However, the communist candidate Baidyanath Ratha won the seat.

In 1946, Cabinet Mission arrived in India for an amicable settlements of the problem of India's independence. The communists in Orissa criticized the cabinet mission as it could neither satisfy the Congress nor the Muslim league. The Communist Party organized its meeting at Cuttack, and Biswanath Mukherjee delivered his speech denouncing the Cabinet mission plan. However, the communists accepted the formation of a constituent assembly.

30. G. Rai Chudamani, Op. Cit., p.125.

On 15 August 1947 India was declared independent when Britishers transferred power to Indians. The Communists had reservations regarding the transfer of power and the partition of India; however, they welcomed the Independence Day all over the State. The Communists had the same goal as that of the National Congress, but the strategy and ideology were different. They wanted that political independence should come along with economic independence. They were critical of the Congress' leaning towards capitalism and its dependence on the Imperialists. They were again critical of the consensual methodology of the congress but they shared the joy of independence along with the Congress.

...

CH. III

COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE FREEDOM
STRUGGLE IN THE PRINCELY STATES
IN ORISSA.

In the early decades of twentieth century, Oriya Nationalism was the strongest form of consciousness among the emerging middle class intellectuals in Orissa. After the Britain take over of Orissa, the first blow delivered to it was its dismemberment and collapse of cultural homogeneity. Although from the point of view of society, economy, culture, language and polity, Orissa constituted a separate entity, there was a flagrant defiance of its autonomy when British rule vivisected it and annexed its different parts to different provinces in the name of administrative exigencies. Originally Orissa was constituted of three coastal districts: Cuttack, Puri and Balasore, its southern portions were annexed to Madras Province and Sambalpur was kept under Nagpur Division. In 1870, the northern portions of Balasore except the Oriya-speaking tracts of Midnapur were reunited with Orissa; in 1905 Sambalpur was transferred to Orissa but the districts of Ganjam and Vizagapatnam were kept away from it.

Since 1903 the movement in Orissa veered round the problem of amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking areas. Utkal Sammilani formed in the year 1903 was a forum to steer the movement for a separate province. The Utkal Sammilani brought to its fold members from the ranks of Rajas, Zamindars, Landlords, rich peasants and intelligentsia. Although the British government recognized the need of unifying Oriya-speaking areas into one administrative unit, it was lukewarm in its action till 1912. In 1912 the Bihar-Orissa province was created only to heighten the aspirations of the people. In 1917, Utkal Sammilani presented a memorandum to Mr. Montague, the then Secretary of State for India and Lord Chelmsford at Calcutta demanding to bring together the Oriya-speaking tracts scattered in four different provinces under one separate administration. Montague Chelmsford in their report recommended that Orissa embracing all Oriya-speaking tracts be constituted into a sub-province. In 1919, the representatives from Orissa in the Bihar-Orissa Legislative Council moved and carried through a proposal recommending the amalgamation of all-Oriya tracts. As a consequence of the resolution, the British-India Government appointed on 11-10-1924 the Phillip-Duff Committee to make a detailed enquiry in order to ascertain the attitude of the Oriya-speaking people of the Madras Presidency on the question of their amalgamation with Orissa.¹ The Committee recommended that "there

1. Pt. Baikoli Mahapatra : Odia Andolanara Itihas(in Oriya) Gopabandhu Sahitya Mandir, Cuttack, 1976, pp.74-175.

was a genuine, long-standing and deep-seated desire on the part of the educated Oriya people of the Oriya-speaking tracts for amalgamation of these tracts with Orissa under one administration."²

In 1927, the Simon Commission arrived in India and the Phillip-Duff Commission's findings formed the basis for the presentation of the case of Oriyas. The Commission appointed a sub-committee under the Presidentship of Atlee to make a detailed enquiry of the question of making a separate province. The Simon Commission stated favourably that "An urgent case for consideration and treatment is that of the Oriya speaking people". The Commission also described the Orissa-Bihar Union in a province as "a glaring example of the artificial connection of areas which are not naturally related." The Simon Commission recommended the formation of a separate province for Orissa.³ The Government of India appointed the O'Donnell Committee to examine the question of setting up a separate administration in Orissa from the point of economic viability and administrative efficiency. The Committee was also to examine the question of adjustment and redistribution of areas in the event of the creation of a new province. The Committee in the report suggested that a separate Orissa Province must include Orissa Division, Anugul, the Kharlar zamindari of the Raipur District and the greater part of Ganjam District and of the Vizagpatnam Agency tracts.

2. Ibid, p.176.

3. Ibid, p.177.

The National Congress in Orissa was critical of the O'Donnell report as it did not include in Orissa the Midnapur and Bankura tracts from Bengal, Singhbhum and Manjusha and Somepet of Madras and the Southern areas of Berhampur of Ganjam. It rejected the recommendations of O'Donnell Committee whereas the Utkal Sammilani accepted the recommendation as a basis for a separate Oriya Province but demanded the inclusion of the above mentioned Oriya-speaking tracts in Orissa. It criticized the views of O'Donnell Committee regarding the financial aspect of a separate Orissa Province.

Finally, the question of a separate province was considered in the Round Table Conference where the Maharaja of Parlakhemundi argued about the urgency of the situation. The Round Table Conference recommended the proposal for a separate province. The British Parliament appointed a Joint Committee to consider the problems in greater details. The Joint Committee suggested the inclusion of Jeypore estate and Parlakhemundi in Orissa. The British Parliament accepted the suggestions of its joint committee. Under section 289(1)(b) of the Government of India Act, 1935, Orissa was accorded the status of a separate province. The status of a separate province of Orissa was effected from 1st April, 1936. However, vast areas inhabited dominantly by Oriyas remained outside the truncated Orissa Province till independence.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF THE PRINCELY STATES:-

Although the Orissa Province was carved out on 1st April, 1936, twenty-six native States kept themselves away from it till the achievement of Indian independence. The native States were petty principalities governed by Samanta Rajas (Feudal Lords). Radhanath Rath, an eminent journalist, astute politician and freedom fighter provides a vivid account of the state of affairs in the princely states of Orissa.⁴ The Orissa States were formerly known as Orissa Garjats (Land of Forts). They had a total area of 28,656 sq.miles and a population of 46.5 lakhs. They were divided into 26 small states beginning with Tigria with 47 sq.miles and a population of 24,000 ending with Mayurbhanj, the biggest of Orissa States with an area of 4,243 sq.miles and a population of 10 lakhs. The Chiefs of all these states were all vassals of the Raja of Puri who obtained these fiefs for the menial services, their ancestors have rendered to the reigning monarch. When the British conquered India, it never conquered these native states but it entered into agreements, treaties engagements and Kaurinamas with the existing chieftains. In course of time few fiefs or mahals such as Kanika, Kujanga and Harishpur were incorporated in the British ruled Orissa. However, the 26 States such as

4. Radhanath Rath : The Story of Freedom Movement in Orissa States, Satyabadi Press, Cuttack, 1964.

Rairkol, Bonai, Palalchada, Athamallik, Gangpur, Sonepur, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Nilgiri, Keonjhar, Dhenkanal, Talcher, Tigiria, Athagarh, Boudh, Narsinghpur, Baramba, Patna, Nayagarh, Ranpur, Dashapalla, Kendrapara, Sarsikala, Khar-suan, Mayurbhanj, etc., were kept under the independent chieftains.

There was no uniform administration in those native states as they had been subjected to different rules and regulations of different provinces. In 1933 April 1, an Eastern States Agency was established comprising of the 26 Feudatory States of Orissa and 14 other states from the central provinces. But again all the 26 States were further vivisected and put under 3 different agencies under the same Resident such as Orissa State Agency, Bengal State Agency and Chhatishgarh State Agency. In the Bengal Agency was included the Oriya State of Mayurbhanj, in the Chhatishgarh Agency, Oriya States of Patna and Kalahandi were incorporated and rest 23 States were under the jurisdiction of Orissa State Agency.

Not only the Native States were politically vivisected and culturally disintegrated, they were also economically in a deplorable state. The people were leading a very miserable life due to extreme backwardness, illiteracy, and despotic rule of the Rajahs and the Feudal Lords and maladministration. The collection of revenue in those principalities was meagre and hence, the ruler imposed excessive taxes on his subjects. The bureaucrats known as

Amlahs in the native states were interested only in filling up their own coffer and they did it by depleting the royal treasury. In such a situation, the rulers of these small states took to undesirable methods of collecting revenues. As Radhanath Rath explains: "the rulers exploited their gullible poor subjects sometimes mercilessly and in most cases squandering away the money on personal and family expenses or on luxuries as there was nothing to deter these despotic rulers from doing so. The purpose and character of such exploitation and the inefficient or indifferent administration extending over years and years demoralized the people to such an extent that there could hardly be any effective opposition or effort to bring pressure on the rulers to behave properly and rule fairly."⁵

The Enquiry Committee Report, Orissa States, 1939 examines the state of affairs in those 26 princely States. The peasantry did not enjoy full legal rights over the land it cultivated. He could be ejected out from land at any time even after long possession and enjoyment for generations. There was no rule governing the payment of land revenues. A default in payment meant the confiscation of land which was sold to the highest bidder without the balance, if any, over the years being refunded. As the peasantry was over-burdened by land revenue, it was restive. The peasants were taxed very heavily without regard to the capacity of the peasant to pay. In addition to the land

5. Ibid, p.8.

revenue, the people had to pay other taxes such as fees, Salamies, levies, monopolies, education cess, hospital cess, forest cess, road cess and miscellaneous cesses imposed in lieu of bethi and beggari. In few States cesses were imposed on the necessities of life such as kerosene, salt, bidis, tobacco, bettlenuts, coconut and in few others cases taxes were collected for having double plank doors, using head dress, use of palanquins, etc. From the study of the system of taxation and conditions of the subjects, the Inquiry Committee reported that

"In a poverty-stricken area which has no other sources of income except land, this heavy and inequitable burden has broken the backs of the peasantry and created conditions ripe for an agrarian revolution, a very mild type of which has already manifested itself in several States in Orissa."⁶

The fact of people's suppression by the native State Rulers was also acknowledged by the British India Government. Sir Charles, the Chief Secretary of Bengal Division reported: "The whole question of the administration of these Orissa Mahals (States) seems to be unsatisfactory, and I am sometimes inclined to regret that they have not yet been declared to be British India. At present the whole thing is based on a fictitious assumption as Mr. Macdonell points out and the result is that we flounder about in all illogical quagmire".⁷

6. See Enquiry Committee Report Orissa States (Non-Official 1939).

7. Quoted from Pt. Baikoli Mahapatra, Odia Andolanra Itihas Gopabandhu Sahitya Mandir, Cuttack, 1976, p.285.

SPORADIC REBELLION IN PRINCELY STATES:

However, the fact of poverty and suppression kept the people in the Native States in a state of passivity and inaction till late thirties. When the British ruled, Orissa saw an unprecedented awakening in the days of non-cooperation and civil disobedience movement, the native States were yet to rise from their passivity. However, the rising tide of nationalism soon spread into those feudatory states to touch its people. As a result during 1936-39 a spate of violent upsurge in political activities took place in these States. Rebellions were sporadic in certain States and were taking place to protest against the oppressive rulers and dictators.

Thus the first rebellion took place in Keonjhar State when T.E. Ravenshaw became the commissioner in the year 1868 after the Great Famine was over. The Bhuyans, an Adivasi tribe, rebelled against the Rajah for his repressive measures. In Bamra State with a span of 20 years, there were 4 popular movements against the arbitrary increase of land-rent. The 5th and the most significant rebellion took place in the year 1928 against Meefar Settlement of increasing the land-rent. Around 40,000 people marched on to the political agent's office at Sambalpur under the leadership of Sri Dayananda Satapathy. In 1937, there was a civil disobedience movement in the same State against the section 144 which was imposed therein. In 1938,

again the people revolted to secure their fundamental rights under the leadership of Kandarp Pradhan and Krishna Pradhan, etc.

In Boudh Estate, land rents were increased arbitrarily under the new Settlement in the year 1930. Around 2,000 people marched on to the ruler to represent their grievances; they, however, were arrested and imprisoned. In 1913-14, there was a Kandha rebellion in the Dashpalla State against the despotic actions of the Dewan on succession issue. In Talcher, ferments were created in the years 1911, 1922, 1932 against the increased land-rent. The movements were brutally suppressed.⁸ However, these movements were the indicators of the shape of things to come in those States, in future. Indeed during 1936-39, most of the native States, sprang to political consciousness and the people got ready to drive out not only the British imperialism but also the despotic rulers acting as the defence shield of British Government. The socialists and the communists played the leadership role here.

ACTORS IN THE FREEDOM STRUGGLE:

To conduct the peoples movement in Orissa, the Orissa State Peoples' Conference was first organized in the year 1931 at Cuttack with active co-operation of the All-India State Peoples Conference. The Orissa State Peoples Conference received the patronage of eminent Congress leaders such as Nabakrushna Chowdhury, Gauranga

8. H.K.Mahtab : Odisha Itihas (Vol.II), Cuttack Students Store, Cuttack, pp.514-17.

Charan Das, Surendra Nath Dwivedi and from each State active workers such as Kailash Chandra Mohanty, Banamali Das, Pabitra Mohan Fredhan, Baishnab Charan Patnaik and Sarangadhar Das came forward to lead the masses. However, a Congress leader like Hare Krushna Mahtab did not exude keen interest at the beginning in the problems of native States. This was the period when Congress was relentlessly waging a battle against the British in Orissa. The Congress activists could hardly get time to activate the organization. As a result, after the first conference, the State Peoples Conference became dormant for long. It was in the year 1936-37, Sarangadhar Das a citizen of Dhenkanal State took fresh initiative to revitalize the mostly dead organization. The second session of the organization was held at Cuttack under the Presidentship of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Sarangadhar Das became the Secretary of the Conference. The Conference proposed the setting up of an Enquiry Committee to investigate into the prevailing conditions in the Orissa States.⁹

In the year 1937, election was held for the Orissa Provincial Legislative Assembly and the Congress formed the government in Orissa. It provided the needed psychological inspiration to the people in the feudatory States to demand for the establishment of representative institutions and abolition of discriminatory labour conditions in these States. Further, the Congress socialists

9. H.K.Mahtab, Op. Cit., p.518.

and the communists who were working from the Congress platform, wanted to create a radical image for their organization. When they were waging an anti-imperialist tirade in the Orissa Province, they found in the Princely States a suitable ground where they could stage an anti-feudalist and anti-royalist agitation. The people of the princely states were gradually drawn into the vortex of the national movement. But first they organized themselves against the maladministration of the rulers. Thus the organization known as Prajamandal came into existence in every princely State. But the Prajamandal was overwhelmingly dominated by the Congress Socialists and the Communists.

COMMUNISTS AND THE NILGIRI PRAJAMANDAL MOVEMENT:-

The Prajamandal of Nilgiri launched an agitation in the year 1938 under the leadership of the noted communists like Benameli Das and Pranabandhu Agasti. The Nilgiri Gadjat Agitation was effectively supported by the Congress leader^{of} Nilgiri Sri Kailash Chandra Mohanty. In Ajodhya a place in the Nilgiri State, a Juvak Sakha Samiti (Youth Forum) was organized by patriotic youngmen of Nilgiri to fight against the oppressive laws of the ruler. The ruler of Nilgiri State introduced the system of collective fines on the people for the 'offence' of inter-dining in social occasions, the system of bethi (forced levy), and compulsory hunting.¹⁰ The Jubak Sakha Samiti organized the people

10. H.K.Mahtab, Op. Cit., p.519.

through village campaign and open mass meeting to restore their full civil rights. However, the Rajah banned all the public meetings and arrested prominent leaders like Pranabandhu Agasthi, Brindabana Sarangi, Sadhu Prasad Bidyadhar Mahapatra and Hadibandhu Raj in a bid to frighten the people and suppress the mass upsurge. The Rajah also took to repressive measures like imposition of heavy fines, auction of households and other belongings. The people of Nilgiri fled away to Balasore where the State Police could not enter to punish the people of the native States. However, at Balasore a training camp was organized by the Congress Socialist Gaura Chandra Das to prepare the people for a peaceful fight against the ruler. The Rajah desperately looked to the Orissa Government for help which the Congress government refused. Finally, he took the help of the Mayurbhanj State Police who failed to bring the people to book.¹¹

The police could not shatter the morals of the people. Under the effective leadership of the Communists such as Banamali Das, Brindaban Sarangi, Chaitanya Mishra, Balaram Raj, Giridhari Panda, Mohini Mohan Bose, the people took to peaceful civil disobedience.¹² The agitation was intensified to secure the civil liberty. Satyagraha continued for months together, hundreds were put behind prison bars; there were heavy lathi charges; even fire was opened. Under these circumstances, the then political

11. Nilgiri Itihas Sankalan Committee : Nilgiri Praja Andolanra Itihas, Town Press, Balasore, 1982.

12. History Section : Nilgiri Itihas, by Swarnachuda, Nilgiri High School Silver Jubilee Publication, Balasore, 1973, p.38.

Agent of Orissa Agency Major Bazelgatte came to study the situation in Nilgiri. He carried on his dialogue with Banamali Das, Secretary of Nilgiri Prajamandal through the mediation of H.K.Mahtab, Kailash Chandra Mohanty was also a participant in the dialogue. A compromise was reached between the Raja of Nilgiri, the Political Agent Major Bazelgatte and Dr. H.K.Mahtab and K.C.Mohanty. The Rajah agreed to the following demands of the agitators:

- ✓ (a) Civil rights were to be guaranteed; (b) Prajamandal would be recognized as the representative body of the people; (c) Laws relating to the land and money lending would be changed; (d) Bethi, Sikar and forced levy would be abolished; (e) All interference on social activities would be stopped.¹³

It was indeed a great achievement not only for the Prajamandal and the people but also for the Communists. The Prajamandal became the first political power in the State the like of which was not seen in any other princely State of Orissa. The Communists were also the members of the Prajamandal but they controlled the Youth League known as Jubak Sakha Samiti. Towards the middle of 1940, a rift emerged within the Prajamandal on the basis of pro-communist and anti-communist alignment. In the year 1940, communist leader Banamali Das was implicated in the Communist Conspiracy Case and charged by the Congress Socialists to have infiltrated the Congress Socialist Party with the Communist

13. Hare Krushna Mahtab : Sadhanara Pathe (1899-1950),
Cuttack, 1972, pp.155-188.

element. When he was in prison he was expelled from the Congress Socialist Party and from Nilgiri Prajamandal without stating any reason for his expulsion. A sizable number of Prajamandal activists left the organization in protest against the ouster of Banamali Das and resolved to organize them independently under the leadership of the Communist Party.¹⁴

COMMUNISTS IN DHENKANAL PRAJAMANDAL MOVEMENT:- ✓

Nilgiri showed the way ^{and} Dhenkanal followed. The People of Dhenkanal State were suppressed for long. The State Peoples Enquiry Committee had collected evidence about the police brutalities perpetrated on the people. For the first time the people rebelled against the revision of rents which took place in 1922. But in 1938 the agitation took a violent form. It was a determined effort on the part of the Dhenkanal Prajamandal to secure to the people a representative form of government and their civil liberties. Further the Prajamandal wanted to end the repressive rule of the ruler. On 11 September, 1938, Baishnab Patnaik and Harmohan Patnaik, two Congress activists who later became Communists, organized meetings in the Dhenkanal town. The Rajah in a bid to defuse the tension arrested five Prajamandal leaders. On 12 September 1938, around 40,000 people marched towards the Royal Palace,

14. In the course of interview, Niranjan Mishra, Ananta Raut, and Brundaban Sarangi, all Prajamandal activists explained to me that with the expulsion of Banamali Das and few other communists, the Prajamandal organization in Nilgiri became defunct.

captured and seized police stations and government offices demanding the release of the prisoners. Few congress and communist leaders from the British ruled Orissa entered into the Dhenkanal State to lead the people. Prominent among them were Naba Krushna Chowdhury, Bhagabati Panigrahi, Ananta Patnaik, Ram Chandra Mishra, Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani, Sachhi Routrey and Pranath Patnaik. The local Communist leaders who actively organized the agitation were Baishnab Patnaik and Maheswar Subash Singh.¹⁵

The ruler ordered firing on the peaceful masses. Even the British Scottish Boarder Regiment was deployed. The Raja pursued repression in full swing. A number of people were killed in the firing. Baji Rout, a boy of 11 years of age faced the bullets of the Armed forces for not allowing them to sail across the river Brahmani. The houses of the local Prajamandal leader Maheswar Subahu Singh was raised to the ground and his property was confiscated. There was a virtual reign of terror spread all over the State and people deserted their home only to flee away to the neighbouring British Orissa province. The Socialist and Communist leaders now took over the leadership. Naba Krushna Chowdhury and Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi organized the people in villages but were soon arrested by the Raja.¹⁶

In November, 1938, "All Orissa Garjat Day" was observed all over the state of Dhenkanal. On 29th October, 1938

15. G.C.Mohanty : Report on Communist Party's Struggle against feudalism, in Nua Dunia, Cuttack, 1977, Issue-I, p.7.
16. Ibid, p.8.

there was a Satyagraha in the whole State. On 2nd November the people gathered with bows and arrows and engaged in a clash with the State's Armed Police. Again the clashes took place on the 11th November, 1938. The Congress leaders apprehending that the situation might go out of the control of Prajamandal initiated a Satyagraha in the first week of December. But as soon as Naba Krushna Chowdhury, Pranatanath Patnaik and Bhagabati Panigrahi were arrested, a second batch of Satyagrahis mostly from the rank and file of communists led the agitation. The noted communists who actively participated in the Satyagraha were Ram Chandra Mishra, Baidyanath Ratha, Ananta Patnaik and Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani. All of them were arrested but let off soon. However, Ananta Patnaik was jailed for two years.

As the Rajah failed to sustain people's pressure, he invited H.K.Mahtab to effect a compromise between the Prajamandal and the administration. The Political Agent for Orissa State Major Bazelgatte came to the defence of Dhenkanal Ruler. Mahtab's half hearted action failed to satisfy the zeal of the Prajamandal leaders and Mahtab withdrew himself from the negotiation table to join the Working Committee of Congress at Delhi.¹⁷ All the leftist leaders were arrested and sent back to the Orissa Province

17. H.K.Mahtab observes that the movement leaders were not ready to listen to his wise counsels. The movement went beyond the control of the leaders. It did not follow the Gandhian path of Satyagraha. The unwise action of the leaders frustrated the possibility of any negotiable settlement. Hence, he left for Delhi to attend the Congress as he believed it to be more urgent. See H.K.Mahtab : Sadhanara Pathe, p.187.

and prohibitory order was imposed on their entry. With the help of British forces, the agitation was put down. However, Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani brings out the significance of Dhenkanal revolt in the following words:

"The People of Dhenkanal lit the funeral pyre of the feudal rulers and hastened its end. The supportive pillars of the British empire started crumbling down".¹⁸

After Dhenkanal the Prajamandal agitation raised its head in Talcher, a neighbouring princely state of Dhenkanal. The Prajamandal agitation gained momentum under the leadership of a Congress worker Pabitra Mohan Pradhan and a communist activist Srinibas Mishra. The people of Talcher were resenting for long the arbitrary actions of the Ruler. As Radhanath Rath states: "Exaction of Bethi or forced labour in addition to a very excessive cess of five annas per rupee of rent levied in lieu of Bethi since 1911 and taxation through monopolies over necessities of life and a systematic economic exploitation of the poor peasantry shook the very foundation of people's confidence in the administration and its Rulers."¹⁹ Although earlier people were agitating time and again, now they adopted a peaceful and Constitutional method. Under the leadership of Pabitra Mohan Pradhan and Srinibas Mishra, the Talcher Prajamandal first adopted the method of presenting memoranda and petitioning the government. As the Ruler did not yield, peaceful

18. G.Rai Chudamani : Itihasra Padakshepa, Cuttack, 1977, p.67.

19. Radhanath Rath : The Story of Freedom Movement in Orissa States, Satyabadi Press, Cuttack, 1964, p.21.

mass meetings were organized by the Prajamandal Workers. When Satyagraha was launched, hundreds were arrested, imprisoned and inhumanely tortured, crops and properties were confiscated and many people were thrown into the concentration camp. Thousands left their homes and hearth only to take shelter in the neighbouring Anugul, a British Orissa area. Agatha Harrison, a member of British Parliament came to Orissa to investigate over the large exodus from Talcher.

The determined agitation of Talcher people disturbed the ruler and the British Government. The Assistant Political Agent of Orissa State Rev. Henry made an effort to bring a compromise between the Prajamandal and the Ruler. Again Hare Krushna Mahtab joined the negotiation on behalf of the Prajamandal. After a prolonged dialogue, the Political Agent of Orissa State and H.K.Mahtab signed an agreement to which the Ruler of Dhenkanal, however, refused to commit. But as Gandhi intervened in the Talcher issue, it took a different turn. The then Viceroy Lord Linlithgo pressurized the Ruler to accept all the demands of the people and the Ruler having no alternative accepted the demands.²⁰

COMMUNISTS IN RANAPUR PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT:- ✓

The Ranapur Princely State had a different story to tell. Here, also the infant communist party entered into the peasantry and the Prajamandal to fight against

20. H.K.Mahtab : Sadhanara Patha, (1899-1950), Cuttack, 1972 p.94.

feudalism. The Communists worked here alongside the Congress as it was operating from the Congress platform. Ranapur was a small princely state and its ruler imposed Bethi, raised Magan (gift) and many other taxes on the people. Exploitation of the people by the Ruler's officials was the cause of people's agitation. The Communists and their supporters led the people against the ruler as the Prajamandal was in a disarray. The people of Ranapur were peacefully led mainly by two leaders- Dibakar Sahu and Raghunath Mohanty having leftist leanings. They were inspired by Bhagabati Panigrahi, Pranatanth Patnaik and Gangadhar Mishra (all from Puri Communist Party) to fight against the injustice perpetuated on them by the ruler.²¹ The agitation in the initial stage was peaceful and non-violent. However, the Ruler arrested the Prajamandal leaders and kept them behind the bars. The people of Ranapur were infuriated over the issue and they assembled under the leadership of a Communist activist Banamali Ram to capture the Ranapur jail and set all the prisoners free. On 5th January, 1939, thousands of people gathered before the Ruler's Palace to attend a meeting organized by the Ranapur Prajamandal leaders such as Banamali Ram, Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida.²² They demanded the immediate release of their leaders. The ruler sought the help of the Political Agent

21. G.Rai Chudamani : Itihasara Padakshepa, Cuttack, 1977, pp.72-74.

22. Ram Chandra Ram : Ranapur Praja Andolan Dibas (Ranapur People's Movement Day), in Samaj, Cuttack, April 23, 1983, p.4.

to subvert the agitation. In the mean time the Political Agent Major Bazelgatte came over to Ranapur with a small police force. The agitated crowd in the Ranapur town blocked the road by placing bullock carts and logs to prevent the entry of the Political Agent and the police force. To foil the attempt of the crowd at a road blockade, the police force opened fire injuring seriously two people. With much difficulty Major Bazelgatte could reach Ranapur but within few moments of his arrival the rumour was spread that two people had been killed by the Political Agent on the way.

The frenzied crowd carried the injured persons in a bullock cart towards a small town called Tangi for medical treatment but the Political Agent ordered the force to prevent the crowd apprehending the worsening of the already tense situation. However a large number of people attacked the Political Agent and Major Bazelgatte opened fire which killed two people.²³ The people snatched away his revolver and stoned him to death. They entered the jail and set the prisoners free. However, the death of the Political Agent created a panic in the people. Apprehensive of police reprisal, the inhabitants of Ranapur fled away to neighbouring areas for self-protection. As the day dawned, Ranapur became a police camp. The communist activists of Puri, Pranath Patnaik, Gangadhar Paikrai, Gangadhar Mishra and Parshuram Padatikarai led the local leaders at this critical juncture.²⁴ They organized refugee camps in the villages of Sana Padar, Gods Manitri and Shika

23. Ibid, p.4.

24. Amulya Mishra : Aliva Sikha, Granth Mandir, Cuttack, 1982, p.46.

and ensured the safe arrival of Ranapur people and made arrangements for their shelter. However, Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida were arrested and detained in the Khurda jail. 26 accused persons were charged under the sections 302, 147, 149, 325, 353 of Indian Penal Code. A case of murder was filed before the Patna High Court. The Government of Orissa investigated into the murder case by B.Sivaraman, I.C.S., then Joint Magistrate of Berhampur as the Enquiry Magistrate and submitted its report before the High Court. One Laxmidhar Mohanty was appointed as the Government Pleader. Dinabandhu Sahu was appointed Advocate on behalf of the accused. Pranath Patnaik and Gangadhar Paikrai formed a Defence Committee to collect funds for financing the case. Finally the High Court awarded death sentence, to Raghunath Mohanty and Dibakar Parida and awarded life imprisonment to nine others. Both the leaders were hanged to death and became martyrs. The leadership of Prajamandal passed on to Ram Chandra Ram a noted Communist and Trade Union Leader from Ranapur. The result of this violent struggle was that the political administration of Ranapur changed hand. The Ruler was divested of the ruling power and the political department of Government of Orissa took over the administration of Ranapur.²⁵

The Prajamandal agitation was not simply confined to these few places. In all the princely states whenever

25. H.K.Mehtab, Sadhanara Pathe (1899-1950), Cuttack, 1972, pp.194-199.

a Prajamandal organization sprang up it took the leadership in demanding civil rights for the Garjat people, withdrawal of arbitrary taxes, abolition of forced labour and forced gifts to the royal family and non-interference in the social customs and traditions of the people. Thus the people rose in revolt against the Ruler and his administration in the native States of Nayagarh, Athagarh, Bamra, Keonjhar, Bolangir and Daspalla. In all these States Prajamandals were organized and the leadership came from the rank and file of the Congress and Congress Socialists. However, as in Ranpur, Nilgiri and Dhenkanal the leadership of the Prajamandals in the States of Athagarh, Nayagarh and Bolangir gradually passed on to the hands of the local Communists. In Athagarh Braja Patnaik, a local communist led the Prajamandal in the movement of civil resistance; in Bolangir, Yudhistir Mishra led the agitation against the ruler. In Nayagarh, however, the agitation took a serious turn. The people of Nayagarh were agitated over the issue of grant of monopoly selling right on betels to a single businessman. The result of such arbitrary action of the Ruler was that small traders in betels lost their business. A movement was launched by the people under the leadership of Bhagabati Panigrahi and Pranath Patnaik, to boycott the use of betels till the wrongs done to the poor traders were undone. As the Ruler's repressive measures failed, the Ruler was forced to withdraw the monopoly order.²⁶

26. G.C.Mohanty in Nua Dunia, 1977, Op. Cit., pp.9-10.

History has recorded these events where the royal institutions were fighting a battle of survival with the freedom loving people. In all cases, Dr. H.K.Mahtab observes that the Rulers gave in to the wishes of the people. And, the Prajamandal under the patronage of the Congress and his guidance had succeeded in achieving victory in all cases. Thus, few historians have either ignored or understated the role of the Communist Party of India and the Communists who were the front ranking soldiers of the freedom struggle in princely states. In those areas, the communists were more radical and uncompromising in their efforts for the violent overthrow of the institution of feudalism and the confiscation of the private property in any form and establishment of a socialist society. The active role of the communist leaders such as Banamali Das, Baishnab Patnaik, Pranath Patnaik, Banamali Ram, Bhagabati Panigrahi, Yudhishthir Mishra, Srinibas Mishra and Braja Patnaik has not been properly appreciated. This is, as Banamali Das, the veteran communist leader stated is either accidental or a wilful distortion of truth.²⁷

COMMUNISTS IN THE WAR YEARS:-

The Prajamandal agitation continued in full swing from 1937 to 1939 in several parts of the princely states. The Rulers granted few concessional reforms in order to thrive in power. In 1939, the world war broke out. Mahatma Gandhi launched his individual civil

27. From Interview with Banamali Das.

disobedience movement in protest against the war preparation of the British and the forcible involvement of India in the World War. Gandhi's call for the selective individual Satyagraha spread to the corners of the native States. The native States sprang into action as the Prajamandal leaders chalked out their strategy for the future days. The Communist activists in the princely states joined with the Prajamandal organization to make the civil disobedience movement a success. But as fascist Germany attacked Soviet Union and Soviet Union joined the alliance, the Communists in India called it a "People's War". The change in the strategy of the communist party of India created confusion in the minds of the local communists but soon they could get rid over their initial vacillation. They organized meetings and processions to convince the people about the nature of the war and appealed the masses to extend support to the Peoples War. But on August 9, 1942, whole of India was swept away by the currents of Quit India Movement. In the princely State of Nilgiri, Communist leaders Gokulnanda Naysak and Mohan Singh gathered an assembly of people to explain them the nature of the war. But both the leaders were severely beaten up and arrested by the Political Agent A.N.Mitchell. As the people of Nilgiri participated in the Quit India Movement, the Political Agent unleashed the reign of terror in Nilgiri. Fortyfive Prajamandal

leaders were arrested, many people were shot dead, houses were looted and raised to the ground.²⁸ The Communist leaders protested against this barbaric police brutality. Consequently, Pranabandhu Agasti, Gokulananda Nayak and Mohini Mohan Bose were arrested and jailed on the pretext of participating in the August Revolution. The book "Nilgiri Praja Andolanra Itihasa" states that the communists faced attack from both sides. The police apprehended them on several occasions as they conducted meetings. On the other, they faced the Congress propaganda who dubbed them as anti-nationalist, anti-revolutionary and opportunist.²⁹ Rama Krishna Pati, a leader of the present Communist Party of India holds that the strategy which they followed during 1942 could not be a tactical error as the communists were fighting not for more political independence but for national liberation along with the establishment of a socialist society. And, he thinks, the East European political systems bear testimony to it.³⁰ Whatever may be the logic of these arguments, the communists' slogans and efforts were not accepted and appreciated by the common man. And, their non-participation in the August Revolution had eroded their base not only in India but in Orissa as well. The Communists to save them from the impending decline supported the cause of the peasantry. This time Bengal was tensed with Tebhaga Movement. The Communists in Orissa took the clue from

28. Swarnachuda : History Section, Op. Cit., pp.43-44.

29. Nilgiri Itihasa Sankalan Committee : Nilgiri Praja Andolanra Itihasa, Balasore, 1982, pp.121-122.

30. Collected from an Interview with Rama Krishna Pati on 2-1-1982.

it and started share croppers agitation in Orissa. And, the communists in the Nilgiri princely state under the leadership of Banamali Das and Mohini Mohan Dose, awakened the peasantry, workers and tenants to rise against the Zamindars and money lenders. But in the native State of Dhenkanal, the Communists under the leadership of Beishnab Patnaik, participated in the Quit India Movement. In all other princely States, specifically in Nayagarh, Athagarh and Talcher the people under the Prajamandal leaders belonging to Congress and Congress Socialists joined in the Movement and communists could not succeed in mobilizing the people in support of their war efforts.

COMMUNISTS AND THE MERGER OF PRINCELY STATE OF NILGIRI:-

After the August Revolution the princely states slipped into comparative lull as the Congress and Communist leaders were in jail. Few protest movements could be organized both by Congress and Communists in the princely states of Nilgiri, Dhenkanal, Ranapur, Talcher, etc., against the Cripps Mission and Cabinet Mission but in the post-war period the Communist Party of India made its most remarkable contribution to the process of integration by hastening the merger of the princely State of Nilgiri.

During the days of August Revolution, the princely state of Nilgiri became the field of police oppression, torture, rape and loot. The excesses committed by the Political Agent A.N. Mitchell were reported to the Viceroy of India.

The Political Agent furnished an explanation stating that the Ruler's police were involved in the act of brutalities. Further the Political Agent submitted a report of conspiracy by the Rulers against the British Emperor. The report stated that the Rajah of Nilgiri State attended the meetings of Eastern States Union at Calcutta and he had established some rapport with Subash Chandra Bose who wanted to free the country with the help of his Azad Hind Forces and the Fascist forces. The Ruler was implicated in this alleged conspiracy against the British India empire and on 1-11-1942 he was dethroned and ordered to go out of the State. He settled down at Ranchi.³¹ The work of Prajamandal in Nilgiri went in a slow pace for several reasons. The Indian National Congress issued directives to the Prajamandal to move slowly. Most of the Prajamandal leaders including Kailash Chandra Mohanty were detained in Bolangir Jail. Finally, as the King was dispossessed of his power and moved out of the State, people were relieved of the oppression and exploitation by the Ruler. But the British Government arrested three communist leaders- Gokulananda Nayak, Mohini Mohan Bose and Banchanidhi Giri on July 1943 at a place called Purunagan under Defence of India Rules. They were charged for their conspiracy to destroy the Royal Administration of Nilgiri through violence. The case was filed in the High Court.

31. Nilgiri Itihas Sankalan Committee : Op. Cit., pp-123-124 and Appendix-40 Report by T.R.Menon.

The Provincial Communist Party of Orissa fought the case on behalf of the convicts. Two Advocates namely Raj Kishore Dash and Dinabandhu Sahu were appointed lawyers on behalf of the three to plead for them. But, finally, the High Court ordered three years of imprisonment to each of the three. However, on appeal, in the Court of Resident, the term of imprisonment was reduced to one year.³²

In early 1944, Kailash Chandra Mohanty, leader of the Nilgiri Prajamandal was released from jail. The Communists in huge number received him at the Balasore Station. As the Prajamandal activists were found indifferent and suffering from inaction, Kailash Chandra Mohanty enlisted the service of the communists to reorganize the Prajamandal. On 9th January, 1945, he convened the meeting of Prajamandal at Nilgiri. A condolence was held on the death of Pranabandhu Agasti, who fathered the Communist Movement in the princely State of Nilgiri. Besides, the expulsion order imposed on the leading Communists was revoked. Banamali Das, Balaram Raj and Gokula Nanda Nayak were allowed re-entry into the Prajamandal. The Prajamandal also opposed the effort of the Eastern States to set up a special High Court for princely States.

The Rajah of Nilgiri returned from Ranchi and took over the rule of Nilgiri after the transfer of power on 14-7-1947. The Rajah in a bid to stay in power followed the strategy of 'Divide and Rule' and whipped of the communal frenzy among the tribals and non-tribals. On the

32. Ibid, pp.125-126.

one hand he organized the Prajasabha on 12th May, 1947, where the Prajamandal members were pitted against the communists. The Rajas knew that this would lead to bitterness among the two and break the solidarity of the Prajamandal and communist alliance. The Praja sabha met in its first session in the Rajah's palace on 3rd August, 1947. The Rajah proposed to create a State Council consisted of three people, one from Prajasabha and two of his nominees. Again the Rajah divested the Councillor elected from Prajasabha of all responsibilities except the Department of People's welfare. The Raja's design was to make a farce of responsible and representative government. So there was a clash of opinion between the elected representatives and the nominees of the Rajah. Secondly, few tribal leaders, loyal to the Ruler gheraoed the Prajasabha members and demanded their representation in it. They threatened to take dire action against the non-tribals if they were not properly heard. The Raja encouraged tribal leaders to go against the non-tribals and non-tribals by telling them that the princely State was the homeland of tribals and non-tribals had migrated and encroached upon their territory and deprived them of their rights over land and forest. Out of sheer disgust the people's representatives left the Prajasabha and the Prajasabha was dissolved for ever.³³

33. Ibid, pp.143-146.

As soon as the Prasabha was dissolved, the Prajamandal leaders decided to fight for and form an Azad Government in Nilgiri. On 5th November, 1947, a committee was formed under the Presidentship of Sri Kailash Chandra Mohanty; Balaram Raj, Hadibandhu Raj, Khirodananda Deba Goswamy, Udayanath Birabara, Krishna Chandra Panda, Kashi-nath Behera, Pranabandhu Maharaja and Bidyadher Mohapatra were the other members of the Azad Government. Initially the Prajamandal decided to fight for the Azad Government against the Rajah on its own strength. But on the intervention of Sharat Patnaik, the General Secretary of the Orissa Unit of the Communist Party of India and Banamali Das, it was decided that both the Azad Government and Communist would work unitedly. This was also the directive of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India.

Prior to this agreement, the Communists in Nilgiri State perceived threat from the armed forces and the tribal-loyalists of the Ruler. The Ruler in order to retain his sovereign power requisitioned the services of the armed forces of the Eastern States Union. However, towards the end of October, the tribals were instigated by the loyalists to attack the Oriyas and non-tribals. They were trained in military training by skilled jawans of Mayurbhanj and hunters brought from Hyderabad. On the last week of October, the Tribals in groups attacked Oriya people in villages, set fire to their homes and looted valuables and

cut ripe rice crops from their fields. This was perpetuated in the villages situated in west and northern Nilgiri. The villagers of Ajodhya, Patna, Sajanagad, Malyani, Kansha, Brahmapur, Sangrempur and the villages on the bank of river Sone suffered worst damages. To counteract these, the Communist Party had already organized a Nilgiri Liberation Army. It consisted of 600 armed guards trained in guerilla tactics and handling of machine guns and ^{at} Nentshala in the Puri District. They were trained by the noted communist leader Bipool Chowdhury from Gauhati and Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani from Puri and Baishnaba Patnaik from Dhenkanal. Many communists from other States had also joined the Liberation Army. This time, the Conference of the Balasore District Branch of the Communist Party was held in Agasti Nagar of Nilgiri. The party conference was attended by 2,000 members and supporters and prominent Communist leaders, Bharat Patnaik, Shailen Mahapatra, Nandini Satapathy, Manmohan Mishra and Sanamali Das, highlighted on the necessity of violent revolution culminating in the overthrow of the Raja and Princes. The party also resolved to fully arm the Nilgiri Communists to eliminate the loyalists and the ruler.³⁴

Hence, on the last week of October, as the ruler's loyal tribals went on a rampage, the communists fully countered them to protect the life and property of the villagers. Three communist activists such as Kangali Nayak, Gokulananda

34. Nilgiri Itihas Senkalan Committee : Nilgiri Praja Andolanra Itihas, Balasore, 1982, p.149.

Nayak and Anadi Nayak were in charge of the Liberation Army. Armed guards were employed to watch the villages in night. The Communists pre-empted the effort of the loyalists to set fire the Brahmapur and Malyani villages by using explosives and blank fire. One of the communists Anadi Nayak was taken as a captive by the loyalists but later abandoned on the way.

But on 5th November, 1947, the Communists and the Azad Government decided for a final attack on the loyalist on 12-11-1947 and the take over of royal palace on 16th November, 1947. The trainees returned from the Nentashal training camp and leaders like Harihar Das and Sadananda Mohanty (Ganjam), Gopinath Brahmachari (Puri), Baishnab Patnaik (Dhenkanal), Iswara Chandra Das, Sudarsan Rout, Upendra Pashe (all from Nilgiri) were in charge of different groups. From Prajemandal, Malati Chowdhury, Balaram Raj and Gaurachandra Das also joined the group of fighters. It was called the Azad forces; the forces were led under the general command of Bipool Chowdhury, the communist guerilla from Gauhati. On 12th November, 1947, there was a virtual clash between the Azad forces and the loyalists. The Azad forces proceeded towards Upardiha village where they shot dead a Chowkidar.³⁵ Then they proceeded towards Pratapada village and attacked the loyalists. From the interview with the members of the Nilgiri

35. Ibid, p.148.

History Compilation Committee it is known that in the clash three people Thupu Majhi of Tassarada, Banemali Pruthal of Matiali and Bhuta Majhi of Telipal were killed and 30 loyalists were injured. The report of the clash between the loyalists and the communists and Azad forces were reported to the Prime Minister Hare Krushna Mahtab. He was also intimated of the take over of the ruler's palace on 16 November, 1947, and the possible administrative complications that might arise out of it. The then Home Minister of Government of India Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was also informed of the lawless and anarchic situation of Nilgiri. The Central Government issued order of take over of the administration of Nilgiri by the Collector of Balasore. The Premier of Orissa H.K. Mahtab initiated talks with the ruler using the good office of Jayanta Ghosh, a journalist from Balasore. The ruler Kishore Mardaraj Harichandan expressed his desire to hand over the administration. Thus, on 14 November 1947, the Government of Orissa sent the Balasore Collector with Orissa Military Police Force to take over the administration of Nilgiri. As Dr. H.K. Mahtab, in his 'Sadhanara Pathe' stated, the communists extended their whole-hearted support to the Magistrate in this take over.³⁶ But leading communists were arrested under the order issued by the ruler before his surrender for their killing a Chowkidar in an encounter. However, the merger of the Nilgiri state

36. H.K. Mahtab, Sadhanara Pathe, (1899-1950), Cuttack, 1972, p. 328.

quickened the process of integration which ended with the merger of Hyderabad on 18 September, 1948. The contribution of the communists to the whole process is by no means insignificant. But there is a distortion in H.K.Mahtab's Sadhanara Pathe where he states that the Communists instigated the tribals and also sided with the ruler in their fight against the Oriyas. But facts confirmed to the contrary. The living members of the Prajamandal acknowledge the contribution of the Communist Party to the overthrow of the feudal lords and princes of native States.³⁷

37. Ibid : p.328.

CH. IV.

COMMUNIST PARTY AND
THE PEASANT MOVEMENT IN
ORISSA

The social map of Orissa speaks of her bourgeoising agrarian population. The peasant community is identified by its characteristic poverty, deep-rooted conservatism and traditional form of cultivation and passivity. For long period, the peasantry constituted an exploited race, unaware of their 'class solidarity' and hence lacked the capacity to organize. The peasantry in the other parts of India rose to consciousness after the first world war. The socio-economic havoc created by the world war and the Russian Revolution were the catalytic agents to infuse a new confidence in the Indian Peasantry. The Indian National Congress under the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi mobilized the peasants to its fold but it was unprepared to champion its 'class demands'. But the Indian peasantry made a break with its past when Communist Party of India could perceive that any agrarian revolution would constitute a prelude to a successful revolutionary movement in colonial and semi-colonial countries.

Thus, when the world was deeped in an agrarian crisis, communists in India could grasp the revolutionary significance of the peasants. The Communist Party of India

1. S. Rai Chowdhury : Leftist Movement in India : 1917-47
Minerva Associates Ltd., Calcutta, 1977, pp.206-218.

identified itself with the socio-economic grievances of the peasants. The Draft platform of action brought about by the Communist Party in December 1930 outlined the strategy and programme for the peasants. The programmes were as follows:-

1. Confiscation without compensation of all lands and estates, forests and pastures of the native princes, landlords, money-lenders and British Government and their transfer to the peasant committees for use by the toiling masses of the country.
2. Nationalization of the whole system of irrigation and complete cancellation of all debts and taxes and transfer of the control and supervision of irrigation to revolutionary peasant committees elected by working peasantry.
3. The peasantry and the agricultural proletariat are called upon to engage in political demonstration and refusal to pay taxes, rents or irrigation charges, etc., to Government, money lenders and land-lords.
4. Independent organization of the agricultural proletariat and formation of peasant committees.

In the early thirties of the century if the communist party could do very little, for the peasants at least it succeeded in breaking their apathy. By 1935, the peasants of the country had undergone a revolutionary change and as Narendra Dev says, the peasant masses were in motion and there were stirrings of a new life on all sides.²

2. Narendra Dev : Socialism and National Revolution, Bombay, 1946, pp.36-38.

In Orissa, peasants woke up from their deep slumber in the late thirties. The conditions of the Orissa peasantry was no better than those of the other states and the sporadic emergence of peasants in revolt in Orissa was also not unknown in its history. Narendra Dev's characterization of Indian peasantry's was equally applicable to agrarian community in Orissa. These peasants trampled upon by tyranny and sunk deep in superstition, knew only one way of protest and that was to rush headlong into riotous conduct.³

Thus, peasant uprising took place in 1922 in Kanika State. Here, the peasants were oppressed by the imposition of overwhelming and exacting taxes which the peasants refused to pay to the zamindars. The peasant uprising was suppressed by the royal force of Kanika.⁴ Since the condition of the peasantry in the princely state was most precarious, most of the peasant uprisings took place in those States. In 1928, peasants revolted against the Meefar Settlement which increased the land rent. In 1930, the peasants of Boudh raised the banner of revolt against the new settlement which had increased the land rent fourfold. In Talcher the first no-rent campaign was launched in 1911. The peasants also agitated in the year 1922 and 1923 against the increase in land

3. Narendra Dev, Op.cit. p.7.

4. S.N.Patnaik, Odisha Swadhinata Andolan, Granth Mandir, Cuttack, 1972, pp.46-51.

revenue. But the movement was suppressed. In Dhenkanal the peasants agitated in 1922 against the Ruler's revision of rent. Besides in different princely states the Prajamandal fought with the Ruler to espouse the causes of the peasants. All the peasant revolts taking place before 1930 revealed a common factor that they were not backed by organized will and action. They were all sudden, spontaneous and violent outbursts of the peasantry. The Indian National Congress in Orissa popularised itself by fighting for the peasants, but the Congress organization was unwilling to consider the peasantry as a class and allow them a separate and independent organization to channelise their grievances and act for their cause. For this obvious reason, the peasant movement did not take a radical form till 1930.

In 1934, the radical section of the Congress formed the Congress Socialist Party. This Left Wing of the Indian National Congress felt that Congress had a multi-class character and as it represented the national movement fighting for national independence it could not represent the class interests of the peasants. Hence peasants and workers organization was a historical necessity of the time. The support of the Left wing Congress leaders encouraged the South Indian Peasants and Workers Federation to organize a Conference in December, 1935, under the leadership of Prof. N. G. Ranga. This was the

prelude to the peasants organization in India. Finally, in April, 1936, an All India Kisan Conference was convened under the leadership of Swami Sahajananda Saraswati and under his presidentship the conference laid the foundation of All India Kisan Congress. The Conference prepared the manifesto declaring the aims of the Kisan Movement. Achievement of freedom for the peasantry from economic and social exploitation and capture of political power by the peasants and workers were the goals of the organization. The Congress recognized the existence of peasant organizations in 1938 at the Haripur Congress session. Subash Chandra Bose in his presidential address acknowledged that "since they have come into existence and show no sign of liquidating themselves, it should be manifest that there is historical necessity behind them."

KISAN SABHA, KISAN CONFERENCE AND THE COMMUNISTS:-

By April 1936 when the All India Kisan Congress was organized, the peasantry in Orissa had become a force to reckon with. In the same month a Kisan Conference was held in Balasore with Mrs. Malati Chowdhury, a Congress Socialist leader in chair. The conference demanded the remission of taxes, mutation fees, debt and salt-tax. In April, Orissa was represented in the All India Kisan Conference by H.K.Mahtab. However, H.K.Mahtab, Naba Krushna Chowdhury, Malati Chowdhury, Gatikrishna Swain and Dibakar Patnaik were elected members of the working committee of

All India Kisan Congress. In 1936, Swami Sahajananda Saraswati came over to organize a peasant organization in Orissa. A Kisan Conference was organized at Puri on 15 November 1936, wherein it was resolved to organize Utkal Pradesh Kisan Congress.⁵ H.K.Mahtab was elected President of the Kisan Congress.

The objective of the Utkal Provincial Kisan Congress was to save the Kisans from the exploitations and achieving for them economic independence. The peasant community of Orissa was subjected to exploitation at various levels. In the coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore although the British Government settled the land revenue with the zamindars, the zamindars were despotic and arbitrary in their collection of taxes. Under the system of Zamindari, the peasants were forced to pay exorbitant taxes or a heavy amount of produce. In Ryotwari areas, a group of rent collector-cum-money lenders emerged who helped the poor peasant tenants during drought, flood, famine and scarcity by granting loans and then collected excessive interest on the loan. If the peasant was unable to pay, his land was auctioned to the highest bidder.⁶ In Zamindari areas, the land revenue was not only exacting but also inspite of a settlement for a fixed time period, the zamindari collected excessive taxes. There was prevalent the system of bonded labour which meant if a loan could not be repaid, the poor landless labourer

5. S.C.DE : Diary of Political Events 1936-47, Cuttack, 1964, p.12.

6. H.K.Mahtab : Odisha Itihas, Cuttack, 1964, pp.462-468.

would be tied down to the Zamindar and would work in his field till the loan was repaid.⁷ In the princely states, the form of exploitation was very severe and peasants were subjected to ruthless suppression. Beginning from the princes and land-lords to the lowest intermediaries such as Mustadar, Inamdar, Sahukar, Sarbarakar, all would demand a share in the produce of the peasant. If the peasant sold his land to any one, he would be required to pay one fourth of the total amount to the Rajah or the local chief. There was also the system of 'Bethi' or forced labour which a worker would be required to perform in the ruler's or zamindar's house without accepting any remuneration. A system of 'Veti'⁸ or gift was in force in all the feudal estates wherein the peasant would be forced to provide the rulers or the zamindars certain items such as fruits, milk, clothes etc., which they produced as a token of gift. The peasants were called upon to work in prince's palace on special occasion in the landlord's palace without being paid. If the peasants or landless labourers objected to this exploitation, they were subjected to undue harassment and tortures.⁸ Hence, the amelioration of the condition of the Orissa Peasant community and restoration of human dignity to them was the basic issue of the time. Many peasant uprisings and

7. Ibid, p.470.

8. Raghunath Mishra : Godabarish Granthabali, Cuttack, Students Store, 1962, pp.465-71.

and many kisan sabhas took place by 1935 to focus on this complex issue. Seen in this context, a class organization of the peasants was a logical necessity and the leftist leaders in Orissa were convinced that the Utkal Provincial Kisan Congress would respond and live upto this expectation.

In 1936 peasant conference turned a new leaf in the history of the peasant community. Throughout the year, peasant conferences were organized in different parts of the State. In Ershema town of Cuttack district a kisan conference was held under the presidentship of Mrs. Malati Chowdhury. On 10 May of that year, a meeting was organized for carrying on an agitation to seek redressal of the grievances of the peasants. A Committee was formed with Sri G.Mishra, Gorachand Patnaik, Naba Krushna Chowdhury and Jagabandhu Sahu, to chalk out the strategy and plan of action. In May, Kisan Conferences were also organized at Khaira and Jaleswar of Balasore district on the third week of May with H.K.Mahtab in chair. In Salepur and Gopa of Cuttack district peasant conferences were presided by Dr. Atal Bihari Acharya and Raja Krishna Bose respectively. Acharya Harihar Das, a leading light of the Gopabandhu era organized the Kisan Sabha at Puri. Thus the wave of Kisan Conference swept away all over Orissa.⁹

9. S.C.DE : Op. Cit., pp.3-4.

The Utkal Provincial Kisan Congress demanded the abolition of land-lordism, non-payment of tax to the British Government, a just share of the tiller in the produce of land. It also demanded the peasants' right over the trees and fish, removal of 'Bethi' and withdrawal of arbitrary taxes. The result of this effort was that at many places the peasants defied the zamindars and government faced difficulty on collection of taxes.¹⁰

On 1 September 1937, a large numbers of peasants from Patia gathered at Cuttack to wage a demonstration. They went in a procession chanting slogans such as "rent to be refused"; "Zamindari System to be abolished" and "down with the zamindari system". Organized by the Congress Socialists, the conference presented a memorandum to the Chief Minister. The leader was Baidyanath Ratha of Patia.¹¹

By 1937, the Communist Party had emerged in Orissa although it had an infant existence. It was operating from the platform of the Congress Socialist Party and concentrating actively on the peasant front. The leading organisers were Pranatanath Patnaik, Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani and Laxman Patnaik in Puri, Fanipal in Cuttack, Banamali Das in Balasore, Sadhu Charan Mohanty, Gobinda Pradhan in Ganjam. The birth of the Communist

10. J.N.Mahapatra : Orissa in 1936-37 to 1938-39, Government Press, Orissa, 1941, p.16.

11. Ibid, p.19.

Party in Orissa coincided with the struggle against feudalism. The communists had a different conception of the peasant struggle from those of Congress and Congress Socialists. For the Communists in Orissa, peasant struggle was not a religious act, it was a question of abolition of the exploitative social custom. To them, one who tilled the land, and raised the produces from the land, he was the owner of the land and land belonged to him only. This was the way how produce could be raised, exploitation ended and the problem of alienation could be solved. This would be the first step to usher in a socialist society.¹²

COMMUNISTS WITHIN THE NATIONAL CONGRESS:

In 1936, the Congress Ministry worked in Orissa under the Premier Sri Biswanath Das, a land-lord from Ganjam. Naba Krushna Chowdhury was appointed the Revenue Minister. The Ministry functioned under the effective guidance of the Provincial Congress Committee. The Communists and the Socialists forced on the Congress to make legislations on the demands of the Kisan Congress. Pranath Patnaik, Bhagabati Panigrahi, Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani, Gati Krishna Swain, Mohan Das and Naba Krushna Chowdhury were instrumental in bringing into effect radical land reform laws. Under the persistent pressure from the Communists and Socialists, the Provincial Congress Committee proposed legislations to abolish 'Bethi', to reduce the rate of interest on loans,

12. G.C.Mohanty : "Role of Communist Party in the Struggle against Feudalism," in Nua Dunia, 1975, p.47.

to six rupees and paise twentyfive and to abolish the payment on the sale of landed property to the local chiefs. The leaders from land-lords class like Nityananda Kanungo opposed the proposals but these proposals were passed by the Congress Committee. And, the Congress Government brought legislation in the Assembly to implement the decisions of the Congress Committee. Thus laws were made to abolish the payment of a share to Zamindars flowing from the sales of property, (which was 25 per cent), to establish the private rights of the people over their trees and fish catch, effect automatic release of a mortgage for a loan after fifteen years and fixing rate of interest at 9 per cent for ordinary loans.¹³ The radical reform laws could be made due to the constant effort of the communists but this act of the communists created a division within the Congress: the rightist congress and the leftists clenching fists at each other's face.

Thus in 1937-38, there occurred clashes between the Congress leaders of land-owning interests and the communist activists organizing peasant sabha. Manifestly it took an ugly form in the district of Puri. The Communists convened the Puri District Kisan Conference in Nimapada town of Puri on 17 April, 1937. The Communist leaders like Prananath Patnaik, Gati Krishna Swain, Gangadhar Mishra and Congress leaders like Mohan Das spoke on the urgent

13. G. Rai Chudamani : Itihasara Padakshepa, Cuttack, 1977 p.57.

necessity of land reform and abolishing the exploitative system of revenues and taxes and other services like 'Bethi.' But eminent Congress leaders of Puri like Jagannath Ratha, Satyabadi Nanda, Lal Bihari Das and Pandit Nilakantha Das opposed the policy of land reform and spoke on defence of the land lords' interests. Because of the clash of opinion, the Congress leader Jagannath Ratha as the President of the Kisan Sabha paralysed it. The Communists with the help of few socialists and moderate congress leaders such as H.K.Mahtab, N.K.Chowdhury and Mohan Das went on mobilizing support for their ideology and programmes. A new Puri District Kisan Congress (Peasant Association) was organized under the Presidentship of a Communist activist Gangedhar Mishra.¹⁴ In Puri, the communists did not confine their activities only to the organization of peasantry. They also organized the poor tribals to protect their interests. Chandaka village of Puri was inhabited by tribals called Sabaras. The tribal community of this area earned its living from the jungle by collecting bamboos, grass, fruits and other materials. These people were prevented from using the forests as a source of their income. They were exploited by a group of people known as the "Sarbarakaras" (a group of tax-collectors) but could not protest for long. The local communists youths like Upendra Das, Braja-bandhu Mohanty and Laxmidhar Mohanty organized these tribals.

14. G. C. Mohanty in Nua Dunia, 1975, p.48.

The tribals marched to Khurdha Sub Divisional Office with bows, and arrows and sticks to protect against their exploitation and to present a charter of demands. The memorandum demanded free access of the tribals to the forests, abolition of the system of Sarbarakara and amendment of forest acts, etc.

In 1937 in Sukinda area of Cuttack district the peasant association was organized by Fanipal, a prominent local communist activist. With the help of the Kisan Sabha, Fanipal launched the agitation to protect the interests of the small peasants and landless labourers. Under his leadership a portion of the jungle under the possession of Sukinda Zamindar was cleaned for the rehabilitation of the homeless. The Zamindar of Sukinda contacted the Congress Government of Orissa seeking help to muzzle the agitation. The Congress Socialists in Orissa bitterly criticized the leadership of Fanipal as violent and anti-revolutionary as violent clashes occurred between the Satyagrahis and the forces of the Zamindar. Finally the agitation was suppressed as Fanipal was arrested by the Government.¹⁵

In Cuttack the peasant agitation reached serious proportion. At Jenapur, the Communists organized a Krishak Sammilani which was attended by 15,000 people. Bhagabati Panigrahi was instrumental in the convening of such a large

15. From Interview with Rama Krishna Pati.

meeting. The peasants of the princely state of Dhenkanal attended this conference. The Conference extended its support to the cause of the peasants of Dhenkanal. In Kanika of Cuttack, the peasants agitated against the taxation policy of the King. The Communists and the Socialists encouraged the peasants to fight against the Zamindar. As the tenants refused to pay the rent, the rent realised by the Kanika Zamindar declined very sharply.

To prevent the waves of Kisan Movement, the Zaminders all over Orissa gathered at Furi and formed a Zamindars Association on 9th January, 1938. They passed a resolution demanding the protection of their interests and non-implementation of the newly legislated Orissa Tenancy Act. They denounced the socialists and the communists for creating chaos among the peasantry and encouraging agitations among them. The resolution also made an appeal to the government to intervene and bring about a negotiated settlement between the zamindars and the tenants.¹⁶

The Orissa branch of Indian National Congress was dominated by land lords and big zaminders. Perceiving threat to their landed interests, they opposed the move from Kisan Sabhas. But as the communists belonged to the Congress, they could not oppose them publicly. They alleged that the peasant agitation was becoming violent and turning away from the Gandhian policy of non-violence and Satyagraha.

16. S.C.DE ; Diary of Political Events, 1936-47, Cuttack 1964, p.15.

And the peasantry was misled and misdirected by the acts of the Communists.¹⁷

ALL ORISSA KISAN SABHA AND THE COMMUNISTS:

In 1938, the All India Kisan Congress at Komilla Conference changed its name to All India Kisan Sabha and adopted red flag as its symbol. The leadership of the All India- Kisan Sabha passed on to the hands of the left wing and particularly to the Communists. In Orissa, the All Orissa Kisan Sabha was also dominated by the Communists and socialists. Eadhu Charan Mohanty, who joined the Communist Party in Orissa in 1938 was a working member of the All India Kisan Sabha. He was elected president of the Orissa Kisan Sabha and continued in that position for pretty long period. The Secretary of the Orissa Kisan Sabha was Gobinda Pradhan another peasant leader who also joined the Communist Party in the war years.¹⁸ Under the leadership of the communist party the All Orissa Kisan Sabha took a radical shape. It presented charter of demands which included the following programmes.

1. Abolition of Mustadari and Inamdari system of Ganjam and Gauntian system of Koraput and abolition of the existing Orissa Tenancy Act.
2. Improvement on land and increase in food production.
3. Drive against blackmarketeers and horders and prevention of artificial scarcity in the supply of food and essential commodities to the people.

17. G.C.Mohanty, "Role of Communists in the struggle against Feudalism in Orissa (Oriya)", in Nue Dunia, 1975, p.47.
18. S.C.De : Op. Cit., p.17.

4. Exemption of small and marginal farmers whose income from land was less than Rs. 300, from agricultural taxes.
5. Abolition of Bethi in any manner.
6. Protection of weavers from exploitation forming Weavers' Associations and Weavers' Co-operative Societies.¹⁹

The Orissa Kisan Sabha under the leadership of Sadhu Mohanty did not merely champion the causes of the peasants. It broad based the organisation by including within it the small peasants, marginal farmers, weavers, blacksmiths, agricultural workers, harijans and girijans. Hence, it espoused very often specific and local demands, of the people. Thus it demanded the timely relief to the flood and famine hit areas, supply of drinking water and exemption of water tax, fixation of price of various commodities, setting up of grain golas to advance paddy loans to poor people. Besides, the Kisan Sabha demanded for the extension of irrigation facilities, fixation of daily wages of the wage earners and return of the lands seized by the money lenders to the poor people.

COMMUNISTS IN GANJAM:

Sadhu Charan Mohanty and Gobinda Pradhan played the main role in organizing the peasantry of the Ganjam District. They awakened the peasants of Berhampur, Chatrapur, Shergada and Aska to their consciousness. In 1937, Sadhu Charan Mohanty organized the peasants of different

19. Muktiyuddha, 30 June 1946, pp.4-6.

zamindaris to form a Zamindari Ryot Sangha. The objective of the Sangha was to work for the abolition of Mustadari and Inamdari systems. The then Prime Minister Biswanath Das was the President of the Ryot Sangha. But a man of substantial land connection could not have acted on behalf of the peasantry. The peasant community of Ganjam was distressed and disappointed as they witnessed the inability of the Prime Minister to act in their interests. Hence, after initial vacillation, the peasant community looked to Sadhu Charan Mohanty for guidance and leadership. Sadhu Charan Mohanty was released from jail in 1943 after undergoing two years jail term. After his release, he dissolved the Zamindari Ryot Sangha and formed the Ganjam District Ryot Sabha on 1st September, 1943. Gobinda Pradhan was elected the President of the organization and the Sabha was affiliated to All India Kisan Sabha.²⁰ The role of the Communists in 'Ganjam Peasant Agitation' cannot be properly appreciated if the system of exploitation is not analysed in this context.

In Ganjam all the big estates belonged to the Zamindars and all the ordinary peasant tenants were sharecroppers. Half of the produce was taken away by the Zamindar in the form of land revenue. For the collection of revenues, villages were auctioned and the highest auctioneer was given the responsibility of the collection of half of the produce and he paid the Zamindar in advance. These were known the Mustadars, who collected along with the

20. Gobinda Pradhan : Sadhu Babu abam Ganjamre Ryot Andolan in Nua Dunia, 1978 25th Issue, p.5.

land revenue taxes for their own maintenance. They imposed severe restrictions on the tenant cultivators and collected illegal and excess revenues in the form of 'Veti' or gift.

There were also Inamdars those who had thousands of acres of landed property for which they never paid any revenue. These lands were cultivated by the Inam peasants who contributed their labour in the form of Bethi. The Inam peasant was thus like a forced labourer. He was required to pay the three-fourth of the produce to the Inamdar keeping for his sustenance of a meagre one-fourth. The peasants did not have any right over the land which they cultivated for centuries. The peasant tenants being oppressed by this system of exploitation very often deserted the village and fled away. But very soon they were arrested and brutally punished by the Inamdar Court and tortured by its police.

In the Ryotwari Settlement area of Ganjam District, the peasants were the direct tenants of the government. They were required to pay a fixed amount of money as revenue to the local revenue officers of the government. But these local officers never spared the tenants; they requisitioned the unpaid labour of the workers and forced the peasants ^{to} give them as gift a part of their produce. Besides the village money lenders known as the 'Sahukars' also formed the part of this exploitative machinery. They advanced loans and charged an exorbitant

rate of interests on it. If the peasant tenant failed to pay back the loans in due time on situations of drought or famine or flood leading to failure of crops, the 'Sahukars' forcibly occupied the land or auctioned the lands to some other rich tenants and the poor peasant was driven out to the street only to become a beggar. The tribal peasants of Ganjam were also the subjects of this exploitation. The tribal lands were regulated by government laws according to which the tribal lands could not be purchased by any outsider or upper caste peasants. But the money lenders advanced loans to the tribals and in return collected the produce from the lands of the tribals.²¹

Thus it was a complex network of exploitation to which the Zamindars, Mustadars, Inamdars, Sahukars and government officials were all co-partners.²² The currents of nationalist movement awakened the peasants. First, they organized them under the leadership of Congress Prime Minister of Orissa Biswanath Das. The Congress Leaders advised the peasants to adopt constitutional methods of presenting memorandum and petitions to secure their objectives. They could achieve their demands relying on Congress leaders. The Congress leaders felt that recourse to agitations and agitational methods would merely project their misguided enthusiasm. Thus, between 1937 and 1943, the peasant community of Ganjam rallied round the Congress and Congress Socialist leaders like Biswanath Das, Malati Chowdhury,

Surendra Nath Dwivedi and Raja Krishna Bose. And their

21. G.C.Mohanty, in Nua Dunia, 1975, p.49.

22. G.C.Patnaik, Ganjamre Rakta Prabhat, Cuttack, 1972, pp.6-9.

grievances ^{were} are yet to be considered.²³

Finally, in utter desperation the peasants looked to the leadership of the Communist Party. Bhagabati Panigrahi formed the Sheragada Ryot Sangha in the year 1943. After the sudden death of Panigrahi, it was taken over by Sedhu Charan Mohanty, Gobinda Pradhan and Harihar Das. The Communist Party adopted a different strategy altogether. It taught the peasants of each village that they would have to fight against the coalition of imperialism and feudalism. The whole agrarian community needed to be unified in the struggle against exploitation. Thus, ordinary peasants, rich peasants, landless, weavers, fishermen, craftsmen and blacksmiths and factory working class would have to extend their support to the peasant struggle.

In 1943, the message of the Communist Party reached the peasants of Parlakhemundi, a princely state in Southern Orissa. Here the leadership was taken by few local Communist activists: Aparna Patro and Sardar Dandapani Swain, Narayan Pani and Jogannath Mishra. They were also influenced by the Andhra Communists. They fought against the system of Mustadar and ownership cancellation fees. Under the ownership cancellation fees, the peasant who sold a piece of land was required to pay some amount to the Zamindar and the payment was about 25 per cent of the value of the land. Under the system of Mustadar here, the peasant

23. Ibid, pp.13-14.

received a piece of land for his maintenance in return of his labour in the Zamindar's house and land. But Mustadars collected revenues even on this land. As the peasants agitated under the leadership of communists, the Council of Ministers of Parlahemundi announced certain concessions to the peasants on 1, January 1943. According to this proclamation, henceforward lands for cultivation would be given to the villages and the peasants of the village would enjoy the right to cultivate the lands and give the revenue directly to the Government officers and not to Mustadars. Thus, with the effort of the communists the peasants could get relief from Mustadar System.²⁴

The achievements of the peasants of Parlahemundi encouraged the peasants of Ganjam. On 15, June, 1945, about 15,000 peasants and peasant leaders attended a Kisan Conference at Aska of Ganjam. The Conference was organized by the Communist Party and Gobinda Pradhan, Sadhu Charan Mohanty and Harihar Das were the Chief organizers. The Conference resolved to fight for the following demands:

- (a) Abolition of Mustadar System;
- (b) Reduction in the amount of "Gutsdhana" (the payment of land rent in terms of rice);
- (c) Fixation of a less exacting tax system;
- (d) Retention of service tenure holdings (land holdings given to tenants for their service in the Zamindar's house and establishment);
- (e) Assertion of the tenants occupancy

24. Remachendra Mishra : Bhagabati and Work in the Grass Roots, in Nua Dunia, Bhagabati Bisheshanka, 1975, pp.23-30.

right over Inam lands and abolition of Zamindari without compensation and distribution of lands.²⁵

Led by the Communists and the Kisan Sabha, the Ganjam Ryots defied the Mustadars, refused to pay land rents. On the event of the Mustadars failure to collect the revenue, the Zamindars attempted to collect it from the village granary but the peasants foiled their bid. The Zamindars, Inamdars and Money lenders counteracted the moves of the peasants, by forming a Ryotwari Ryot Sangha which was, in fact, an association of the Zamindars and Inamdars and not of the tenants. In some places like Dharakote and Sheragad the Zamindars collected the land rent by cutting the ripe paddy from the service tenure holdings of the peasants. The peasants turned more restive.

As the Congress Government came to power in 1946, the peasants of Ganjam District approached the government to enact tenancy protection laws. In September, 1946, two hundred peasants led by the Communist Party met the Revenue Minister Naba Krushna Chowdhury to discuss with him the problems of the tenant peasants. However, by the end of December, 1946, no legislation was brought before the Orissa Legislative Assembly. On 14 November, 1946, the Ganjam Unit of Orissa Kisan Sabha convened a conference of the peasants to prepare for the future course of action at Sheragada of Ganjam. The Conference resolved to take the

25. G.C.Patnaik, Ganjamre Rakta Prabhat, Cuttack, 1972, p.16.

following actions: (i) The peasants would cut the paddy and take it to their store-house; (ii) Peasants would refuse the payment of share to the Mustadars; (iii) Peasants would pay current land rent without making any payment for the arrears. Peasants of Sheragada, Aska and Dharakote etc., swiftly swung into action. They cut the ripe paddy and took it away to their state. The Zamindars applied police force to prevent the peasants from cutting paddy but it could not resist the agitating peasants.²⁶

To end this situation, the Congress Government of H.K.Mahtab followed a two pronged strategy. It introduced in the Orissa Legislative Assembly the Orissa Tenancy Bill of 1947. The Bill suggested reduction in the existing high rate of rent prevailing in the proprietary estates of Ganjam District. It also introduced Ganjam Small Holders Relief Bill of 1947 to regulate the payment of arrears in rent. Thus, Orissa Act 19 of 1947 and Ganjam Small Holders Relief Act (30) of 1947 were enacted to protect the peasants. And in the mean time, the Congress Government attempted to bring about a compromise between the peasants and the Zamindars and Mustadars. The Congress leader Biswanath Das and his Zamindar Ryot Sangha participated in the negotiation. It was decided that there would be a 33 per cent cut in the last 10 years arrear land rent

26. G.C.Patnaik, Op. Cit., pp.20-21.

and fresh arrears would be collected after the deduction was made. This compromise was reached on 8 January, 1947.²⁷

However, the compromise could not be put into effect. The Zamindars went on collecting arrears without any cut and deprived the peasants from their service tenure holdings if they could not pay the arrears. In a bid to suppress the peasant agitation, the police arrested the communist leaders of Ganjam. Many leaders like Gobinda Pradhan, Surya Narayan Achari and Harihar Das went under ground and Radhakrishna Pradhan brother of Gobinda Pradhan was kept under detention. Widespread arrest of peasant leaders was resorted to in the areas of Sheragada, Kachakhandi and Takarada. The Congress organization of Ganjam was put under the leadership of two Zamindars Raghunath Panda and Madhu Mahapatra to encounter the communists. The Congress Chief Minister H.K.Mahtab paid a visit to the tensed areas of Ganjam and advised the peasants to wait patiently, for enactment of land legislation to protect their interests.

All these efforts at diffusing the tensions bore no fruit. As the peasants forcibly cultivated the lands, they were implicated in alleged cases and charge sheeted. Despite this, towards the end of 1947 the peasants attempted to forcibly cut the paddy from their lands. But, the

27. A. Suryanarayana Achari : "Ganjam Ryot Andolanre Sathi Gobinda Pradhan," in Nua Dunia, Bhagabati Bisheshank, Cuttack, 1981, p.20.

Zamindars, on prayer in the Court, could get stay order on the reaping of ripe paddy. Because of the stay order, the ripe paddy fields stretching for miles covering thousands of acres of land was destroyed. On 30 November, 1947, about 15,000 peasants gathered in a conference at Brahmapur. The Conference resolved to intensify the agitation and to secure the rights of the peasants. It raised three demands : (i) Land to the Tiller; (ii) Reduce the arrears in the land rent; and (iii) Abolish the system of Zamindari without compensation.²⁸ Now the peasant agitation spread to the area of Khallikote and Sheragad where peasants forcibly seized the land.

The Zamindars looked for the help of the Government to evict the peasants from their land. The whole Sheragad area looked like a police camp as on 14 April, police marched on to Sheragad. The police force was deployed to secure the lands of Zamindars of Sheragad. On May 24, 1948 the people of village Takarada protested against the police brutalities. On this day, 15 communist leaders including Narayan Mahapatra and Narsingha Panigrahi were arrested. On that very evening the police fired on the villagers of Takarada and killed 6 persons including 4 women and 2 men. Those who were shot dead were Hema, a 13 year old girl, Rahasa Baurani, Koili and Subeini and Arjuna Barad and his father Bauri Barad.

28.G.C.Patnaik : Op. Cit., p.34.

On the peasant agitation of Ganjam the public relations department gives us the following note: " The situation deteriorated in Eheragarh (Ganjam) in May where a large mass armed with lathis and other weapons attacked a police search party with the result that firing had to be opened resulting in 5 or 6 injured."²⁹ The socialist party newspaper "Krishak" on 13-6-48 laid the blame on the Communists for unduly fomenting unrest among the illiterate mass and commented that "It seems the government ordered fire under compulsion."³⁰

COMMUNISTS IN CUTTACK:

In 1941, the Cuttack District Branch of Communist Party was organized and its office was located in a place called Chandani Chowk. Under the leadership of Krupa Sindhu Khuntia, Bhabagrahi Pati, Ram Chandra Mishra and Sharat Patnaik, Kisan Sabha was organized in the several places of Cuttack District. On 9 August 1942, the Communist Party organized a kisan conference at Cuttack. Swami Sahajananda Saraswati, the peasant leader from Bihar was invited to preside over and deliver his inaugural speech. Peasant leaders all over Orissa led the peasant processions to Cuttack. From Puri, Parshuram Padatikarai, Gangadhar Paikrai, Pranatanath Patnaik, Damodar Mishra and Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani led the peasants. In Cuttack, peasants were organized and led by Baidyanath Ratha,

29. Orissa : 1949, Public Relation Department.

30. Krishak , Cuttack, on 13-6-48.

Rama Krishna Pati, Ram Chandra Mishra and Krupasindhu Khuntia. Although the British government banned all processions and conferences, Sahajananda Saraswati delivered his message to the Kisans at Chandani Chowk for their unity.

In the year 1943, Orissa was facing a situation of severe drought. Due to the failure of crops and export of rice to West Bengal, the price of rice rose sky high. The communist activists of Cuttack district organized the peasants of Cuttack to protest against the free trade of rice. Around 2,000 people of Shankarpur area of Cuttack led by Bhagabati Panigrahi, Ramakrishna Pati and Ram Chandra Mishra protested before the Orissa Legislative Assembly at Cuttack. They also prevented the traders and businessmen from exporting rice to West Bengal. Stray incidents took place as a result of the agitation of the peasants. The government was forced to enact laws ending the free trade in rice.³¹ In Cuttack, these communists formed a mass Food Committee which had, for its objectives increase of food production and distribution. The Food Committee appealed to the government to reorganize the government's policy of food procurement and creation of a buffer stock and food distribution to the people of drought hit areas.

During 1945-47, the Communist Party engaged actively in the organization of the Kisan Sabha. Thus

31. R.C.Mishra : Bhagabati and Grass Root Work, Nua Dunia 1976, Bhagabati Bisheshanka, pp.23-30.

Kisan Sabha under the leadership of the communist Party sprang up in Sukinda, Jajpur, Patkura, Dharmashala, Salepur, Mangalpur, etc. On 27 March, 1947, a Kisan conference was organized by the Communist Party at Cuttack. It demanded the abolition of Zamindari system and improvement in the status of the share-croppers. The Communist Party also recruited its Red Army from the Youth Peasantry of Cuttack.³²

In 1946-47 a notable contribution of the Communist Party to better the lot of the peasantry was the construction of Domuhani embankment at Patia estate. Patia embankment was a continuous threat to the peasants of the Patia estate of Cuttack. Each year, the 7 miles long Patia embankment collapsed due to the onslaught of regular flood causing irreparable loss to the peasant community. Neither the Government of Orissa nor the Zamindar of Kanika took interest in this embankment. The peasants of Patia approached the Zamindar and the Government urging them to construct a permanent embankment. But finally Sadhu Charan Mohanty, Bhagabati Panigrahi, Baidyanath Ratha and Ramakrishna Pati from Communist Party took interest to salvage the conditions of the peasantry. They formed a Patia Embankment Committee in the early 1946.³³ The Committee mobilized the labour of 3,000 peasants from nearby

32. S.C.De : Diary of Political Events, ¹⁹⁴⁶⁻⁴⁷ Cuttack, 1964, p.19.

33. Banamali Jena : Prananath O' Patia Bendh, in A.K.Baral and L. Rai Singh, Prananath Emrane, pp.88-90.

villages to construct the embankment. Around 5,000 people went in a procession in the mid March of 1946 to demand the sanction of money for the construction of the embankment. The Government and the Zamindar of Kanika sanctioned an amount of Rs.10,000 each for this purpose. Besides, as the Communist Party publication Muktiyuddha on 23 March, 1946 reported, many villages also contributed funds for the construction work. Kalajhari donated Rs.400, Kalyanpur Rs.400, Barimund Rs.620, etc.³⁴ The construction of Patia embankment was completed in 1947 and it saved 12,000 peasants from a regular damage. Indeed, the active involvement of the Communist Party in the construction of Patia Bandh popularised the party and made Patia a fort of the communist party of India in Cuttack District.

In Cuttack district, the peasant agitation took a serious turn in 1948. In this year the Congress Government passed the Orissa Tenants Protection Act. Under the Orissa Tenants Protection Act of 1948, land-holders owning 33 acres of land were debarred from evicting the cultivator-tenants. Secondly, tenants enjoying occupancy rights were not bound to pay more than one-third of the gross produce as rent to the superior ryot, for holding land under produce rent system. Thirdly, tenants without security of tenure were not bound to pay more than two-fifths of the gross produce as rent to the land-owners.³⁵

34. Muktiyuddha, 23, March, 1946.

35. S.N.Rath, The Development of the Welfare State in Orissa, S.Chand & Co., New Delhi, 1977, p.71.

As the Orissa Tenants Protection Act was enacted, the Zamindars and Sahukars of several places of Cuttack tried to evict the tenants taking advantage of the legal loopholes in the law. Thus in Sukinda, Patakura, Dharmashala, Mangalpur, Ardhaludia, Salepur, etc., the peasants clashed with the Zamindars. The peasants in all these areas were led by the Communist Party and its leaders. The peasants forcibly seized the land and cultivated it. In Cuttack, Ardhaulia turned out to be a military camp and in Tirtol and Ershma area of Cuttack, section 144 of the Indian Criminal Penal Code was to be imposed. As the Zamindars applied force, the peasants and share-croppers forcibly captured the land, removed the paddy.³⁶ In many cases, the communist party stood as a force on behalf of the exploited peasants to face the intimidation and police brutalities by the zamindars.

COMMUNISTS AND THE PEASANTRY IN PURI:

The Puri district branch of the Communist Party was organized towards the end of 1937. But prior to it the Congress leaders had actively involved themselves in organizing the Kisan Sabhas and arousing the peasants to consciousness. The Communist Party opened its branch office at Khurdha of Puri. Pranath Patnaik, one founder member of the Communist Party was the elected representatives of the people. He gave the peasants its direction

36. G.C.Mohanty in Nua Dunia, 1975, p.49.

and imparted them the sense of class solidarity. In 1938, the Khurdha "Demand Charter" was prepared.³⁷ The Charter included the amendment in jungle law, abolition of Sarbarakara System, amendment of Zamindari Act and retention of Khesmahal lands by the tenants. Pranath demanded the abolition of the system of Sarbarakara. Sarbarakaras were a grade of revenue officials who collected revenues from the peasants. Like Inamdars and Mustadars of Ganjam these officials were exploiting the peasants taking advantage of their ignorance. The Communists under the leadership of Pranath, Gokul Mohan and Balaram Paikarai mobilized the peasants to fight against the Sarbarakaras. Pranath also placed before the Congress Government, the demand for abolishing such system. He brought out peasant processions and held kisan conferences as the instrument to realise the goal.³⁸ As a result of the continued peasant agitation the Congress Government of H.K.Mehtab sought to eliminate the Sarbarakaras.

During the war period, the communist party involved itself in the grass root expansion. During this period, Parshuram Padatikarai in Belgada, Gangadhar Paikarai in Begunia, Digambar Harichandan in Tangi organized the agrarian community. The Communists took up the task of mobilizing the peasants against the war-tax supply, of

37. Abani K. Baral & L. Rai Singh : Pranath Emarene
(In Memory of Pranath), Khurdha, 1971, p.61.

38. Anulya K. Mishra : Aliva Sakha, p.35.

paddy and rice to the poor peasants demanding opening of Grain Golas in the rural areas of Puri District, supply of cotton yarn, to the weavers at cheaper rate and recruitment of a "Defence Squad" to face the Japanese aggression.³⁹ The Communist Party recruited young peasants from these villages to work for this purpose. Peasant agitation reached a low ebb in Puri district as Pranath and Sadhu Charan Mohanty were arrested and Gokul Mohan went underground apprehending a police crack down. It also observed the 'Peasant Day' on September 1, each year to organize the kisans. During the war period Mohan Das of Nimapara and Gatikrishna Swain of Kakatpur joined the communist party and organized Kisan Sabha in Gopa, Kakatpur and Nimapara of Puri. As in Cuttack, the Communists in Khurdha and Begunia area of Puri fought against the export of rice. During the period of drought, communists under the leadership of Gangadhar Paikarai, Bankanidhi Subudhi gheraoed the land-lords and rice traders of Khurdha demanding the sale of rice at cheap price. The land-lords, traders and money lenders who had surplus stock of grain were forced to release it to the drought hit area.⁴⁰

In 1946, the Communist activists in Puri engaged them in two more notable events. On the first occasion, the Communist Party fought against the oppressive policies of the Zamindar of Haladia, a small estate under Khurdha. Besides exacting unpaid labour, the zamindar

39. S.C.De : Diary of Political Events, 1936-1947, Cuttack, 1964, p.49.

40. These events have been narrated to me by Rama Krishna Pati in the course of an interview.

collected arbitrary land revenue from the peasants and very often replaced the peasant tenants by evicting them from the land. The peasant was helpless before the force of the Zamindar. But under the leadership of Gangadhar Mishra and Gangadhar Bhanj, Kisan Sabha sprang up in the estate of Haladia. Kisan Sabha mobilized the peasants and tribals under the banner of Communist Party to fight against the suppression of the Zamindar. The peasant tenants, receiving patronage from the Kisan Sabha, asserted their occupancy rights over the lands which they cultivated and could get them registered in their names during land settlement. In another occasion, the communist party took the lead in building a small embankment in Kakudia, a place near the Kudiary Railway Station. A small rivulet flows by the side of Kakudia, a big revenue village. During the period of flood, the river damaged thousand acres of cultivable land. Sadhu Charan Mohanty and Pranath Patnaik collected the funds in the year 1946 for the construction of an embankment. They enlisted the services of the inhabitants of Kakudia and Kudiary and could construct the stone embankment with the help of the common mass. This Kudiary Embankment had served to save the lands of hundreds of poor peasants from further damage.⁴¹

As the world war ended, peasant agitation rose to a new peak. The peasants of Khurdha, Kakatpur, Oalasing,

41. G.C.Rai Chudamani, Op. Cit., p.79.

Begunia, Nimapada, Gopa, Chandaka and Balipatna launched the Share-croppers' agitation. It fought against the eviction of the peasant tenants by the temple priests (Matha Mahantas) and the Sarbarakaras and Zamindars and increase of land-rent. In 1948, as the Orissa Tenants Protection Act was promulgated, the Zamindars of those areas started evicting peasants. Hence, the communist leaders like Pranath Patnaik, Gatikrishna Swain, Gengadhar Paikarai, Mohan Das, Balaram Paikrai led the peasants against the Zamindars, forcibly occupied the land, cultivated it and removed the paddy to the peasants' store house. The agitation took a very serious turn. Communist activists were hounded out and arrested. Pranath Patnaik was imprisoned and was implicated in the alleged charges of "stealing of ploughs" and Mohan Das was charged with the stealing of a jug of the Mahanta of Emer Matha of Puri.⁴² The Public Relations Department of Orissa in its "Orissa : 1949" reported the following: "In Puri District the Communist instigated tenants of Malipara were prosecuted for forcibly entering upon the land of the local zamindars. In Kakatpur and Nimapara areas, the agrarian agitation was more widespread and several cases were instituted against the ryots for indulging in assaults and preventing land owners from cultivating their lands."⁴³

42. A.K.Barel and R.Rai Singh (Ed.): Pranath Smarana Khurdha, 1971, p.89.

43. Orissa : 1949, Public Relations Department, p.27.

The share-croppers agitation was not confined to Ganjam, Cuttack and Puri simply. It spread to Balasore, Mayurbhanj and Sambalpur also. In the areas of Soro, Chandabali and Nilgiri, the peasants were organized by Banamali Das, Giridhari Panda, Gobinda Mahapatra, etc. In Sambalpur, share-croppers agitation was launched by Laxman Pujari and Natabar Banachhor. In Sambalpur the communist party also organized the small peasant and labourers against the proposed Hirakud Dam, as this led to severe eviction of the peasants and labourers from their houses and lands without compensation. The Congress Government decided to give compensation to the homeless and landless people and make provision for their rehabilitation. In Koraput, Bipra Charan Sarangi, an organizer of the Communist Party led the Kisan agitation against the system of Gauntia. The peasant agitation continued till 1950-51. This was because during this period, the Zamindars taking help of the Court and Police evicted the peasant tenants. In each area, the local communists being directed by Ranadive line of thinking, actively supported the peasants in their struggle against Zamindars.

The report of the Public Relation Department regarding the activities of the Communists in 1949 noted that "the communists intensified their activities in the districts of Cuttack, Puri, Ganjam, some parts of Sambalpur and Balasore". It also noted that the communist leaders

in Sambalpur were rounded up and imprisoned. The communists in Puri established their firm grip over the sweeper community. In the beginning of 1949 the communists concentrated on the railway employees to effect a strike there but it was suppressed as the leaders were arrested and detained. The communists then turned their attention towards the forcible removal of paddy, usurpation of land and intimidation of local zamindars and land-owners in Ardhaulia (Cuttack), Sheragada area in Ganjam, Chandaka, Kakatpur, Tangi and Begunia in Puri and Rasam and Kandeikela in Sambalpur.⁴⁴ The Police Department Report of 1950 also described the continued agrarian agitation in Orissa in the following lines: "The Socialists intensified their activities in all the districts of the State. The communists started anti-government postering, fostered agrarian trouble with regard to 'Bhag-chas' lands and instigated tenants to take recourse to lawless activities".⁴⁵

R E S U L T:-

The Congress Government, directly or indirectly had exhibited its anti-communist stance. It arrested and imprisoned the communist leaders for fomenting agrarian tension. But in this aspect, the Congress Government had sided with the exploitative feudal lords, who, once constituted the strong pillars of British Imperialism. Even then, the government failed to resist the popular pressure. It had enacted between 1950 and 1960, a series of land

44. Ibid, pp.29-30.

45. Orissa Gazette Supplement No.6, Jan.16, 1953, pp.32-33.

reform legislations which the Congress proclaimed as 'socialistic'. The Communist Party had never been a prey to the ideology of peasantism or feudalism. It was opposed to both. On the other side the communist party in Orissa had understood the revolutionary potentials of the Kisans. It worked as an agent to inspire its revolutionary zeal. The result was: The Kisan could snatch away through struggle its due share from the landlord and zamindars. It could establish its own class identity and assert its legitimate rights. Peasant agitation in Orissa had accorded a great deal of legitimacy to the communist party to survive and grow in this soil.

As Professor S.N.Rath observed: "In view of the agrarian agitation, remedial laws in tenancy rights and land tenure system could hardly be delayed. In 1952 the government abolished the zamindars with the passing of the Orissa Estate Abolition Act.⁴⁶ Orissa Estate Abolition Bill of 1950 became Orissa Estate Abolition Act in 1952, two years after its presentation to the house. The Bill was opposed by the sections of Zamindars and their representatives in and outside the Assembly. However, the Act sought to abolish (a) the estates of Zamindars, Inamdars and Pradhans, etc., and (b) all rights of intermediaries and vest them in the State free from all encumbrances. The Act provided for compensation also. The Orissa Estate

46. S.N.Rath, "The Development of Welfare State in Orissa", New Delhi, 1977, p.74.

Abolition Act was followed by the Orissa Tenants Relief Act of 1955. This Act declared that no tenant holding land for cultivation on July 1, 1954 or at any time thereafter could be lawfully evicted from his holding by the land-lord. The Act also provided for the quantum of rent payable by the tenants to the landlords. Finally, in 1960 the Assembly passed the Orissa Land Reforms Act of 1960. The Act defined the term Raiyat and determined his responsibility in respect of utilisation of lands. The Act was significant so far as it imposed a ceiling on the land to be possessed by a land owner. Thus the Act provided that the ceiling area of land should be five 'Basic holdings', each 'basic holding' comprising an area of 'five standard acres'. The Act also laid down the rules for the disposal of the lands in excess of the ceiling limit.⁴⁷

The Communist Party in Orissa had welcomed all these legislations in spite of its reservations. And it stood on behalf of the poor peasants for the assertion of his legal rights. The Zamindars and many intermediaries took the help of the law courts to evict the poor peasants and put these poor peasants to undue harassment. Here, the Communist Party had directed the leaders of Orissa Kisan Sabha, Party's Peasant Wing, to actively assist the peasants. Thus, in Orissa, the peasant agitation continued

47. The Orissa Land Reform Manual (Cuttack) 1966, pp.X-XI.

under the leadership of Gobinda Pradhan, Gobinda Mohanty, Harihar Das, Dyuti Krishna Panda, Girish Chandra Roy, Mohan Das, Prananath Patnaik, Laxman Mahapatra, Banemali Das, Gangadhar Paikarai, Surya Narain Achari, etc.

During 1950-60, the Communist Party formulated its unambiguous, clear-cut policy regarding peasants and land reform. It asked for confiscation of all private lands in any form and pleaded for state ownership and distribution. Alternatively, it demanded the fixation of land ceiling. It also demanded the extension of irrigation facilities to every piece of cultivable land. It criticized the functioning of the co-operatives as oligarchic, and feudalistic and demanded its reorganisation on democratic principles. It demanded for the registration of the share-croppers in order to avoid problem of eviction. In the absence of collectivisation of land, the communist party demanded the enactment of a 'Minimum Wage Act' for agricultural proletariat. The revolutionary thinking and radical programmes of the communist party has made it the unrivalled leader of the peasantry in different parts of Orissa.

CH. V

COMMUNIST PARTY AND
THE WORKING CLASS IN ORISSA

The modern working class movement is a product of the rise of the factory system. The development of modern factories coincided with the growth and concentration of the workers in few pockets of the industrialised countries. The demand for labour created a labour market where the labourer could sell and the capitalists could buy the labour. The working class, gradually aware of its labour potential in the delivery of goods, could become conscious of his deplorable living conditions and started asserting himself against the will of the capitalists. The working class understood that their emancipation could be achieved by the workers only and the struggle for their emancipation was not a struggle for class privileges or monopolies but for equal rights and duties and abolition of class rule. Marx came on the side of the working class as he issued a call in his "Communist Manifesto of 1848 : Proletarians of all countries unite !" Marx also delivered his historic judgement when he announced that capitalism digs its own grave and capitalism

and its grave diggers are born simultaneously. Indeed, it is the working class, the product of capitalism, which has become its grave diggers.

Modern Indian working class was born in a period when it was passing from its status of an agricultural colony of British imperialism to a stage of nascent industrialism. After its birth, the working class was confronted with two basic antagonistic forces such as a British colonial political domination and economic exploitation both by domestic and foreign capitalist classes. Specifically the problems became very acute in the post world war India. On the economic front, the conditions of the working class worsened as essential commodities became scarce and costly and wages reached their lowest level, working hours enhanced and working conditions grim.¹ On the other hand the industries grew in numbers and the capitalist yielded fantastic profit. The workers in the factory were forced to leave for their villages failing to work under such appalling conditions. But in the political front, the Great October Revolution and the consequent victory of the working class in Soviet Union opened the eyes of the oppressed workers of India. The working class understood that the only way for them was to throw away the yoke of colonial domination and the amelioration of the conditions of the workers would be possible only with national liberation. The Indian labour felt the

1. B. Shiva Rao : The Industrial Workers in India, London, 1939, p.19.

necessity of organising it to assert its right. Thus, trade unionism and working class movement came to India. The Trade Union was the organization of the working class through which they could put forth their collective weight against the capitalists and the imperialists. The ideology of the working class was the economic emancipation of the working class and struggle for national liberation.² The leadership was provided by the leaders of the Indian National Congress at the early stage and later by the communist party of India. The strategy of the working class movement was intensive propaganda, pamphletering, meetings, posters and demonstrations. Thus, the All-India Trade Union Congress was founded in 1920 to fulfil the aspiration of the Indian working class.³

The All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) gained its strength under the vigorous leadership of B.P.Wadia, N.M.Joshi, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sarojini Naidu, Jawaharlal Nehru and Subash Chandra Bose. But very soon the AITUC had to tread upon an arduous path when as the organisation of the working class it had to tackle outside antagonism and internal contradiction. On the issue of international policy and affiliation and working class ideological orientation, the communist radicals differed greatly from the moderates. Communists were critical of the right wing,

2. See V.B.Karnik's article "Trade Unions : Progress Towards Democracy" in Studies in Indian Democracy, edited by S.P.Aiyer and R.Srinivasan, Bombay, 1965, p.659.

3. A detailed study of the Trade Union Movement may be seen in Sukomal Sen, "Working Class of India: History of Emergence and Development 1830 - 1970", Calcutta, 1977.

conservative trade unionism based upon 'bankrupt theory of collective bargaining'. The communists set the goal for the working class movement "the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism". They wanted a dominant role for the working class in the national struggle for freedom and urged the affiliation of AITUC to International Red Trade Union at Moscow and its relation with the Pan Pacific Trade Union Secretariat. In the Jharla session of AITUC in 1928 the communists "emerged as a distinct group with their own tactics, programmes and ideologies".⁴ Finally, at the Calcutta session of AITUC in 1931, the organization was split, the communist led by Deshpande and Ranadive formed the Red Trade Union Congress. But as the Congress Socialist Party emerged, it vigorously championed the unity in the working class movement. Thus in 1935 RTUC merged itself with the AITUC to carry on common programme of action. During the days of nationalist struggle the hold of Congress over AITUC was loosened and the CPI captured the AITUC. The Congress had to form its Indian National Trade Union Congress under the leadership of Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel. Thus the process of polarisation in the working class became distinct in the days of independence.

4. S. Rai Chowdhury : Leftist Movement in India (1917-47), Minerva Associates Ltd., Calcutta, 1977, pp.186-206.

A SMALL BEGINNING (IN ORISSA) :

The growth of the working class and trade union movement in Orissa is of very recent origin. Orissa, although blessed with abundant natural resources, could not industrialise itself till the commencement of the era of planning. Very few small factories had their existence in the first decades of this century when industrial expansion could take place in a rapid pace in other parts of India. In the third and fourth decades few factories emerged where large number of workers could be employed. In 1936, Orissa was granted provincial autonomy. During this time, there were only 69 factories, the number of factories rose to 80 in 1938, 100 in 1941, 289 in 1950, 292 in 1951, 305 in 1955, 424 in 1961.⁵ In 1936-38 the manufacturing and processing factories in Orissa were processing food, tobacco, drinks, paper and printing, chemicals and glass etc. But by 1951, the factories were involved in the manufacture of textiles, machinery, basic metal goods, agricultural tools, sugar, mineral products, matches and soaps, etc. Around 99 factories were involved in rice milling and 199 in 'Bidi' manufacture. The average number of daily workers in factories was 4,545 in 1938, 6821 in 1941, 17,186 in 1951, 20,203 in 1955 and 24,067 in 1960. And by 1950, 22 factories employed more than 100 persons. By 1936, Balasore district of Orissa had maximum number of rice mills, Cuttack had two important ice factories. As

5. S.N.Rath, "The Development of Welfare State in Orissa"
S.Chand & Co., New Delhi, 1977, pp.161-162.

mining operation developed by 1943, few workers were working in Talcher colliery. Besides before independence Orissa had 3 large industrial establishments such as Orient Paper Mills, Baranga Glass Factory and Chaudwar Textile Mills.

Thus, Orissa had a very small industrial working class before independence. But the communist party as the party of peasants and workers started organizing this small negligible labour group into an organized class. As early as 1920, an organization of the Oriya working class was existing in Calcutta and known by the name of Oriya Labour Union.⁶ In 1936, the members of the Communist Party working within the Congress Socialist Party organized the workers in few places. At first the communist activists organized the sweepers of Puri. The sweepers of Puri District Municipality belonging to the scheduled castes were very lowly paid i.e., Rs.2 per month. Narasingha Tripathy and Guru Charan Patnaik awakened those sweepers and organized Puri Sweepers Union to enable them to protest before the Municipality authorities for seeking redress to their economic distress. After initial reluctance, the Municipal Administration was forced to fulfil these demands. This Sweepers Union was under the control of the Communist Party and Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani and Gour Mohan Nayak were its President and Secretary respectively till 1960 for about a period of 2 decades.⁷ The Union was actively engaged in

6. C. Revri, Indian Trade Union Movement, p.80.

7. From interview with Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani.

the radical reform of the life style of the sweepers emphasizing on their education and economic amelioration. In the same year, two peasant leaders of the Communist Party, Prananath Patnaik and Sadhu Charan Mohanty actively engaged in the organization of the Railway Workers at Kudiari and Jatani of Puri in the S.E. Railway. Although there was no union of these workers, they organized a strike demanding higher wages, housing facilities and better working conditions. Although the Railway authorities suppressed the strike, the demands of the workers were filled up.

However, the Cuttack Press Workers' Union was the first registered trade union in Orissa. It was organized by the Congress Socialists in the early 1936. Bhagabati Panigrahi and Malati Chowdhury were the main inspirations behind this organization. On 6 March 1938, All Utkal Press Workers Conference was held at Cuttack on the initiative of the Cuttack Press Workers Union. The Conference was addressed by the education minister Sri Bodharan Dube who highlighted on the role of working class in the nationalist struggle for independence.⁸ The press

formation of a legal Communist Party in Orissa, the leadership of the Press Workers Union was captured by it. In the year 1946, the Communist activists like Rama Krishna Pati, Durgacheran Mohanty and Baidyanath Ratha could bring about a successful strike of the Press Workers, demanding higher wages and leave and holidays on Sundays. The strike was in the most important Oriya daily newspaper 'Samaj' establishment which could be closed down for a period of one month. Finally a conciliation committee headed by Samuel Das brought the employers and the workers to a negotiation, a wage fixation was achieved and other amenities providing for better working conditions were negotiated. This was a major achievement of the communist party in Orissa on the Trade Union front. The Cuttack Press Workers' Union was affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress, the trade union affiliate of the Communist Party of India.⁹

During the year 1936, Rambha Rice Mill Workers Union was formed, and later Panchanan Muduli of the Communist Party from Balasore District organized the Chandabali Rice Mill Workers Union and was its President for a period of 20 years. He also organized and led the Balasore Rice Mill Workers Union during the same period.¹⁰

9. Rama Krishna Pati and Baidyanath Rath described their experiences in the organisation of this Press Workers Union in the pre-independence days. They were the real founders of the working class movement in Orissa.

10. S.C.De : Op. Cit., p.15.

Krupasindhu Khuntia was the organizer of All India Trade Union Congress in Orissa. A participant in the civil disobedience movement of 1930 sponsored by the Congress, Krupasindhu Khuntia later joined the West Bengal branch of the Communist Party of India. He was organizing the labourers of Bengal and Bihar specifically the workers of the electricity department of Calcutta. He came to Orissa on the year 1943 and till the period under study he was the leading figure in the labour field of Orissa. He organized the workers of all big industrial establishments, Sambalpur Orient Paper Mills, Ranpur Colliery, Baranga Glass Factory and Chowdwar Textile Mills and affiliated all these organizations to the All India Trade Union Congress.¹¹

In May 1944 Krupasindhu Khuntia organized the workers of the Orient Paper Mill, Brajarajanagar owned by Jhunjhunwala, an eminent industrialist. About 1,500 employees went on strike and cease work demanding higher wages and increments, more promotional facilities, confirmation of temporary casual labourers, health benefits and better sanitations in the factory. The strike was led by Krupasindhu Khuntia and Gangadhar Rath. The Mill owner threatened to dismiss the striking workers and declared out of bounds. the mill's locality for the organizers, Khuntia and Gangadhar Rath. As the strike continued, the

11. Nua Dunia, 1981, p.24. See Article by G.C.Mohanty.

President of All India Paper Mills Union initiated negotiations with the Mill owner. The strike continued due to the intransigence of the employer-management. However, on May 28, 1944, the Government ordered investigation on the management-worker dispute and the resultant strike. It appointed an adjudicator to start negotiation between the Union and the Management. Finally in the mid June, the manager of the mill Goenka accepted the following recommendation of the adjudication committee.

1. Minimum monthly wage of each worker shall be fixed at Rs.18-00.
2. During the period of strike, the workers would be paid half of the pay.
3. No worker would be dismissed from service and dismissed workers would be reinstated with half pay for the period of strike.
4. The management would improve the service conditions, promotional avenues and other amenities within a period of three months.¹²

The Orient Paper Mill Workers Union was affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress in 1943 and since then it was controlled by the Communist Party of India till the late sixties till other political parties entered and organized the workers. In the month of August 1944, Krupa-sindhu Khuntia tried his hand in the Rampur Colliery.

12. Muktivyuddha, 5 August, 1944.

Rampur Colliery Workers Union was formed with Khuntia as its President, Sindhu Gountia as its Vice President and Banshidhar Das as General Secretary. But later Krupasindhu Khuntia was arrested under Defence of India Rule for his objectionable speech on the 20th August, 1944 delivered to the convention of Rampur Colliery Workers.¹³ The first annual convention of Rampur Colliery Workers Union was organized on 25 May, 1945. Krupasindhu Khuntia presided over the meeting.

In the early months of 1945, the production of coal drastically came down. Coal could not be supplied to Baranga Glass Factory. The management of the Rampur Colliery sought to dismiss the regular employees of the Colliery. The company dismissed 23 colliery workers and 50 workers of timber department and engaged them as daily wage workers. The colliery workers union led by Krupasindhu Khuntia and Banshidhar Das went on strike from March 12, 1945. They demanded not only the reinstatement of the dismissed employees but also the increase in salary and payment of bonus. In a bid to quell the strike, the management dismissed a peon of the colliery on flimsy ground. However, finally the management agreed to reinstate the dismissed workers and accept the demands of the workers.¹⁴

13. *Ibid.*, 11 November, 1944.

14. Muktiyuddha, 9 June, 1945.

During the year 1945-46 many weavers union were organized to fight for the cause of weavers of Sambalpur, Ganjam and Puri. About one lakh weavers of Sambalpur were on the brink of ruin due to the closing of several weaving mills. The Sambalpur Weavers' Union was formed to demand for the cheap supply of cotton bales to the weavers. In Ganjam, the Ganjam Weavers' Union was organized by Gobinda Pradhan as its President. Gangadhar Paikarai and other leading communists organized the weavers of Belgarh and Gunia villages in Puri.

In September 1945, the Cuttack Press Workers Union organized a strike demanding higher wages, leave and fixed working hours. During the same period the 'Asha' Press of Berhampur Publishing the only English daily in Orissa closed the publication of the daily. The Asha Press also shifted its office to Cuttack as its owner Madanlal Jajodia thought this venture to be profitable. The Asha Press workers were given discriminatory treatment in matters of wage, bonus and leave. Hence, on 22 September 1945, the workers of Asha Press joined in strike with the Cuttack Press Workers.¹⁵ On 23 September 1945, an arbitration committee was appointed with Harihar Mahapatra, later a judge of Orissa High Court, as its Chairman. The strike was called off on 1st October 1945, as the arbitration committee impressed upon the management to accept all the demands of the workers and the later accepted it. The Press Workers Union in Orissa organized

15. Muktivyuddha, 22, September 1945.

another strike in August 1946. The charter of demands included a wage increase of twentyfive per cent, a fifty per cent increase in the Dearness Allowance, grant of sick leave for one month with full pay, payment of wages in the first week of every month, grant of bonus, sanction of casual leave for 12 days and provision for provident fund and the application of Factory Act to all Press in Orissa. It was a prolonged strike for three months. The Government of Orissa directed the Press authorities to refer the dispute to the Deputy Labour Commissioner for conciliation and the Commissioner promised relief to the workers and the strike was called off.

Thus by 1946, the Communist Party as a part of its political strategy, tried to penetrate into the factories to organize workers unions. And, few unions had been affiliated to the All India Trade Union Congress and very few were registered trade unions. The active involvement of the Communist Party in the Trade Union front yielded it a rich dividend. In 1946, election to the Orissa Legislative Assembly was held. One seat was reserved for the labour representative who would represent the labour all over Orissa. Communist Party in Orissa selected Baidyanath Rath as its candidate against the Congress. During this period Baidyanath Rath was actively involved in the organization of the workers of Chowdwar Textile Mill and Baranga Glass Factory. Communist activists like Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani, Pranath Patnaik, Rama Krishna Pati

and Krupasindhu Khuntia mobilized the support of the workers- Cuttack Press Workers Union, Railway Workers Union of Jatani, Orient Paper Mill Union, Rampur Colliery Union and JB Colliery Union, etc.¹⁶ It was also reported that the owner of Baranga Glass Factory Jhunjhunwala rendered helps to the Congress candidates against Baidyanath Rath.¹⁷ However, Baidyanath Rath was elected to the Orissa Legislative Assembly as the labour representative.

The most crucial phase in the history of the trade union movement in India was the period of 1948-50 when the Communist Party of India under the guidance of B.T.Randive followed the policy of extremism. This policy of extremism and adventurism influenced the communists in Orissa and consequently the trade union leaders. The leadership of the few existing trade unions was in the hands of the communists for all the Congress leaders of Orissa were jailed during war period for their participation in August Revolution. And the Communists could organize the workers unopposed as the champion of the working class interest. In the period between 1948 and 1951, the trade union leadership was in the hands of Rama Krishna Pati, Durga Charan Mohanty, Baidyanath Rath and Ram Chandra Mishra. From mere strike and cease work, the

16. Muktivyuddha, 30 June, 1945.

17. Nue Dunia, Special Issue 1975, Report by G.C.Mohanty.

the trade unions switched over to adopt a strategy of violence, lock-out, loot and unlawful assembly, etc.

On 18 March 1947, the Communist Party in Orissa organized and observed the Trade Union Congress Day. The Party resolved to show solidarity with workers and peasants and fight for the abolition of the feudal vestiges such as Zamindars and estate holders.¹⁸ In 1947-48, the Baranga Glass Workers Union organized a violent strike demanding higher wages and better facilities. However, the management agreed to increase the wages. The strike was led by Rama Krishna Pati, a Communist leader from Cuttack, who was later elected to the Orissa Legislative Assembly and Durga Charan Mohanty working as the General Secretary of the Orissa branch of All India Trade Union Congress. The Communists established their firm hold over the Puri Sweepers Union by 1949. They organized the workers of Ib Colliery and successfully brought about strike of the workers. The workers assembled near the colliery and prevented the workers from joining the work. They designed to paralyse the work of the colliery till their demand for better working conditions, higher wages and security in service are met. However, the police dispersed the workers and tried to subvert the strike by detaining the communists. During the year 1948-49, the Communists concentrated on the Railway Employees to bring about a

18. S.K.De : Diary of Political Events in Orissa : 1936-47, Cuttack, 1964, p.46.

strike but again it was foiled by the arrest and detention of the trade union leaders.¹⁹

CHALLENGE:

In the trade union field, the communists in Orissa faced stiff challenge from the socialists in Orissa. The socialists also succeeded in their effort of organizing labour movement in these rising industrial establishments. The main socialist leaders were Duleswar Bastia, Samarendra Kundu, S.N.Dwivedi, Rabindra Mohan Das and Nisamani Khuntia. The Union which the socialists organized were affiliated to the HMS but there was a difference of strategy which the socialists and the communists employed. When the communists intended to raise the workers to fight against the imperialism and capitalism and to secure its overthrow only to ensure the emancipation and rule of the workers, the socialists took up the immediate economic concern of the working class. The indifference of the communists alienated a section of the workers in Orissa and the active involvement of the Congress Socialists in the August Revolt attracted these sections of the working class to their fold. Besides, few workers with their belief in 'economism' were averse to the communists policy of extremism and adventurism. Secondly, the fear of police suppression in Orissa also worked as a factor for the working class to remain neutral or to join the trade unions floated by the ruling congress or by the socialists.

19. See: Orissa - 1949 : Review by Public Relations Department of Government of Orissa.

The Socialists entered into the Talcher Colliery and organized the Talcher Coal-field Workers Association in 1946. Main architects behind this union were Dr. Rabi Ghose, Rabindra Mohan Das, Bichanda Charan Pradhan and Dukhabandhu Mishra. The Talcher Coalfield Workers Association was formed with the workers of three collieries of Dera, Deulbera and Handidhua. Dr. Rabi Ghosh and B.C. Pradhan were elected as President and General Secretary respectively. However, the organization could not work as the management expressed its hostility to the union and the union could not be registered. In October 1947 under the guidance of Duleswar Bastia, the Dera Colliery labour union was formed and Binbar Mohanty was chosen its President. Bastia also organized separate workers union in other coalfields. In the year 1948 when Communists were organizing strikes in different factories, Bastia organized a token strike of the three coalfield workers demanding the application of Trade Union Act to Talcher area and the registration of their unions. Finally, in 1948 the Trade Union Act was enforced and the three unions were registered and affiliated to Hindu Mazdoor Sabha. In 1950-51, they brought about a strike in the Talcher Coalfields.

The socialists also organized the labour union of the Limestone Quarry workers and brought out a strike in 1946. They also organized the Manganese Mines Workers Union.

In the year 1939-40, the total number of registered trade unions were 2. They rose to 54 in the year 1947-48. The following table shows the rate of growth of trade unions in Orissa till 1950-51.

TABLE - 2.

Year.	No. of Registered Trade Unions.	Total membership.
1939-40	2	374
1940-41	N.A.	323
1941-42	N.A.	535
1942-43	N.A.	359
1943-44	N.A.	653
1944-45	4	1,494
1945-46	7	1,148
1946-47	42	8,766
1947-48	54	4,634
1948-49	72	5,634
1949-50	N.A.	N.A.
1950-51	44	16,097

N.A. stands for Not Available.

Source: S.C.Jha, Indian Working Class Movement and Indian Labour Year Book 1946-47 to 1951-52.

The table shows a degree of fluctuation in the trade unions in Orissa. The fluctuation was due to the fact that most of the trade unions were very short-lived. As soon as it fulfilled the demands of the labourers, the labourers started deserting it. Again the trade union consciousness in the working class of Orissa was not strong

and there was no training in the trade union ideology for the workers. Even the communist party from the point of view of ideology considered trade unionism as un-Marxian.²⁰

BETWEEN 1950 AND 1960:

But in the first decade of the era of planning in Orissa, few more industries were established. And there was a rapid increase in the work-force in the industry. Now the communists had to compete with the socialists and the Congress to capture control over the workers. The communists organized the workers of Kalinga Tubes of Chowdwar, Textile Mill Workers at Chowdwar, Hindustan Steel Limited at Rourkela. With the active involvement of Durga Charan Mohanty, Baidyanath Rath and Ramana Rao, the communist party could consolidate its position among the labourers. It organized unions in the public sector, Rourkela Steel Plant which has a work-force of 35,000 and the Rourkela Steel Mazdoor Union was formed in 1957 and was affiliated to AITUC. The Congress led Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) also organized Hindustan Steel Workers Association in 1959. However, Duleswar Bastia of the Socialist group was the first to organize Rourkela Mazdoor Sangha in 1954. Further the communist party entered into Indian Aluminium Company

20. Collected from Interview with Benemali Dae, President of CITU, Orissa Sakha.

and Hirakud Dam Workers Union in the year 1958. In the district of Sambalpur Krupasindhu Khuntia was the main inspiration behind these organizations. In the early sixties, Jayshree Chemicals and J.K. Paper Mills were established in the districts of Ganjam and Koraput and Lexman Mahapatra, a veteran Communist leader who was elected once as member of Rajya Sabha and twice as M.L.A. led the workers union here. Dyutikrishna Panda, another communist leader and Secretary of the Ganjam District Communist Party led the Sugarcane Growers' Association in 1954-55 and the Sugar Factory Workers Union in June 1964 and these were affiliated to AITUC. Nua Dunia, the Communist Party weekly from Orissa also reported in 1954 that the communists like Ram Chandra Ram, Durga Charan Mohanty were leading the primary teachers association, Huma Salt Workers Union, Balasore Rice Workers Union, Balasore Press Workers Union, Mayurbhanj Motor Workers Union and Utkal Journalists Association.²¹

Nua Dunia also further reported a strike in the Chowdwar Textile Mill Workers. The strike took place as the management dismissed few clerks of the mill. The workers demanded their reinstatement, besides demanding bonus and a grant of sick leave for 15 days. Finally, the mill authorities came to terms.²²

21. Nua Dunia : 10 December 1954, p.2.

22. Ibid., 1 October 1954, p.11.

The 1954 Textile Mill Workers Strike was organized by the Veteran Communist Party worker and Trade Union Secretary Durga Charan Mohanty. On his initiative on 7 August 1955, the Orissa Textile Mill Mazdoor Union was founded and affiliated to AITUC. The Mill management recognized it in 1962. In the same year few workers hostile to the Union launched a strike which the management declared illegal. The management withdrew its recognition till 1964.

In 1959-60, the workers of Barbil Mines in Keonjhar district went on strike demanding workers participation in management, more dearness allowance and housing facilities. Here the workers union were chiefly led by the socialists and the congress. When the workers resorted to cease work, the owner Sirajuddin took the help of police and resorted to police firing injuring several labourers. The labour leaders were arrested on the alleged charge of murder case. Pranath Patnaik the leading communist legislator in Orissa visited the mining sites and restored courage in the minds of the workers. After protracted negotiations with the management, Pranath could bring out a compromise. The dismissed workers were taken in. In 1960, in the month of September, 15000 workers at Rourkela including the workers of Rourkela Steel Plant went on a 4 days strike. The demands were fixation of minimum wages, payment of additional wages along with the rise of prices, removal of

unemployment and stopping all retrenchment of workers. The lead was given by the Orissa Branch of All-India Trade Union Congress. Communists also brought about strikes of the Orissa Textile Mills Workers Union, Ranital Balasore Rice Mill Workers Union, Keonjhar Forest and Mines Workers Union and the Workers Union in Hindustan Steel Limited.²³ The period of 1959-60 was a period of turbulence in the history of Industrial climate. Industrial relations were disturbed by strikes, stay in strikes, short notice strikes and hunger strikes. The absence of the general industrial peace in the state led to a heated debate in the Orissa Legislative Assembly. In April 1959, the Communist and the Socialist members criticized the Government for following an anti-labour policy and favouring employers generally. These members asserted that the employers as a body were violating the tripartite code of discipline agreed to at the Indian Labour Conference in 1958 and were ignoring the Industrial Tribunal and were preferring to appeals in the Supreme Court and High Court against such awards. They demanded that the Government must implement promptly and properly the awards of the Industrial Tribunal in the interest of better industrial climate in the State.²⁴ The Communist M.L.A. Lokanath Chowdhury participating in the debate criticized

23. Nua Dunia, 9 September 1960.

24. Orissa Legislative Assembly Debates, Vol.IV, Pt.II, No.31, April 29, 1959, pp.13-20 and 37.

the Government for its failure to implement the recommendation of the Labour Advisory Board in respect of the minimum wages. He cited the instance of a public sector undertaking Hindustan Steel Limited at Rourkela flagrantly defying the recommendations of the Labour Advisory Board.

As regards the labour welfare, the government of Orissa has followed a policy of indifference. It has put into implementation the Union laws rather than making its own regulating the workers conditions. In 1953, the government brought the Orissa Maternity Relief Bill before the Assembly. The M.L.As. belonging to the Communist Party of India welcomed the move as a piece of progressive legislation. However, members like Gangadhar Paikarai and Harihar Das criticized the provision, for daily allowances for women workers in confinement at the rate of 3 annas as inadequate. They wanted that the period of maternity should be much longer than the period of seven weeks as provided in the Bill.²⁵ Although the Labour Department recommended the subsidised industrial Housing Scheme, the effort of the Orissa Government in this regard was very slow and tardy. The Communist members of the Assembly were critical of this and urged upon the Government to speed up its programme of slum clearance scheme.

25. S.N.Rath : Development of Welfare State in Orissa,
S.Chand & Co., New Delhi, 1977, p.184.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

On 25 December 1954, the Orissa State Trade Union Congress, the workers affiliate of the Communist Party of India convened two days conference. 110 participants representing 50 trade unions of Orissa attended the conference. The conference was presided by Ranen Sen, leader of the Trade Union Congress from West Bengal. Mahmed Ismail and M. Farouqi were the delegates from AITUC who delivered speeches. Durga Charan Mohanty, the Secretary of the Orissa State Trade Union Congress reported that out of 4 lakh workers only 33,000 were organized. He referred to the Government suppression of workers in the factories to protect the Mill owners and the management. He referred to the Government's indifference in the enforcement of wage-laws, industrial disputes Act, Trade Union Acts and rules governing leave and holidays. The Conference proposed to organize workers irrespective of their group affiliation. It also elected 3 leaders of the Orissa Branch of AITUC to the General Council of AITUC. It passed a two point action programme:²⁶

- (i) AITUC would organize workers in all the working complexes;
- (ii) Workers would continue strikes and agitations to secure their rights.

On 19 May, 1957, the Orissa State Trade Union Congress met in a meeting presided by Harihar Das, a communist legislator of the Aska Constituency of Ganjam District.

It was attended by representatives of several trade unions organized by the Communist Party. The convention passed a two-point resolution.

- (1) Fight against the suspension and dismissal of workers in the factories;
- (2) Evaluation of the working of the trade unions in Orissa.

For this purpose, the convention suggested the setting up of a co-ordination committee of the INTUC, AITUC and HMS.²⁷

Along with the industrial progress, the working force in Orissa has multiplied. The workers have looked to the factories as a permanent source of income. They have relied on trade unions as they are more effective instrument of collective bargaining. Hence during the period from 1950 to 1960, the trade unions have acquired a greater degree of stability. In 1950-51, there were only 44 trade unions, their number rose to nearly 100 in 1955-56 and 140 in 1960-61. The following table would show the rate of growth of registered trade unions from 1951-52 to 1960-61.

TABLE - 3

Year	No. of registered trade unions.	Total membership of the unions.
1951-52	104	19,209
1956-57	116	48,000
1958-59	138	44,689
1959-60	115	55,000
1960-61	103	53,000

Source: Labour Commissioner, Government of Orissa, Bhubaneswar.

27. Ibid., 6 July, 1957, p.2.

This fluctuation is explained by the fact that every year few trade unions lose their registration for failure of submitting annual returns.

The Communists' contribution to the working class movement is noteworthy. By 1960 they had made inroad to every factory but everywhere they were not in a dominant position. They had to face challenge from the Congress and the Praja Socialist Party. They were yet to enter on a large scale into the Railway Workers, Hindustan Steel Plant Workers and Mines workers. Everywhere they preached nationalisation of industries, socialism and unity. Their dislike to any form of bourgeois economic exercise could not attract sizable workers. But a heavy blow was dealt to the working class unity by the split of the communist party. The working class movement received an undue shock as the C.P.I.(M) organized its own organization CITU and CPI retained its hold over the AITUC. A rivalry between the two warring factions of the working class had proved disastrous. The workers have also shunned their revolutionary zeal to fight against the management. Capitalist's shrewd manoeuvre to outwit the working class has paid good dividends. Yet the proletariat makes its effort to maintain class solidarity when the question of bread and butter arises.

CH. VI

COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE PERIOD
OF PARLIAMENTARY EXPERIMENT IN
ORISSA.

- (A) Communist Party and Election.
- (B) Communist Party and Political
Development.
- (C) Communist Party : Organisation,
Leadership and Split.

With the inauguration of the new constitution, the free India entered into the stage of parliamentary democracy. This politics bases itself on the institutionalization of consensus and accommodation of the social pluralities through competition, bargaining and adjustment.¹ Few institutions and agencies such as elections, franchise, political parties and public media have grown up and are at work to crystalise the modernising process in politics. Despite their limitations, elections, franchise and political parties notably have become the vehicles of political participation. They provide a government by parliamentary majority and ensure its responsible and representative character for the polity. Both for the people and for the rulers, democratic legitimacy is to be achieved through periodic elections; election not only accords mandate to the ruling class but also secures the representation of the various interests in society.² Viewed in this context, election also provides a mechanism to evaluate the political consciousness of common

1. See Rajni Kothari; Politics in India, 1970.

2. ^{Karl J.} Friederich, ~~Karl~~, Constitutional Government and Democracy, p.275-78.

men and extent of political mobilization by political parties and its consequent legitimacy.

The Communist Party of India considered election as an occasion to awaken the toiling masses and educate them in socialist ideology. But it never did shun its radicalism for the communist leadership was convinced that the parties' strength lay in continuous mass movement. It took up elections as opportunities to expose the reactionary elements in society and the bourgeoisie-feudal land lord nexus. The Communist Party took part in the election held to the Central Legislature and Provincial Assemblies in 1946. The prime objective of its participation was to arouse the masses to readiness to launch a mass struggle for the final bid for power. It also championed the cause of a sovereign constituent assembly. The communist party was dubbed as a betrayer of the Nation's cause. Against these heavy odds the Communist Party secured 7 lakh votes and 9 seats in the provincial assemblies. In the election to the Constituent Assembly one candidate from the Communist Party could be elected from West Bengal.³ In Orissa, the Communist Party contested one seat only and it was a labour constituency. Baidyanath Rath contested the election and won it.

However, the first occasion for participation in the parliamentary process came in 1952 with the declaration of first General Election. And the Communist Party of

India prepared itself to take part in this election.

3. N.K. Krishnan, "Communist Party of India", Journal of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies, Oct-Dec., 1971, p.448.

The election is to be seen in the context of Party's background performances. The intervening period between 1948 and 1951 was the period of dark days in the history of the party. In the Calcutta session of February 28, 1948, the Communist Party adopted unanimously a resolution calling for a programme of violent revolution throughout India under the leadership of party General Secretary B.T.Randive. The same programme of action was also approved by the Communist Party of Orissa Branch in the same year. The revolution took the form of railway strike, strike in factories and peasant agitations. Revolution took its serious turn in the form of armed struggle in Telangana. In Orissa, the Communist leadership organized the peasantry, the railway and press workers. Hence, agitation broke out in all these sectors. Immediately the Congress government under the leadership of H.K.Mahtab cracked down upon the communist activities. The communist newspaper 'Muktiyuddha' was declared illegal. As the police reprisal followed, leaders like Gobinda Pradhan, Harihar Das, Suryanarayana Achari, Durgacharan Mohanty, Rama Krishna Pati and G.C.Patnaik went underground. However, the adventurist policy of the Communist Party cost it very heavy. A dislocation followed in the party's organization among the peasantry, the workers, the landless and the students and the youth.

The Communist Party of India made a fresh revision of its policy and abandoned its policy of extremism.

It regarded the development as 'left deviation' and decided to return to the path of united front and pursued the policy of people's democracy. In Orissa the State party conference was held at Cuttack Nari Sangha Sadan. It discussed and criticized the left deviation and resolved to work for the programme of Peoples Democracy.⁴ Thus under the force of changing realities the party thought to widen its popular base by uniting the workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie and to participate in the parliamentary process as a prelude to its advance towards socialism.

ELECTORAL PERFORMANCE:

Along with the reversal of its extreme policy, the party took up the onerous task of preparing the election manifesto for its participation in the election to the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies. The manifesto avowedly calls for "the replacement of the present anti-democratic and anti-popular government by a new government of People's Democracy, created on the basis of a coalition of all democratic anti-feudal and anti-imperial forces in the country capable of effectively guaranteeing the rights of the people."⁵ The manifesto strongly criticized the Nehru Government for its lack of zeal in effecting the agrarian reforms. The Manifesto promised a revolutionary agrarian reconstruction, which involved the slogan of land to the tillers and confiscation of lands

4. G.C.Patnaik, "Growth of Communist Party in Orissa," Nua Dunia, Party Special, December 26, 1975.

5. C.P.I. Programme of the C.P.I., 1951.

of the land-lords and princes. In industrial sector, it announced its programme for speedy industrialisation of the country and elimination of foreign control and dominance of foreign capital from our economy. The manifesto recognized the federal nature of India's composite society and wanted to organize the country on the basis of regional autonomy on linguistic line. It finally pledges its commitment to save the country's independence from outside imperialist interference.⁶

Although the Congress Party had carved out a mass party under the leadership of H.K.Mahtab, Naba Krushna Chowdhury, Nityananda Kanungo and Biswanath Das was relying on its achievements in the nationalist struggle. The socialists under the leadership of Surendra Nath Dwivedi and Rabindra Nath Das were also riding on the crest of popularity due to their heroic struggle in Quit India Movement. The amalgamation of princely states in Orissa also coincided with the emergence of Ganatantra Parishad which represented the princes and feudal lords deriving their strength from the primordial loyalties of the tribes of Western Orissa. The suppression of the communists in Orissa under the chief ministership of Mahtab was both an element of strength as well as weakness for the party. The party was severely handicapped by its 'alleged' negative role during the days of freedom struggle. The Congress as well as the socialists made it the source of attack.⁷ The Communist Party's indulgence with violence

6. J.P.Suda : Main Currents of Social and Political Thought in Modern India, Vol.III, pp.29-30.

7. Interview with Banamali Das.

and class struggle was also the congress's main them of criticism.

Thus, the Communist Party of India entered into the field of electoral contest circumscribed by social and political constraints. For 20 Lok Sabha seats in Orissa, Congress chose to contest for 18 seats, Ganatantra Parishad for 12 seats, Socialist Party for 10, Communist Party of India for 4 and others for 14. And the Congress won 11 seats, polling 42.2 per cent of the valid votes, the Ganatantra Parishad bagged 5 seats whereas the Socialist Party contested 10 seats but could win only one seat but polled 15.4 per cent of valid votes. The Communist Party of India contested 4 seats and got one seat only. When Bijaya Chandra Das got himself elected from South Ganjam constituency the other three Mohan Das from Khurdha, Man Mohan Mishra from Puri and Baidyanath Rath from Cuttack were defeated.⁸ The party performance in 1952 General Election is presented in the following Table.

TABLE No.1.

ELECTION TO 1952 LOK SABHA

<u>Party con- tested.</u>	<u>Seats con- tested.</u>	<u>Seats won.</u>	<u>% of seats.</u>	<u>Valid votes in percentage</u>
Congress.	18	11	55%	42.2%
Ganatantra Parishad.	12	5	25%	-
Socialists.	10	1	5%	15.4%
Communists.	4	1	5%	5.8%
Others.	14	2	10%	-

Source: Election Commission, India : Report on the First
General Elections in India 1951-52 Vol. New Delhi, 1955.

8. Paramananda Mohanty; Ama Nirbachana (Oriya) Cuttack, 1973,
p.43.

Election was also simultaneously held for 140 seats of the Orissa Legislative Assembly. Congress contested for 130 seats, the Socialist Party for 67 seats, the Ganatantra Parishad for 58, Communist Party for 33 and others contested were 218 in number. Congress snatched away 67 seats polling 39% of valid votes and Ganatantra Parishad secured 31 seats but polled 20 per cent of valid votes. The Socialists secured 10 seats and polled 11 per cent whereas the Communist Party of India bagged 7 seats and got 5 per cent valid votes.

TABLE No.2.

THE 1952 ELECTION TO THE ORISSA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.⁹

Party.	Seats con- tested.	Seats won.	% of seats.	Valid votes polled.
Congress.	130	67	43%	39%
Socialists.	67	10	7%	11%
Communist.	33	7	5%	5%
Ganatantra Parishad.	58	31	22%	20%
Others.	218	25	18%	25%
TOTAL:		140	100%	100%

Although Congress Party came out victorious securing the largest number of seats in the Assembly, its performance did not match its pre-independence days popularity and its election preparation. It was a great shock for the Congress Party. The Ganatantra Parishad scored impressively as it relied heavily on the feudal bastions

9. Source: Paramananda Mohanty : Ama Nirbachan, Cuttack, 1971, p.62.

of Western Orissa. The Communist Party of India contested from 7 seats in Ganjam District, 8 seats in Puri, 10 seats in Cuttack, 5 seats in Balasore, 2 seats in Dhenkanal and one seat in Sambalpur. It won 4 seats in Ganjam, 2 seats in Dhenkanal and 1 seat in Puri. The members who were elected were Mohan Das, Harihar Das, Gobinda Pradhan, Jagannath Mishra (all from Ganjam), Madan Dehuri and Baishnab Charan Patnaik (from Dhenkanal) and Gangadhar Paikarai from Puri. However in Khurda and Ranapur constituency of Puri, Pranath Patnaik and Gangadhar Mishra lost marginally securing a second position. In Jagannath Prasad and Purushottampur constituency of Ganjam Ananta Charan Raut and Sadananda Mohanty respectively lost the election securing second position. Similarly, in the double member constituency of Rural Cuttack, Biswanath Panshayat lost the election securing third position and polling 10,005 valid votes. In Kakatpur, Nimapara, double member constituency, Banshidhar Sahu and Gatikrishna Sethi lost the election securing third and fourth position and polling 19,583 and 15,672 valid votes respectively.¹⁰ However, the party did not contest in any seat in the districts of Koraput, Phulbani, Kalahandi, Bolengir, Sundargarh, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar. In contrast the Socialist Party contested from all the districts of Orissa but could secure 4 seats in Mayurbhanj, 3 seats in Cuttack, 1 in Puri, 1 in Ganjam and 1 in Sambalpur. A districtwise

10. Ibid, p.67.

comparison between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party as regards their electoral strength is illustrated in the following Table.

TABLE No.3.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE PERFORMANCE OF COMMUNIST AND SOCIALIST PARTIES IN THE 1952 ELECTION TO THE STATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Name of the District.	COMMUNIST PARTY.		SOCIALIST PARTY.	
	Seats contested	Seats won.	Seats contested	Seats won.
1. Koraput.	-	-	4	-
2. Phulbani	-	-	-	-
3. Dhenkanal.	2	2	4	-
4. Bolangir.	-	-	5	-
5. Kalahandi.	-	-	1	-
6. Sambalpur.	1	-	2	-
7. Sundargarh.	-	-	3	-
8. Keonjhar.	-	-	1	-
9. Mayurbhanj.	-	-	9	4
10. Balasore.	5	-	10	-
11. Cuttack.	10	-	26	3
12. Puri.	8	1	8	1
13. Ganjam.	7	4	5	1
TOTAL:	33	7	78	10

Although both the Communist and the Socialist Parties had strong organizations in the coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore, they fared very badly as Congress was the main challenge for them. From the coastal districts Congress secured 51 seats and all other parties were crushed under its feet.

In the 1952 election no single party could secure an absolute majority to form the government.

However, with the Congress Party staked its claim to form the Ministry, Naba Krushna Chowdhury, the former Congress Socialist, took over the leadership and became the Chief Minister. But the office proved very thorny to Naba Krushna Chowdhury as H.K.Mahtab wanted to retain his firm grip on Orissa Politics. Disturbed by the pressure of murky politics and specifically disgusted by the crude politicking of H.K.Mahtab, Naba Krushna Chowdhury resigned from Office on 18 October 1956. On 19 October, 1956 Mahtab assumed office in Orissa only for four months as the Second General Election was declared to be held in 1957.

The changing realities in the National and International environment also brought remarkable changes in the theory and strategy of the Communist Party of India. It appreciated the way Nehru conducted his foreign policy but was still critical of Nehru's alignment with big bourgeoisie. It pledged to support the Government in its fight against imperialist, feudal and monopoly interests. It also resolved to strengthen the independence and sovereignty of India and its effort towards the world peace. This ideological perspective also coloured the party manifesto emphasized on the abolition of foreign dominance of our economy and loosening the grip of monopolists. It demanded a massive land reform, transfer of land to the tillers, living wages for agricultural proletariat, speedy

industrialization and development of public sector and improvement in labour condition. It also called for the elimination of disparity in income and removal of unemployment. But a noticeable difference was that one Communist Party of India fixed its goal to wield power this time through the election. In Orissa Politics, the main contestants for power were Congress and the Ganatantra Parishad. H.K.Mahtab was to lead the Congress, whereas the Ganatantra Parishad was steered by R.N.Singh Deo. This time the Socialist Party was divided and in Orissa Praja Socialist Party, had captured the rank and file. For the 20 Lok Sabha seats, Congress filed 20 candidates. Ganatantra Parishad contested for 14 seats. P.S.P. contested for 6, Communists for 5 and others contested for 11. In the election Congress captured 7, Gangatantra Parishad 7, P.S.P. secured 2, Communist Party secured one and independent got 3 seats. In terms of valid votes polled, Congress secured 40%, Ganatantra Parishad 29%, Praja Socialist Party 15.4%, Communist Party of India 4.8% and others got 10%. Chintamani Panigrahi was the lone communist member to ^{be} elected from Puri District Constituency. The performance of political parties in the 1957 Lok Sabha election has been illustrated in the following table.

TABLE No.4.

THE 1957 GENERAL ELECTION TO LOK SABHA.

Party.	Seats con- tested.	Seats won.	Percen- tage of seats.	Valid votes polled.
Congress.	20	7	35%	40.1%
Ganatantra Parishad.	14	7	35%	29.1%
P.S.P.	6	2	10%	15.4%
C.P.I.	5	1	5%	4.8%
Others.	11	3	15%	10.6%

Source: Election Commission, India : Report on the second General Election in India, 1957, Vol. I
New Delhi, 1959.

Election to the State Legislative Assembly created a peculiar situation. For the 140 seats in the Assembly, Congress Party contested all the seats. Ganatantra Parishad filed candidates for 108. Praja Socialist Party contested 43, Communist Party contested in 42 constituencies. There were also 171 candidates in the fray, contesting either from Jharkhand Party or from Lohia Socialist Party or as independents. But in the election Congress could muster 56 seats only by polling 38 per cent of valid votes. Ganatantra Parishad secured 51 seats but polled 29 per cent of valid votes. The Praja Socialist Party captured 11 seats and polled 11 per cent of valid votes and Communist Party captured 9 seats by polling 9 per cent of valid votes. Compared to 1952 Assembly Election, the Communist Party could bag 2 more

seats in 1957 election. It captured 3 seats in Ganjam, 3 seats in Puri and one seat each in the districts of Dhenkanal, Sambalpur and Cuttack. In Jeypore constituency of Koraput District, the C.P.I. candidate Harischandra Buxipatra lost marginally by securing second position. So also, in the constituencies of Bhatali, Chhatrapur, Begunia, Nilgiri and Ranapur, the Communist candidates lost marginally. The elected communist party candidates were Mohan Das, Pran Nath Patnaik, Gobinda Pradhan, Harihar Das, Soma Nayak, Natabar Barachhore, Lokanath Chowdhury, Hrushikesh Pradhan and Gangadhar Paikarai. The party performance has been illustrated in the following Table.

TABLE No.5.

THE 1957 GENERAL ELECTION TO THE ORISSA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Party.	Seats		Percentage of seats won.	Valid votes polled.
	Contested.	Won.		
Congress.	140	56	40%	38%
Ganatantra Parishad.	108	51	37%	29%
Preja Socialist Party.	43	11	8%	10%
Communist.	42	9	7%	9%
Jharkhand and others.	171	13	8%	..
Total:-		140	100%	100%

This time the Communist Party of India could contest 10 seats in Koraput and 4 seats in Mayurbhanj. This could be possible because of the emergence of grass root organizations in Koraput and Mayurbhanj. The lead was taken by Harishchandra Buxipatra, D.B.M.Patnaik and Purnachandra Gamanga in Koraput and Girish Chandra Rai, Durlave Chandra Rai and Bhaktabandhu Mohanty in Mayurbhanj. However, it could not secure a single seat in the election.¹² The Communist Party of India did not contest any seat from Phulbani, Kalahandi, Balangir, Keonjhar and Sundargarh Districts. This is indicative of Party's organizational weakness. However, in this election the Praja Socialist Party contested for 43 seats but did not file any candidate in Phulbani, Dhenkanal, Sambalpur and Keonjhar. Table-6 presents the districtwise comparison of the electoral strength of Communists and P.S.Ps. in 1957 election to Orissa Assembly.

12. Paramananda Mohanty : Ama Nirbachan, Cuttack, 1971, p.75.

TABLE No.6.

COMPARATIVE STUDY OF COMMUNISTS AND P.S.P.S. ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION : 1957 ELECTION TO ORISSA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

District.	C.P.I.		P.S.P.	
	Seats contested.	Seats won.	Seats contested.	Seats
Koraput.	10	-	1	-
Phulbani.	-	-	-	-
Dhenkanal.	2	1	-	-
Kalahandi.	-	-	2	-
Bolangir.	-	-	3	-
Sambalpur	5	1	2	-
Sundargarh.	-	-	2	-
Keonjhar.	-	-	-	-
Mayurbhanj.	4	-	7	2
Balasore.	2	-	5	2
Cuttack.	6	1	17	6
Puri.	6	3	2	1
Ganjam.	7	3	4	-
TOTAL:	42	9	43	11

Electoral performances of the political parties created a coalitional situation in Orissa Politics. As the major parties failed to achieve a comfortable majority in the Assembly the minor parties snatched away the scope for playing the role of a balancer. Thus, both the C.P.I.

and Praja Socialist Party gained significance because of their strength. Congress under the leadership of Mahtab with the support of Jharkhand and Communist Party formed the Government but it was too difficult for the Congress Ministry to continue as power of the purse had its decisive share in the politics. The Congress Government of Mahtab initiated dialogue with R.N.Singh Deo of Ganatantra Parishad for forming a coalition Ministry. On May 22, 1959 Mahtab and R.N. Singh Deo issued a joint statement agreeing to form a coalition ministry. The coalition ministry could not continue for long as there was a marked difference of opinion among the Congress leaders as regards its rationale.¹³ With the election of Biju Patnaik to the Presidentship of UPCC, the coalition government resigned on 21 February 1961, paving way for the clamping of President's Rule and subsequent declaration of a mid-term election to the Legislative Assembly.

In 1956, the Communist Party of India held its Fifth Congress in Amritsar. The party congress declared that it was possible to establish socialism through democratic means. Here the party advocated its policy goals in clearer terms. The party pronouncement was consistent with its capture of political power in Kerala for the first time in 1957. But soon troubles erupted in Kerala as a vanquished Congress Party organized agitations and violence. The Communist Government in Kerala was sacked

13. Jena, B.B., Orissa : People, Culture and Polity
New Delhi, 1981, p.278.

in July 31, 1959 in the name of Communist 'mis-rule' or its failure to run the constitutional machinery. This was also interpreted by the Communist radicals as a failure of the constitutional line of the party.¹⁴ Despite the differences in ideological perception, the communist party in its Sixth Congress at Vijayawada in 1961 confirmed the democratic line to assume power. It also resolved to form a National Democratic Front to fight against the forces of right reaction in the country. The party manifesto for the Third General Election of 1962 was along the lines of Vijayawada Congress resolution.¹⁵ In third General Election, the Communist Party improved its image, at national level. It secured 29 seats in the Lok Sabha by polling 9.94 per cent of valid votes. It also emerged as the strongest opposition party in the parliament. In Orissa, the party contested only in two constituencies of Puri and Bhubaneswar and could not secure a single seat. In the election to State Legislative Assemblies, the communists earned an encouraging return by securing 186 seats and the party became the second largest organization only next to Congress in terms of electoral strength in India.

In view of the crisis the mid-term election to Orissa Legislative Assembly was held in 1961. Under the

14. L.P.Sinha : "Left Wing Opposition in India" in Aspects of Democratic Politics in India, edited by K.R. Bombwall and L.P. Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi, 1968, p.456.

15. L.P.Sinha : The Left Wing Parties and the General Election, 1962, in Indian Journal of Political Science, No.4, Oct.-Dec., 1962.

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captainship of Biju Patnaik the Congress Party contested for all the 140 seats in Assembly. Ganatantra Parishad contested in 117 seats, P.S.P. in 46 and Communist Party contested in 35 constituencies. The result of the election was both a surprise for the Congress as well as a shock for the left wing parties. Biju Patnaik's strong organizing ability could secure for the Congress 82 seats polling 44.44 per cent of valid votes. The Praja Socialist Party got 10 seats but polled 10.23 per cent of valid votes. The Ganatantra Parishad bagged 37 seats and polled 23.81 per cent of valid votes and the Communist Party could win only 4 seats and 8.37 per cent of valid votes. All the 9 sitting members of the Communist Party in the last Assembly were defeated. The party got one seat in Sambalpur, 2 seats in Puri and 1 seat in Ganjam District and snatched away these seats from the Congress. The Socialists secured 3 seats in Mayurbhanj, 3 seats in Balasore and 4 seats in Cuttack. Congress came out victorious in the strongholds of Communist and Socialist parties.¹⁶ However, in 12 constituencies such as Jeypore, Parlakhemundi, Bhanjanagar, Digapahandi, Aska, Bhattalu, Anugul, Nayagarh, Khurdha, Bhubaneswar, Kakatpur, Nimapada and Erashema, the Communist Party lost marginally, securing the second position. Table-7 shows the respective party performances in the election.

16. Paramananda Mohanty, : Ama Nirbachana, Cuttack, 1971, pp.89-92.

TABLE No.7.THE 1961 MID-TERM ELECTION TO ORISSA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

<u>Party.</u>	<u>Seats con- tested.</u>	<u>Seats won.</u>	<u>Percentage of votes.</u>	<u>Valid votes %</u>
Congress.	140	82	58.4%	48.44%
Ganatantra Parishad.	117	37	26.4%	23.81%
P. S. P.	46	10	7.0%	10.23%
Communist.	35	4	..	8.37%
Others.	163	7	..	13.15%
TOTAL:		140	100%	100%

The candidates elected from C.P.I. were Rama Chandra Ram from Ranapur, Gangadhar Paikarai from Segunia, Lakshman Mohapatra from Chhetrapur and Prasanna Kumar Panda from Braj Raj Nagar.

Certain conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing analysis of the electoral performance of the Communist Party of India in Orissa. First and foremost, the Communist Party is not a viable political force in the State. As we see, in the ex-princely states of Orissa, specifically in Phulbani, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Sundargarh and Keonjhar the party could not carve out a popular base. In these tribal states feudal exploitation was maximum but the Communist Party could not penetrate into these feudal bastions.

Secondly, even in the coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri, Balasore and Ganjam, the party could not secure

all the seats it contested in any election. The party was concentrated in certain localities only. In Balasore, party had its base in Nilgiri, Eoro and Chandabali, in Cuttack party's pockets of influence were Ershama, Badachana, Sukinda and Athagarh, in Puri the party bastions are Bhubaneswar, Nimapada, Khurdha, Katakpur, Ranapur and Begunia, in Ganjam District, Aska Chhatrapur, Bhanjanagar, Jagannathprasad and Parlakhemundi were communists' strongholds. The party's electoral success in this area was due to the communist participation in the struggle against princely states and its successful organization of the peasants and workers.

Thirdly, the party's organization and finance were the two main weaknesses from which the party was suffering. The party contested from those constituencies where Congress put stiff challenges. In terms of finance and mobilization the Congress was enjoying the obvious advantage over the Communist Party. As Rama Krishna Pati explains, the party's mobilization capacity was largely hampered by its financial weakness but yet it could be elected because of its disciplined cadres in certain areas. The party had to fight against the prevailing popularity of the Congress as the leader of the Indian National Movement.¹⁷ A veteran legislator, Lakshman Mohapatra of the Communist Party also observed that the party exists

17. From Interview with Rama Krishna Pati.

and grows by mass struggle. Its success in the elections relied on the extent to which the party leadership can mobilise the people into the fold of mass struggle. He also admits of the financial constraint as one factor for the party's electoral defeat.

Fourthly, in 1961 Legislative Assembly Election, the party's strength was reduced to 4 whereas the PSP could retain its strength. The explanation of the party leadership was that the ambitious programme of Mr. Biju Patnaik, who could pose himself as capable of delivering the immediate good to the people could inspire hopes in the people. His organizing leadership could not be countered equally by the communist party. Of course no leader of the communist party did say that the congress won the election through the power of the purse. They felt that the progressive image of the party leadership and the remoulding of entire congress organisation were factors for the victory of the Congress and defeat of the communists in their strongholds.

Finally, in the coastal districts of Cuttack, Balasore and Puri and in the districts of Mayurbhanj and Dhenkanal the communist party influence has been severely checked by the Socialist Party. Hence, in Cuttack, Balasore and Mayurbhanj the Socialist Party has emerged victorious at the cost of the communist party.¹⁸ The communists have failed to make any remarkable dent into the base of

18. A constituencywise analysis of the three General Elections establishes this fact beyond doubt.

the Socialist Party.

COMMUNIST PARTY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN ORISSA:

While participating in the parliamentary process, the communist party did not give up its strategy of extra-parliamentary struggle to solve the problems of people. The party made use of the mass organization, its press as well as the Assembly to fulfil the promises it made to the people. Each political development in Orissa was viewed by the party in the context of the operating historical forces and party showed an active involvement to direct it in the direction of the people.

The first General Election established the hold of the Congress both at the Centre as well as at the State. Naba Krushna Chowdhury assumed office in 1952 as Chief Minister. During 1951, when Naba Krushna Chowdhury was the Chief Minister, a student strike raised its head all over Orissa on the issue of tuition-fees of college students which was raised by the-then congress government. The strike took a serious turn as it was organized by the leaders such as Miss Nandini Panigrahi and Prabir Palit and it received the support of C.P.I. of Orissa. This very issue hardened the Chief Minister's attitude towards the Communist Party. Similarly the Communist Party's attitude towards the Congress Government was one of critical support, based on the party's assessment of Congress politics. In the state level conference of the

All India Trade Union Congress, the Secretary Barga-charan Mohanty bitterly criticized the Chowdhury government for its support to the industrialists and factory owners and its policy of suppression of the workers. He held the government responsible for the appalling condition of the industrial workers in Orissa and criticized its failure to enact Wage Act, Industrial Disputes Act and Trade Union Rights Act to ensure better working facilities for the workers.¹⁹ The Communist Party viewed the policy of land reform adopted by the Chowdhury Government with appreciation. It welcomed the Orissa Tenants Relief Act, 1953, passed by the Orissa Legislative Assembly. But in July 1954, the party's peasant wing All Orissa Kisan Sabha under the presidentship of Sadhu Charan Mohanty bitterly opposed the resolution of the Congress Land Reform Committee which suggested that a family could retain 100 acres of land. It branded the Congress Party as the party of the rich peasantry and land lords and hence its land reform policy provided protection to the rich peasants and land-lords. In the same year, the Balasore District Krishak Sabha also decried that the Congress was pursuing the policy of peasant suppression, resorting to tax increase only to harm the interest of the landless agricultural proletariat and supporting the removal of small peasants from his lands.²⁰

19. Nua Dunia Report on 30.12.54, p.4.

20. Ibid., Report on 16.7.54, p.3.

The Nua Dunia, Communist Party mouth-piece, in its editorial column on 19 December 1954 examined the class character of Congress Government under Nehru. It viewed that the Congress and its leadership represented the bourgeoisie interest in the society. Restrictions on the movement of the workers, peasants and middle classes established the authoritarian attitude of the representatives of the capitalists. Through the operation of black laws these sections attempted to suppress the just right of the common man. Nehru's characterisation of the communists, the Editorial argued, as decoits, anti-social and anti-nationalist indicative of the crisis in the ruling party which in turn, emerged out of the economic crisis in capitalism.²¹

The Communist Party welcomed the presentation of Anchala Administration, 1954 in the Assembly by the Congress government but it criticized the failure of the government in undertaking minor irrigation projects and specifically handling the flood situation of 1955. As a policy alternative the communist party appealed to the government to constitute a flood relief committee so that the flood situation could be controlled in a war footing by using the service of volunteers of different political parties. The inept handling of the flood situation was highlighted by the Communist Party. However, politicians within the

21. Nua Dunia Editorial on 3.12.54, p.2.

Congress Party with a sufficient stake in power engineered the belief that the devastation took place due to administrative lapses and government's indifference.²²

State reorganization was another sad event during the tenure of Nabakrushna Chowdhury which brought down the Ministry's reputation. The State Reorganization Committee came to Orissa in 1955 to consider the construction of the State on linguistic basis. Rama Krishna Pati, Sharat Patnaik and Gobinda Mohanty, all from the Communist Party of India, represented strongly for the integration of all the Oriya speaking tracts in the Orissa Province. Their argument was that the integration of all the Oriya-speaking areas in Orissa would not only contribute to the cohesion of the State but also was a logical necessity for the development of the nationality. For the purpose of boundary reconstruction one village should be construed as one unit and since Sareikala and Kharasuan villages were Oriya speaking tracts, should be amalgamated with Orissa. When the Commission advanced the possibility of carving out a union territory in the interest of the Ho community who inhabited the Singhbhum district, the communist representation pleaded that the economic and cultural development of the Ho community could not be achieved by isolating them from the Oriya mainstream. The key to their development lay in their association with the mainstream of Orissa while they could retain their tribal

22. Suniti Ghosh : Orissa in Turmoil, p.79.

23. Nua Dunia : Report on 18.2.55, p.3.

identity through the grant of local autonomy.²³

Different political parties represented strongly the case of amalgamation of Sareikala and Kharasuan villages in Orissa. Even the Finance Minister Radhanath Rath mobilized public opinion in favour of their integration in Orissa State. When the Reorganization Committee submitted its report, it retained the two villages with Bihar which were transferred to Bihar in 1949 during the Chief Ministership of H.K.Mahtab. As the report turned out to be disappointing, the Chief Minister Naba Krushna Chowdhury appealed in the Assembly to all the political parties to wage a united struggle to achieve their object. Thus, a mass movement was launched with the active effort of all the parties including the Congress government to press the demand for the return of Sareikala and Kharasuan villages to Orissa. In Jeypore, the SRC movement sprang up under the active leadership of the communist party activist Haris-chandra Buxipatra. In Cuttack and Puri districts, Rama Krishna Pati, Sharat Patnaik, Gurucharan Patnaik and others launched the mass movement to build up a strong public opinion. The students under the leadership of Prabir Palit and Akhila Mohan Patnaik also went on strike to protest against the State Reorganisation Commission Report. In this event, the Communist Party considered the step taken by the Chief Minister in launching the mass movement as 'sincere'.²⁴

24. Interview with Rama Krishna Pati, an active organizer of this protest movement.

The Communist party also considered Ganatantra Parishad as a party of reaction representing the decadent feudal and princely elements of the State which rendered its unequivocal service to the British for the perpetuation of colonial rule. The communist party openly declared that its objective was the abolition of all feudal vestiges and the withdrawal of all royal privileges, the party considered these privileges as anachronistic in a progressive society. However, as back as 1952, Sraddhakar Supakar, the leader of the Ganatantra Parishad, wanted to explore the possibility for forming a non-congress government in Orissa. He convened the meeting of all the non-congress political leaders to reach at a compromise. The Communist Party in Orissa under the leadership of Mohan Das did not attend such a meeting as its leadership made it sufficiently clear that the party would not join any alliance of the princes and landlords and would keep no track with the reactionary retrograde elements of Orissa. Hence, the Ganatantra Parishad's active move to assume power did not succeed.²⁵ As Rama Krishna Pati points out, the communist party made it clear that it would not support the Ganatantra Parishad in the event of its wielding power.

During the Chowdhury regime, Mahtab, the then Governor of Bombay tried to assert himself in the corridors

25. Sraddhakar Supakar : Madhyama Purusha (Autobiography), p.196.

of power in Orissa. Even he unleashed barrels of criticism against Naba Krishna Chowdhury and created factionalism within the Congress. Explaining the alleged charges of factionalism, Mahtab wrote to Nehru, "The mounting unpopularity on account of inaction, inefficiency and corruption in the administration, has created a situation which cannot be explained away by throwing the blame on imaginary party factions."²⁶

Disturbed by his detractors, Naba Krishna Chowdhury pressed before the High Command for the resignation of his government. Mahtab also seized the opportunities to convince the High Command that in the interest of the party there must be a change in the power structure of Orissa. On October 18, 1956, Naba Krishna Chowdhury resigned from office and H.K.Mahtab assumed power on 19 October 1956.

The Second General Election cast a negative verdict for the Congress Party. The Party's strength was reduced to a mere 56 and thus fell short of an absolute majority in the Assembly to form a government. The Ganatantra Parishad securing 51 seats manoeuvred to form a coalition ministry with the help of Praja Socialist Party and the other minor parties. The Communist Party refused clearly to co-operate with the Ganatantra Parishad and Praja Socialist Party in the formation of coalition government. On

26. Suniti Ghose : Op. Cit., p.82.

18 May, 1957, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India endorsed the stand taken by the party in Orissa in this regard.

Mahtab made political capital out of the Ganatantra Parishad's failure to form a Ministry. As Congress failed to get a working majority, the alternative course was to form a coalition. The coalition with the Praja Socialist Party could not be possible as the later joined hands with the Ganatantra Parishad. The other course for Mahtab was to rally the support of Jharkhand Party, the Communist Party and the independents behind him. Similarly for the communists, as Professor B.B.Jena mentions, three possibilities were there. First, to extend support to the Congress, second to enter into the coalition ministry with Ganatantra Parishad and third to demand for a fresh election to avert the crisis of political instability.²⁷ The second possibility was ruled out as the Communists characterized Parishad as the representative of Kings and Land-lords. The third possibility was also too expensive for the party to accept and the party was not prepared to seek fresh election. Hence, the party resolved that its support in the legislature would be based on the needs of the common men and their fulfilment by the party in power. Thus, the party was ready to tolerate the Congress in the Government provided it fulfilled its promises to the electorate. This

27. B.B.Jena, : Orissa : People, Culture and Polity, p.285.

resolution of the communist party cleared the ground for Mahtab's assumption of power in the State as Chief Minister. Mahtab indeed could stay in power through an artificially manufactured majority and through intense politicking. Even F.G. Bailey commented, "The Ministry (of Mahtab) showed disproportionate tenderness to even the least of its supporters."²⁸

On 24 June, 1957, the Communist leader in the Assembly Prananath Patnaik and a noted legislator Mohan Das took part in the deliberation on land reform bill, demanded a comprehensive land reform policy from the government and called on the government to distribute the surplus lands among the landless. Mohan Das also criticized Mahtab's indifference to land reform characterizing it as a product of his feudal background. In the same Assembly, Prananath Patnaik attracted the attention of the government towards the acute food shortage in Orissa and suggested for setting up district level and State level Food Committees and for establishing a State Foodgrain Trading Corporation in India. The Chief Minister accepting the proposal expressed in the Assembly that the government would urgently consider these suggestions.²⁹ On 23 August 1957, the Communist Party publication Nua Dunia called on the government to fulfil its electoral promises within a time frame and also appealed to the people to join mass

28. F.G. Bailey : Politics and Social Change, Orissa in 1959, p.203.

29. Samaj on 25.6.57, Reported in its Assembly Review.

agitations on the event of the government's callousness. The State Committee meeting of the Orissa Communist Party held from 9 August to 14 August 1957, passed a similar resolution. It also proposed to the Congress government (i) to fix ceiling on lands, (ii) to set up a committee to enquire into the working of watchman system in village (Chowkidar Pratha) and (iii) to introduce Panchayat system for local-self government of the people. The Committee further discussed the boargeoise-feudal character of the Congress Rule and urged upon the people to stage mass demonstration against the anti-democratic and corrupt functioning of the Congress government. Finally the committee proposed to meet the urgency of the drought situation in Orissa through the following measures: (1) Set up an all party food committee, (2) Stoppage of the sale of food grains to outside the State (3) Provision for supply of fertiliser and seeds to drought affected areas, (4) The expenses of the small cultivators in farming the land must be provided by the government (5) Grant of tac-cavi loans to cultivators without charging interest on it, (6) Spread of irrigation facilities to all villages, (7) Opening Grain stocks in each villages to provide grains at cheap rates and finally to set up State and District level food committees.³⁰

30. Nua Dunia on 30.8.57. Resolution of the State Committee Meeting of Communist Party of India.

The Orissa Branch of Communist Party of India held its conference on 11 June, 1958 in which the Congress Government's performance was evaluated. The party assessed the government's character as anti-people and found the government to have followed a reactionary policy. The party resolution called for the enactment of laws by the government to protect the small peasant tenants against the illegal transfer of property, to safeguard the interest of the workers in Rourkela Steel Plant and Hirakud by regulating their working conditions, to develop the Paradip Port for the future use of State's natural resources.

The Congress Government under Mahtab continued to remain in power under a fluid political situation. When the communists were particularly bitter about the achievements of the Congress ministry, the members of Jharkhand party who on earlier occasion supported the government, now turned against it. Defection and horse trading ruled the Orissa Politics for a few months.³¹ The Congress in spite of its majority in the House was defeated in the election of one of its members to Rajya Sabha. This was a clear blow to the prestige of Mahtab and the Congress. To make the situation worse for the Congress government Harihar Das, a leading legislator of the Communist Party, moved a cut motion in the Assembly on April 24, 1958, on the budgetary demand for new taxation. To save the ministry

31. The detail account on Politics of defection in Orissa is found in Sukhadab Nanda : Coalitional Politics in Orissa, pp.62-63.

Congress resorted to purchase of legislators on payment of huge amount of money. Even the few opposition leaders were carefully prevented from attending the cut motion discussion. The ruling party had a narrow escape just by one vote, when the Government secured 63 votes, the opposition got 62 and all communist members voted against the government. On May 5, 1958, on the occasion of voting on the appropriation Bill 1958-59, the government had also a very critical escape by two votes, when the government mobilised 68 votes, the opposition got 66 and all the communist legislators voted against the Appropriation Bill.³²

In the midst of crisis H.K.Mahtab could only see one way of retaining his prestige by tendering his ministry's resignation. On May 9, 1958, he resigned and the Governor asked him to withdraw his resignation. Mahtab continued till May 22, 1959. However, in the mean time, he explored the possibility for a viable coalition. Although the Ganatantra Parishad and PSP agreed to work on a common programme against the Congress, Mahtab started hobnobbing with R.N.Singh Deo, the leader of the Ganatantra Parishad. The communist party in Orissa could uncover the sinister designs of Mahtab and criticized the move towards the coalition. On 30 April 1959, it was reported that the State unit of the Communist Party of India characterised the move for Congress-Parishad coalition as an attempt to defend the desperate feudal reaction and

Congress misdeeds and corruption in India.³³ The Central Executive Committee also endorsed the views of the State Unit and commented, "the Government led by H.K.Mahtab sought to retain itself in office by all manners of thoroughly unprincipled and corrupt practices including recourse to bribery and intimidation". The Communist party also deliberated upon the common programme of the Ganatantra Parishad and P.S.P. and held that in deference to wishes of the people of Orissa and having regard to the broadly popular characters of the announced programme, the C.P.I. will support the formation of an alternative ministry of Ganatantra Parishad and P.S.P."³⁴ Thus, while the Communist Party's support for the coalition of Ganatantra Parishad and P.S.P. would be conditioned and most continuous it declared its open opposition to any coalition of Congress and Parishad. However, on 22 May 1959 the Congress-Parishad coalition assumed power in the State under the leadership of H.K.Mahtab.

F.G.Bailey sums up the communists criticism of the Congress participation in the coalition ministry of 1959 thus, "The Congress could no longer pretend to socialism. Whatever the Congress or the coalition government has to say about their intentions, it was unlikely that men who were not only born into an aristocracy but also had fought a long and bitter fight to maintain their

33. Hindustan Standard, Delhi, April 30, 1959.

34. Sunit Ghose : Op. Cit., p.96.

way of life would overnight become enthusiastic proponents of socialism.³⁵

On 15 October, 1960, the Communist Party State Council held its meeting at Cuttack for two days. Banamali Das, a member of the State Council advanced the resolution for the formation of a Progressive Front. The idea of the Progressive Front was to secure unity among all the democratic forces in Orissa and it was felt to be an urgent necessity to check the drift towards feudalism. The resolution also put forward a programme of action for the realisation of unity among the progressive elements. The programme of action included, (i) Elimination of the dominance of princes and Land Lords over the economic and political life of Orissa, (ii) Progressive land reforms (iii) Planned development of agriculture, irrigation and flood control system, (iv) Merger of Kharasuan and Sareikala Oriya-speaking villages in Orissa, (v) Speedy industrial development, (vi) Gainful employment for Oriyas, (vii) Nationalisation of essential industries, trades and business and reduction of tax-burden on common man, (viii) Protection of just and legal rights of workers, (ix) Introduction of local self-government to foster common man's participation in politics and administration, (x) Protest against the central indifference to the planned development of Orissa and (xi) Mobilisation of mass support to the principle of world peace

~~35. Nua Dunia dated 31.10.1960, pp 4-9.~~

35. F.G.Bailey: Politics and Social Change : Orissa in 1959, Berkeley, 1963, p.248

and peaceful co-existence pursued by India.³⁶ The resolution, it appears, appreciated Nehru's conduct of India's foreign policy.

In the third election to Orissa Legislative Assembly the Congress was returned to power with an overwhelming majority under the Chief Ministership of Biju Patnaik. The Communist Party's strength in the Assembly was reduced to four. The Communist Party considered Biju Patnaik a progressive leader and extended its support to his policy of speedy industrialisation. However Biju Patnaik was to resign soon under the Kamraj Plan. His trusted lieutenant Biren Mitra, who left the Communist Party in 1946 and joined the Congress, took over the administration on 2 October 1963.

On 8 December, 1961, a no-confidence motion against the 5 month old Congress Government was jointly tabled by the legislators of Ganatantra Parishad, Praja Socialist Party and the Communist Party. However, the motion was defeated in the Assembly by 30 votes as the Government mobilised 79 votes, against the 49 votes of the three opposition groups. In October 1962, the Orissa State Assembly unanimously adopted a motion moved by the Chief Minister Biju Patnaik recommending to the Union for the formation of a National Government both at the centre as well as the States in order to meet boldly the

36. Nua Dunia, dated 21.10.1960, pp.4-9.

national crisis arising out of Chinese aggression. In November, 1962, the State Unit of the Communist Party in Orissa strongly criticized the Chinese invasion of India, when the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India was still grappling with the matter as to whether the Chinese could be called aggressors.³⁷ The Government of Biren Mitra soon ran into trouble. Mahtab's open hostility to Biju Patnaik was also at the root of difficulties. Mahtab through his daily paper 'Praja-tantra' exposed the Congress Ministry's involvement in corruption. It was also reported that the whole State administrative machinery had been geared up to subserve the business interest of Patnaik and Mitra.³⁸ The Communists in Orissa seized upon this opportunity to awaken the masses to the facts of political corruption in Orissa. Thus mass demonstrations and processions were organized in the Communists pocket of influence such as Nilgiri, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Khurdha, Chhatrapur and Berhampur. The popular slogans of the Communist Party were: "Biju and Biren are identical terms for corruption" and "Whatever you see Biju and Biren, you see liquor shops". In 1964, student agitation sparked off from a non-issue i.e., man-handling of a student of Cuttack Engineering School by a Radio repair shop owner. But the strike under the political patronage of socialists and communists spread

37. Asian Recorder, Delhi, on 8.11.62, p.11.

38. A detail discussion is found in Vherghese and Dwivedy : Political Corruption in India.

all over Orissa and took a political colour. The strike was organized in Schools and Colleges against the corruption of Congress government. It demanded the resignation of the Mitra's Ministry. Mitra's style of functioning was resented by Congress leaders. Party factionalism was at its apex.³⁹ Being the subject of ridicule and criticism and incurring people's displeasure, Mitra Government resigned finally on 20 February 1965.

Thus during the period under review, the Communist Party was a small party in terms of its legislative strength. But it could make its notable contribution to the political development in Orissa by waging a continuous struggle both in and outside the Assembly against the anti-people policies of Congress and the reactionary policies of Ganatantira Parishad. The Party's support was crucial for the Congress in the period of 1957-59 and it maintained the balance by extending a qualitative and conditional support to the Government's policies. The strategy was fully issue-oriented and it stuck to the ideology of common man by refusing to become a partner in the coalition. When other parties' actions were unideological in view of their policy of opportunism, the Communist Party followed a consistent policy of not aligning itself with any opportunistic alliance to capture power. It even withdrew its support from the Government and organized the masses against it in the event of the exposure of Government's corruption.

39. B.B.Jena : People, Culture and Polity, p.282.

PARTY ORGANIZATION:

The Communist Party of India during the period of national movement and in the phase of parliamentary experiment aggregated the interest of the workers, peasants and landless labourers in Orissa. The party could wage struggle through its party organization and leadership. Both party organization and leadership are the two objective determinants of party's successful functioning.

The State Unit of the Communist Party of India had developed its own organisation and pattern of leadership. The ruling organisational principle of the party was democratic centralism. When it carried out the dictates of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of India, it also democratically conveyed its decisions upward to the Central Committee. The State Unit was functioning through three main institutions: State Council, State Executive and State Secretariat. The State Council was the main policy making body and State Executive carried out the decisions through the help of the party secretariat. While the State Council usually elected 3 members to the Central Committee of the Party, the members of the State Level Council were elected from the district party organisations. By 1962, the Communist Party had established its party officers and organizations in all the districts of Orissa except Phulbani, Kalahandi, Bolangir and Sundergarh.

In the coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri, Balesore and Ganjam and in some sub-divisions of Mayurbhanj,

Koraput, Sambalpur and Dhenkanal, the party had also opened its zonal offices and village cells. All the party positions were elected. The membership of the communist party was a difficult process as it was a monolithic party. The membership of the party required that a person desiring membership of the party must work for a definite period either in the student organization or in workers front or in the peasantry. The period of work was to be prescribed by the State Council. The membership of any affiliated organization was also a prelude to the membership of the party. The worker might also be required to sell the party paper 'Nua Dunia' for a specified period in order to be eligible to membership. After proper appreciation of his work the village cells or the zonal office would recommend his name for membership and on the basis of recommendation, the candidature would be endorsed by the district level party office and the State Council. This cumbersome process explained why the Communist Party had so few number of members. In the year 1958, Communist Party had in its roll only 2,495 members and it increased to 4,022 in 1962.⁴⁰

The Communist Party was well entrenched in the working class. By 1954, the party had 50 affiliated trade unions and 33,000 workers were organized by them. The Orissa Unit of All India Trade Union Congress was functioning through its Secretary. In 1954, the State Unit

40. See Organisational Report, Seventh Party Congress, Communist Party of India.

of AITUC elected 3 members to the General Council of AITUC. However the party lost its control over the workers of Chowdwar which passed on to the hands of Praja Socialists and the Congress. The trade union leadership was in the hands of Durga Charan Mohanty, Ram Chandra Ram and Lakshman Mahapatra. In the Kishan front, the party's affiliated institution was All India Kisan Sabha. In the year 1956, the membership of Orissa Unit of AIKS was 6,384. Sadhu Charan Mohanty was the President of the Orissa Unit of Kisan Sabha till it was finally split along with the split in the Party in 1964.

The Communist Party also penetrated into the students community and it functioned through the All India Student Federation. The All India Student Federation had a strong base in Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, F.M.College, Balasore and S.C.S. College, Puri during the period of 1952-64. However, the Communist Party could not appoint a whole timer to take charge of student wing till 1964. Similarly, although the party organized youth conferences in 1954 and 1959 its youth organization did not function till 1962. The seventh congress of the Communist Party held at Vijayawada in 1962 appreciated the party's Kisan organization and Trade Unions but it lamented that the student and youth organizations, though formally existed, were indeed inactive and hardly wielded any influence over the student and youth community in Orissa. ⁴¹

41. Seventh Party Congress : Organizational Report,

The party press had a very chequered history. The Communist Party's first legal weekly paper was 'Muktiyuddha' published in Orissa in the year 1942 and it was printed in the Nabayuga Press Cuttack. But during the period of Communist extremism, the Congress Government declared the weekly illegal. The party also published few issues of 'Sambada' and 'Sandhana' in the following years which were banned by the Government. Since 1950, the party published Nua Dunia as the party mouth-piece to communicate to its members the theoretical debates in the party and party's policies and programmes and allied news related to the party organization.

PATTERN OF LEADERSHIP:

Political leadership imparts cohesiveness and dynamism to a party organization. Lenin in his "What is to be done?" suggested that a leader of the Communist Party must be a professional revolutionary and the party must "rely upon people whose profession is that of a revolutionary."⁴² He further suggested discipline, devotion and education as the most essential requisites of a party leader. In our analysis of political leadership of the Communist Party in Orissa we just not consider those people who could influence his followers. The criteria for considering the leadership here are the assumption of party positions, participation in Legislative Assembly and assumption of positions in workers, kisans and students

42. Lenin : What is to be done? p.225.

organization. The study of political leadership here is very selective as it studies those who acquired their party membership in pre-independence days. The analysis covers 4 main aspects of political leadership: (i) Caste representation, (ii) Educational representation, (iii) Occupational status representation, (iv) Areas of political and social activity. It also considers the rural-urban representation of the leadership. Source of Party affiliation and jail experience, etc. Data regarding the socio-economic and political profile was collected 25 leaders who assumed the above mentioned party positions till 1964 or were the members of the Legislative Assemblies of 1952, 1957 and 1961.

Various studies in Orissa have established that caste plays a key-role in Orissa politics. Brahmin and Karan dominate the Orissa Political scene. Table-8 shows the caste status of the communist party leadership.

TABLE No.8.
CASTE REPRESENTATION

Caste.	No.of leaders.	Percentage.
1. Brahmin.	9	36%
2. Karan.	6	24%
3. Kshyatriya.	Nil	-
4. Khandayat.	8	32%
5. Scheduled Castes.	2	8%
6. Scheduled Tribe.	Nil	-
Total:-	25	100%

Nine leaders representing 36 per cent of the total leadership belonged to the Brahmin caste. The Khendayats who are also known as people of cultivator caste ranked second in the leadership as there were 8 Khendayats representing 32 per cent. The Karans ranked third and they represented 24 per cent of the leaders. As Communist Party was a closed and mass based party with a hierarchical structure, the assumption of party leadership was a fact of industry, discipline and organizational ability. Indeed, as educational avenues expanded during the period of British rule, the Brahmins and Karans seized the opportunity to educate themselves. And consequently they could establish themselves in Orissa Politics. Although the scheduled caste constituted 18 per cent of the entire population, the party leadership had 2 representation amounting to 8 per cent. This explained the comparative backwardness of the scheduled caste people. Although in Orissa, feudalism was the dominant social relations till 1960, the communists did not have any leadership from Kshatriyas which explained the Communist Party's anti-feudal and anti-zamindar stand. As there were no tribal leaders in the communist party, it explained party's inability to mobilise the tribals of Orissa.

Educational background of the communist party leaders has been shown in the Table No.9. Educational qualification of the leaders shows that an overwhelming 16 members representing 64 per cent of the total leadership

had college and professional degrees. Only 5 leaders representing 12 per cent of the total leaders had middle English education. The educational qualification has never been a bloc for the communist party leaders as their capacity for organization outweighed their qualification. Legislators like Gangadhar Paikarai who had education upto M.E.Standard and Harihar Das and Benamali Das who had education upto Matriculation were very successful peasant leaders, and legislators. But the Table shows beyond doubt that during the period under review, the party leadership was in the hands of highly educated men. The reason

TABLE No.9EDUCATIONAL REPRESENTATION.

Level of education.	No.of leaders.	Percentage.
1. Middle English.	3	12%
2. High School.	5	20%
3. Graduation and above.	10	40%
4. Law degree.	6	24%
5. Not known.	1	4%
TOTAL:-	25	100%

was not very far to seek. The intellectual soundness of Marxism and Communism appealed to the educated minds and hence educated people who joined the party rose to prominence due to their educational superiority and organizational ability.

The occupational background of the Communist Party leadership provides peculiar conclusions. The figures given in Table No.10 are overlapping and the percentage is misleading. While 17 leaders owned landed property as their source of income 20 leaders representing 80 per cent claimed to be full time politicians. This is because those who were full time politicians had never directly engaged themselves in cultivation, their lands were cultivated either on a share-cropping basis or by their kins in the family. However, land provided sustenance to 68% of the party leaders. Among the 17 leaders claiming to be from land-owning family. Gobinda Pradhan

TABLE No.10.

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS DISTRIBUTION.

Occupation.	No.of leaders.	Percentage.
Cultivation.	17	68%
Business.	Nil	-
Legal Practice.	5	20%
Government jobs and teachership.	Nil	-
Full-time Politicians.	20	80%

a legislator was the son of a Mustadar and Benamali Das, Mohan Das and Sadananda Mohanty were born to rich peasants having more than 30 acres of landed property but Gangadhar Paikarai, Lakshman Mohapatra and Suma Nayak were born to poor family. That the party did not have any link with business is also seen in the Table. While 5 leaders

were practising lawyers, no one was in teaching and government jobs. However, Ananta Patnaik who was in charge of party publication was a teacher, who left his job to join the party. Similarly, Lakshman Mohapatra, who joined a Sub-Inspector of Orissa Police left job to join the Communist Party. The leaders occupational background also shows that as many as 22 leaders were from the rural areas.

Experience of the leaders in the primary social and political activity has been presented in the Table-11 It takes into account experience in trade union works, kisan organisation, student and youth movement and social services.

TABLE No.11.

PRIMARY SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVITY.

Area of activity.	No.of legislators.	Percentage.
Trade Union.	6	24%
Kisan Organisation.	15	60%
Student and Youth Movement.	3	12%
Social Service.	7	28%

A large number of party leaders i.e., 15 representing 60 per cent of the total leadership had experience in Kisan organisation and also held district level and state level leadership in Krishak Sabha during this period. This also explains that the party could build up a strong peasant organisation in Orissa. 6 Party leaders representing 24 per cent had experience in Trade Union activity.

Three leaders had experience in the Student and Youth organization. The figures are also overlapping as those who had experience in student organizations were also trade union leaders such as Durga Charan Mohanty, Ram Krishna Pati and Rama Chandra Ram. Seven members representing 28 per cent expressly stated that they also devoted time for organization of co-operatives, establishing schools and colleges and organizing tribals and harijans for redressal of their grievances. Few leaders such as Gengadhar Paikarai, Lokanath Chowdhury, Dyutikrishna Panda and Sadhu Charan Mohanty were both peasant leaders and organizers of social service activities. While 10 leaders stated that they participated in the National Congress's struggle against British rule for achieving national independence, 7 leaders stated that they took part in the Freedom Struggle against Rajas tyrannical rule in the princely states. And, the leaders who were in Congress joined the Communist Party later. Thus, it is seen that all the political leaders of the Communist Party in Orissa had sufficient political education before they could assume party positions. All the political leaders also claimed to have prior jail experience. Leaders like Durga Charan Mohanty, Banamali Das, Harihar Das, Ram Chandra Mishra and Gatikrishna Swain were jailed in more than one occasion. This is seen in Table No.12. The jail experience was common to all the communist leaders as the Communist Party was a radical party and the

leadership was involved in the radical activities such as mass agitation, demonstration, strike and processions, etc.

TABLE No.12.

PRIOR POLITICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE DAYS.

Nature of experience.	No.of leaders.	Percentage.
1. Experience in freedom struggle.	10	40%
2. Experience in the struggle against Royal Tyranny.	7	28%
3. Jail experience.	All	100%

The districtwise distribution of the party leadership is seen in the Table No.13. The largest number of political leaders of the communist party were from Ganjam

TABLE No.13.

DISTRICTWISE DISTRIBUTION OF PARTY LEADERSHIP.

Name of the District.	No.of leaders.	Percentage.
Cuttack.	6	24%
Puri.	7	28%
Balasore.	1	4%
Ganjam.	7	28%
Dhenkanal.	2	8%
Sambelpur.	2	8%
TOTAL:	25	100%

and Puri which together contributed 14 leaders representing

56% of the total leaders. Cuttack assumes the third place in terms of its contribution to the leadership as it has six leaders. The table shows also that the remaining 7 districts had no representation in party leadership. The lone representation of Balasore was through Banamali Das. The table can be interpreted thus: As Cuttack, Puri and Ganjam took the all-Orissa leadership in building up a strong Kisan Movement, naturally leadership of the party came from these districts.

Thus the pattern of leadership of the communist party provides interesting inferences. We studied the socio-economic and political profiles of the 14 legislators, 3 district party secretaries, 2 general secretaries of the State Unit, 4 leaders of Orissa Unit of AITUC and one President of All India Krishak Sabha, Orissa Unit. The leaders had an overwhelming rural background. They were mainly from the three higher castes in Orissa and a majority of them (17) were land owners, although they did not cultivate lands. The leaders were educated (64% had college education) and had prior political experience as they did take part in national movement or in the freedom struggle in the princely states and also organized Kisans, Workers, Students and Youth. Mainly the leaders had created a strong rural base. As industrialization in Orissa was not very widespread, workers concentration was not very strong and so communist leadership did not fare

well in workers front. And, hence, the leaders were all from coastal Orissa except 2 from Sambalpur districts who were trade union leaders. The table also do not prove that the land and caste domination in the party leadership has checked the growth of the party in power as its critics very often opine.

SPLIT AND DEFECTION:

The split of the Communist Party of India has been viewed by both Marxist and non-Marxist scholars. Non-Marxist scholars trace the split in the party to the intense factionalism in it arising from a competition for leadership and fulfilment of personal ambitions. They also discover the cause of the split in the non-Indian character of the party. The Marxist scholars⁴³ put primary emphasis on the understanding of the Marxist ideology and its relevance to the Indian situation, the difference in the party has arisen from conflicting perceptions of the subjective and objective conditions of the Indian national movement, the role of the bourgeoisie leadership as the steerer of the national struggle for independence, the need for an independent proletarian movement for the attainment of independence. Differences occurred on the issues of the attitude of the Communist Party towards the Indian National Congress, the bourgeoisie leadership and towards a proletarian struggle and what should be the party strategy on all these situations. In the Seventh Congress of the

43. Sudipto Kaviraj: Split in the Communist Movement in India, (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University).

Communist Party of India held in 1967 a veteran communist leader G. Adhikari pleaded for an objective assessment of the role of the communist party during the period of freedom struggle. Acknowledging the weakness of the party in the perception of the situations, he stated that the party could not play a decisive role in the national movement as it could not interpret the Indian situations in the light of a dynamic Marxist ideology. He felt that the party considered the primary conditions as secondary and secondary conditions as primary ones on various occasions which led to the formulation of an inadequate and wrong strategy. However as the Marxist scholars put it the conflicting understanding of these situations created a division within the communist party in the pre-independence days.

After the achievement of independence when Congress assumed power in India disagreement followed on the issue of the nature of State power in India, i.e., the nature of the Congress Rule in India and what should be the C.P.I.'s attitude and strategy in relation to Congress Rule. Those who considered Congress as the representative of the National bourgeoisie and as such was progressive proposed to extend its support to the Congress in its fight against imperialism and put forward the proposal of a 'National Democratic Front'. They also felt that the Congress policies had a leftward trend and hence it was progressive. But others within the communist party

believed Congress rule as a rule of the land-lords and monopoly bourgeoisie and hence the character of its policy could never be progressive. They considered the Congress still to be a reactionary force as it supported the feudalism against the people and the big bourgeoisie against the workers. Hence, the basic policy of the Communist Party must be one of opposition to the Congress and its government although this group wanted to extend a qualified support to the Congress in its fight against imperialism. It also considered the independence of India achieved under the bourgeoisie leadership as largely formal.⁴⁴

In June 1950 after a prolonged debate and inner party struggle on contending theses on the left-deviation of the communists during the leadership of B.T.Randive, the Central Committee of the party could adopt the thesis of left deviation. At the Fourth Congress held at Palghat in 1956 an ideological struggle was ensued on the issue of units with the congress, under Nehru and the characterization of Congress as a patriotic force. The party faced a new crisis with the emergence of polecentrism in the international communist movement and the Chinese attack on India. The Communist Party of India after an intense debate in the Fifth Congress at Amritsar in 1958 accepted the line of the the 20th Congress of CPSU which envisaged for the first

44. Shankar Ghosh : Socialism and Communism in India,
Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1973.

time the possibilities of a peaceful transition to socialism in the developing countries. However, the line of the CPSU was decried by China who dubbed it as a compromise with imperialism. The difference between the two leading communist countries, Soviet Union and China on a host of issues and leadership led to the break-down of the monolithic structure of the international communism. This also created a flutter within the communist party which later took serious proportion. The Chinese invasion of India also baffled the leadership of the Indian Communist movement and as the leaders came to grapple with the situation with a marxist tool, the ideological division reached the point of no return. Indeed those who championed earlier the cause of congress communist collaboration and appreciated the line shown by CPSU decried the Chinese aggression in no uncertain terms. But those who advocated the line of peoples democracy, anti-congress strategy to build up a working class state criticized the 'right' communists anti-China outbursts and criticized the Congress governments historic pronouncements on the 'alleged Chinese aggression'. To the 1963 Congress, E.M.S.Namboodripad presented his political resolutions titled "Dogmatism and Revisionism: Common Root. He tried to establish that Revisionism, right opportunism, dogmatism and left opportunities ~~are~~ have their class roots in the broad state of petty bourgeoisie, the small masters who in the process

of capitalist development join the ranks of the proletariat. E.M.S.Namboodripad, himself as a centrist, criticizes the majority as revisionist and right opportunist and not marxist Leninist and says that the majority condemns the minority as dogmatic and sectarian.⁴⁵

With the death of Ajaya Ghosh, the party lost a moderate leader who held the balance for a long time. The struggle for leadership also played its own part in the division of the party. Finally, the party disintegration reached its climax in 1964 when 32 members of the National Council left the party to formalise the split and form a new party to be known as the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Veteran party leaders who provided a leftward shift to the Communist Movement by forming the new party were E.M.S.Namboodripad, Jyoti Basu, Pramod Dasgupta, B.T.Randive and P.Sunderayya. The official communist party (C.P.I.) remained under the control of S.A.Dange, Bhupesh Gupta, Rajeswar Rao, G.Adhikari and N.K.Krishnan etc. The split was so massive that even there was a split in the state level and district level organizations of the Communist Party.

✓ The Communist Party in Orissa reflected a peculiar character which was not typical of the national level organization of the party. The ideological division was

45. E.M.S.Namboodripad, Dogmatism & Revisionism, Common Root-Political Resolution.

of course very strong within the party. As back as 1942 when Quit India movement was launched, the Communist Party of India boycotted the agitation in favour of the People's war policies. But in Orissa leading communists such as Pranenath Patnaik and Gokul Mohan Rai Chudamani were arrested for their participation in the agitation. They took part in the struggle as they viewed the movement from a different perspective. G. Rai Chudamani says that a communist is a nationalist of the first order in his thought and action.⁴⁶ Pranenath thought communism could be achieved within the framework of nationalism.⁴⁷ In 1951 a debate was also carried on the resolution of 'Left-deviation' on which Banamali Das, Sharat Patnaik, Guru Charan Patnaik, Ram Krishna Pati did take active part. Although the Political Resolution of the Central Committee was unanimously accepted, the left wingers considered it as a 'rightward shift'. With the acceptance of the path of constitutionalism differences cropped up on the issue of support to the Congress Government in Orissa and also at the Centre. Few Communist leaders like Bijaya Chandra Das, Baishnab Patnaik, Baidyanath Rath, Rama Krishna Pati wanted an unqualified support to the Congress Government in Orissa, as it was

46. A.K.Baral & L.Rai Singh : Pranenath Smarane, Khurdha, 1971, p.49.

47. A.K.Mishra, Aliva Sikha, Granth Mandir, Cuttack, 1982, pp.35-36.

constituted by the progressive section of the national bourgeoisie. But the other group who could be called left-wingers such as Harihar Das, Sharat Patnaik, Sadhu Charan Mohanty, Pranatanath Patnaik and Banamali Das were considering the Congress government still reactionary and wanted to extend only a limited support based upon issues. They also were critical of the Congress Party's association with Ganatantra Parishad, a representative of the ex-Rajahs, feudal chieftains and land-lords.⁴⁸ However, the Chinese invasion of India changed the configuration of the left and right groups in Orissa. Indeed prior to it, there was no rigid division of the party leadership into 'Left' and 'Right'. The Orissa Unit of the C.F.I. passed a unanimous resolution condemning the Chinese aggression of India. However, leaders like Banamali Das, Shivaji Patnaik and Lakshman Patnaik thought that the alleged Chinese aggression was a part of the Congress propaganda aimed at hoodwinking the working class.

The Communist Party of India was split into two in the Bombay Congress held in 1964. From Orissa Guru Charan Patnaik, Shivaji Patnaik and Banamali Das etc., went to attend the Congress. Returning from the Congress Banamali Das, Shivaji Patnaik and Lakshman Patnaik and Jagannath Mishra broke away from the party and formed the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Even the leftists like Durga Charan Mohanty, Sharat Patnaik,

48. From Interview with Rama Krishna Pati and Lakshman Mahapatra.

Ram Chandra Ram and Rama Krishna Pati remained with the 'Right' group which consisted of G.C.Patnaik, Ram Chandra Mishra and Pranatanath Patnaik, etc. In Orissa the actual control of the party organization remained in the hands of C.P.I. and the C.P.I.(M) had to create its own mass base. The C.P.I.(M) created its peasant organization, trade union front and its student organizations in Orissa. When the official Communist Party held its sway in Ganjam, in the districts of Puri, Balasore and Cuttack, the party organization was divided into two. The C.P.I.(M) created its mass base in the constituencies of Nilgiri, Badachana, Ranpur, Bhubaneswar and Parlakhemundi.

Lakshman Patnaik a labour leader of C.P.I.(M) organized the labour organizations affiliated to CITU and Banamali Das organized its Kisan Wing known as the Orissa Kisan Sabha. The party also attempted to penetrate into the Students Community and formed the student Federation of India in major colleges of Orissa. The official communist party of India retained the organization and the rank and files in Orissa and thus it retained its dominance in the previous communist strongholds.

More than the formal split, defection took a serious turn in the Communist Party of India. Many important personalities of the party left the organization and joined the Congress within the period of 1952-64. One group of leaders who defected from the party were guided by the consideration of United Democratic front

including the Congress. Bijaya Chandra Das, Baishnab Patnaik, Binayak Acharya were of the belief that the Congress was an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal organization. Socialist reconstruction of Orissa and of the Nation would be possible if the Congress rule was strengthened. So they espoused the idea of a Congress-Communist collaboration and a coalition government. As the communists characterization of the Congress was wrong and its policy led to alienation of the masses from the party, they left it to join the Congress.⁴⁹ Binayak Acharya who later became the Chief Minister of Orissa, was convinced that the Communist Party's left sectarian policy in Orissa would ultimately lead to its ruin. Mrs. Nandini Satapathy left the Communist Party to join the Congress organization in 1962. She was impressed by the inspiring leadership of Biju Patnaik who could consolidate the Congress in Orissa and described him a progressive man. Disturbed by the internal dissention of the party and the party's indecision in the event of Chinese aggression of India, she left the Communist Party and joined the Congress. She also felt that it was possible to achieve socialism remaining within the Congress Party and through parliamentary measures. Finally few other important leaders such as Chintamani Panigrahi, Harishchandra Buxi Patra and Sailen Mahapatra left the party organization in 1964 as the party was split into two. Kripa Sindhu Khuntia disappointed by the intense conflict within the party and left the organization during the period of 1964.

49. Interview with Binayak Acharya.

However, Banamali Das and Rama Krishna Pati, leaders of C.P.I.(M) and C.P.I. respectively argued from the point of planned economy and institutionalization of political power at the regional and local level. The planned economy leading to the development of capitalism opened in its years of inception new avenues for those who could assume political power at any level. Hence many leaders who saw no political gain within the communist party left it to reap the high dividends that could be got from the Congress Party. Thus it was seen, some of the important leaders of the present Congress were recruited and trained in the Communist Party. Further, lack of training in the Marxist ideology and ideological opportunism were important factors determining the defection from the Communist Party in Orissa. Rama Krishna Pati also strongly felt that the middle class root of these leaders was also responsible for their defection from the party.

The twin occasions of split and defection tell upon the party's future seriously. The parties monopolistic control over the Kisans all over Orissa has declined. The party's electoral strength has shown remarkable fluctuations. In the 1967 Assembly election, both the communist parties secured 8 seats polling 7.5 per cent of the total valid votes. It was an impressive result compared to the 1961 mid-term assembly election result but both the parties got only 6 seats polling 6 per cent of the total valid votes. In 1974 the parties

captured 10 seats at the expense of 6 per cent of the valid votes again whereas in 1977 they could capture 2 seats and 4 per cent valid votes and in 1980, four seats and 5 per cent valid votes. When these two left parties have improved their electoral strength in the States of West Bengal, Kerala and Bihar, Tripura, in Orissa they have either stagnated or declined. The party leadership claims that the division in the party has weakened the communist party in Orissa and its prospects lay in the united effort by both the parties in raising a strong Kisan struggle and building up a strong rural kisan base.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The paper makes an incursion into the realm of radical politics in Orissa in its historical context but the confines of the paper are limited to the assessment of the contribution of the Communist Party of India to radical politics. The historical contextual analysis of the subject precludes any futuristic attempt on the part of the researcher, yet the research relevance of the paper lay largely in the suggestive aspect providing few of hind-sights into the nature of class organisation in Orissa, the nature of state power, the subjective and objective conditions in which the Communist Party has built up its mass movement and the strength and weakness of the party as a radical movement and also a radical political organisation. The role of the Communist Party of India has been appreciated from the angles of ideology, organisation, leadership and strategy. The time frame within which the party's contribution has been studied, is from 1936 to 1964 and is very crucial not from the point of view of political radicalism or party building in Orissa but more importantly because of the development of a sub-systemic political culture in Orissa. Again the political radicalism of the Communist Party has been studied not as an anomic tendency

but as an ideological and legitimate involvement on its part which is in conformity with the principle of Marxism.

I

The Communist Party of India has both a national and international character, it has an all India organisation and its ardent faith is on international communism. However, in Orissa the Communist Party was not imposed from above, it originated in the soil of Orissa which provided the party its necessary pre-requisites for sustenance. The social ecology of Orissa presents the dominant agrarian character of Orissa society. Orissa is known for its characteristic backwardness and mystic poverty. Its industrial backwardness is still a stark reality. Its social composition shows disproportionate preponderance of tribals in Orissa. Hence the Communist Party of India in order to grow in strength must understand this social configuration. Any successful radical movement on the part of the Communist Party would largely depend on its ability to awaken the tribals of the land and to propagate the ideology of peasant communism as has been done in China.

The Communist Party has a very peculiar growth in Orissa. Few educated radical youths from the middle class of Orissa were attracted by the terrorists of West Bengal. They were also impressed by the intellectual soundness and humanitarian outlook of the marxist philosophy. These youths were the active workers of Indian National Congress

but they had lost their faith in the Congress as an instrument of radical change. Within the Congress, they formed the Congress Socialist workers league under the leadership of Bhagabati Panigrahi and Naba Krushna Chowdhury. However, in May 1934, with the formation of All India Congress Socialist Party, the Congress Socialist Workers League in Orissa was converted to the Congress Socialist Party of Orissa. Towards the end of 1936, the Communist Party in Orissa was formed as a small cell comprising 3 communists. By the year 1938, its strength rose to 50. The Communist Party was declared legal in 1942 but it held its first conference in Orissa in the year 1948.

II

The Communists' critical participation in the national movement of India has earned them much denunciation and dubious reputation in Orissa. The Congress historians of Orissa have examined the role of Orissa Congress in the National Movement and exhibited a comparative indifference towards the role played by the Communists and Socialists. While, in Orissa, Congress was a belated growth and its leadership was in the hands of the middle class, its organization having a cadre base, the communists mobilized the masses and awakened them to the state of national consciousness. For long, Orissa was an isolated unit cut off from the national mainstream. The Communists had a differing perception of the national movement and yet they

organized the masses of the villages to fight against British imperialism to liberate the country. The National Congress in Orissa reaped the benefits in the early 1940 utilising this awakening of the masses and the Communists were subject to bitter ridicules as the betrayers of the nation and collaborators of British imperialism.

The Communist leadership in Orissa had its origin within the Indian National Congress. Many leaders who were initiated into politics by Congress later became communists. The Communists utilised the Congress forum to build up a mass movement against British imperialism and feudalism. But the infant party was strangled by the British Government when it launched the infamous Communist Conspiracy case against the nine youth communist leaders. However, it could not suspend the advance of the party in Orissa. As suspicion also spread in the Congress Socialist Circle, the Congress Socialist Party under the leadership of Naba Krushna Chowdhury expelled the Communists for their anti-party activities. The Communist's attempt to take the national movement in the direction of left radicalism was indeed regarded as anti-organisation activity. As the World War II broke out, the Communists in Orissa, inspired by the Congress Policy of individual Satyagraha, took the lead, participated in Satyagraha and were arrested for their anti-British Pronouncements. But it is a fact that the communists in Orissa had a very limited faith in the techniques of Gandhi and in Gandhian philosophy. They also considered

the Congress leaders in Orissa as the representatives of Indian bourgeoisie and even criticized Biswanath Das, veteran Congress leader and later member of the Constituent Assembly and Chief Minister of Orissa as an agent of decadent feudalism.

The year 1941 was crucial for the Communists in Orissa as also for the Communist Party in India. The Communists declared the war as People's War as the fascist force attacked Soviet Union. The Communists mobilized support in favour of British against the fascist forces as they considered the fascists as more dangerous. However, the communists still believed the British Rule as basically imperialist. Their non-participation in the Quit India Movement was considered as ideologically sound but a tactical error. When the entire country rose against British Rule, few communists could not have turned the tide. Their non-involvement rather alienated them from the masses of Orissa whom they so concertedly organised against the British. Their support to the British war effort did only puzzle the masses. However, later, their effort to counteract the fascist force brought them certain dividends. Yet in Orissa few leading communists took active part in the Quit India Movement which established that these leaders were nationalist out and out and wanted a balance between communism and nationalism. And, today, communism has accommodated within itself the reality of nationalism.

During the critical years preceding independence, the Communists in Orissa advanced the cause of a 'National Front' and 'Hindu-Muslim Unity' and observed 'anti-Repression Day' and protested against 'Cabinet Mission Proposals'. The Communist Party in Orissa celebrated the Independence Day but with reservations as it was political in character. The Communist Party was also critical of Congress as the latter believed in a consensual freedom, i.e., a freedom that was granted due to the mutual agreement between the Congress and the British bourgeoisie.

III

If the Communists could not play an effective role in the national movement in Orissa, the Communist Party could earn much of its appreciation for its struggle against the Rajahs and Princes of the native States. The communists have gained their foot-hold in the princely States of Nilgiri, Ranapur, Dhenkanal, Talcher and Athargarh as they waged a serious battle for the attainment of freedom for the native people. Ideologically the communists in Orissa were inclined to demand the abolition of royal absolutism and secure self-government to the people. The first round of battle was fought between 1937-39 against the brutalities perpetrated on the common men by the Rajahs and their coteries. These Rajahs and Princes were the continued supportive pillars of the British government

however, the pillars crumbled down like the house of cards as they failed to check the unfailing tide of communist radicalism in Orissa. However, the communists' role has been neglected by the historians who have paid very casual attention to the history of the freedom movement in the princely states of Orissa.

The freedom movement in the princely state of Nilgiri was launched under the leadership of Banamali Das, the noted communist and Secretary of Nilgiri Prajamandal. The freedom struggle reached such a proportion where with the intervention of Major Bazellgette, the Rajah reached an agreement with the Prajamandal to grant civil rights and representative rule. In Ranapur when the freedom movement was at its height Major Bazellgette was murdered by the agitated masses demanding freedom from royal oppression. In Dhenkanal, the Communists led the Movement against the Rajah. After a prolonged struggle, the Rajah agreed to restore the civil rights of the people and end all oppression.) All these princely states in the coastal Orissa awakened themselves because of the active involvement of the communists.

The Communists finally rang the death knell of the Rajahs and Princes in India. The process was initiated in Nilgiri where the Rajah unleashed the reign of terror over the people and engaged the tribals to liquidate the communists. The Communist Party organized an Azad Force

in alliance with the Prajamandal leaders and raised the battle to liberate this small princely state from the hands of the oppressive Rajah on 12 November, 1947. But immediately with the active intervention of H.K.Mahtab the then premier of Orissa, the Central Government took over the administration of Nilgiri and annexed it to the district of Balasore. Nilgiri hastened the process of integration of princely states in Orissa and India and the Communist Party's role was singularly noteworthy in the process of integration.

IV

✓ In the predominantly peasant society of Orissa, the success of the Communist Party depends on its capacity to bring out a revolutionary movement of the peasants and landless. The communists differed from the Congress so far as the role of Kisans in the national movement was concerned. The Congress wanted to make use of the strength of the peasant masses for the attainment of national independence but the Communists wanted to enlist the services of the Kisans in building up a State of the peasants and workers while simultaneously fighting for country's independence. When the historic role of the Kisans was appreciated, a large number of Kisan Sabha grew up in different districts of Orissa. Of course this was the result of the joint effort of the communists and socialists. But when socialists identified them with the Congress, the Communists

built up their independent peasant organization. Initially, the objective of the communist party was to awaken the peasants to the facts of their exploitation by a huge number of intermediaries particularly the Zamindars, Mustadars, Inamdars and money-lenders and to fight against these oppressive systems to secure justice to the peasant community. Thus under the leadership from communist party peasant agitation raised its head in the coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri, Balasore and Ganjam. From sporadic violence, the peasant agitation took its organized form. In 1937-38 the peasant agitation faced stiff resistance from the Congress as the Congress was packed with the land-owners. Yet under the mounting pressure the Congress Government had to enact land laws regulating the tenants payment of share to the zamindars and abolition of harrasing taxes. In the year 1938 under the leadership of Sadhu Charan Mohanty a famous communist from Puri, the All-Orissa Kisan Sabha sprang up and assumed a radical shape. It championed the cause of the peasants, share-croppers and landless agricultural proleteriat. In the year 1946-48, the famous peasant agitation of Takarada was led by the Communists and Gobinda Pradhan led the movement althrough. During the period of left extremism, peasant agitation also occuved in Puri, Cuttack, Balasore and Sambalpur. Although the Congress government suppressed the movement by the employment of ruthless oppression, it had to enact many land laws to improve the status of the

of the peasants. The peasant agitations worked as a constant reminder to the Congress government that any reactionary policy of the Congress would face stiff resistance from the peasantry. The peasant radicalism in Orissa is a direct contribution of the communist party.

The Communist Party in Orissa had felt the urgent needs of defining its policy and ideology involving the peasant community. In its formulation of objectives and strategy, the party has faced unsurmountable difficulties. The land fragmentation in Orissa and the consequent stagnant production does not allure the Orissa peasantry. The definition of a 'Kisan' a 'Peasant', 'a land lord' and 'a Zamindar' is very difficult to frame keeping in view our complex social ecology. The party's urgent need is to evolve a suitable definition which will eliminate the conflict among the landless and small peasants, small peasants and marginal peasants. The peasants' passivity and an attitude of peasantism is to be radically tackled if the party is to build up a strong Kisan base in Orissa. The division within the party has eroded its peasant base and the peasants of Orissa still stand in the midst of confusion.

The Resolution passed in the 1958 Amritsar Congress of the Communist Party of India, holds good in our case. It reads: "The failure to organise and develop Kisan Sabha and agricultural labour Unions, in spite of most

favourable conditions, constitutes the greatest weakness of the entire democratic movement. Without resolute measure to overcome this weakness the democratic movement will not get built and the party will fail to take roots as a decisive force in the political life of the country.

v

In India, the Communist Party has thrived on the support of the working class. The radicalism of the industrial proletariat provided the quintessence of the communist party in the pre-independence days. But in Orissa industrial clusters emerged only in the post-^{war} years very few working class organisations were led by the communist party. Specifically the press workers union, cane-growers association, Mahars Union, etc., were led by the Communist leaders. Between 1950-60 the communist trade union leaders captured sizable number of working class organisation in the newly established industries. Thus, Durga Charan Mohanty, Kripa Sindhu Khuntia, Rama Krishna Pati, Lakshman Mahapatra, and Dyuti Krishna Panda emerged as the communist leaders organizing the All India Trade Union Congress in Orissa. They have voiced demands affecting the entire working class community such as better wages, more leisure, housing conditions, representation of workers in the management of industries, etc. The Government of Orissa under pressure has enacted

factory laws to ensure the welfare of the workers. The Communist Party affiliated Orissa Branch of All India Trade Union Congress has organised the workers in Chowdwar, Brejaraaj Nagar, Rourkela, and Paradip Port etc., where workers concentration has been found. But because of Trade Union rivalry and other political parties competition the party has not made much headway into the trade union field. The party's success depends largely upon its capacity to articulate effectively and precisely the workers demand and train them in communist ideology. The tendency of economism within the working class is to be fought by the party with suitable strategy. The party's effort to build up a working class radicalism should be in harmony with its objective of organising the peasantry. The party has utterly failed in striking a balance. The party has also to build up a working class movement in the face of the government's counteracting capacity. The split in the party has also weakened the role of the communists in building up a strong working class movement in Orissa although industrialisation has been achieved considerably.

VI

In the period of parliamentary experiment, the communist party has moved between the two points of radicalism and constitutionalism. It has accepted the constitutional path to strengthen itself without abandoning its faith on the extra-parliamentary struggle. Its participation

in the electoral politics of Orissa has revealed its weak foundation. At no time it has been able to secure more than 9 seats and poll more than 10 per cent of the total valid votes. It also shows that the party has carved out few pockets of influence in coastal Orissa and is yet to penetrate into the western Orissa tribal bastion. Its organisations even do not function systematically in the tribal segments. The party's electoral success is also conditioned by its capacity to advance the cause of the poor and illiterate tribals whose causes were allegedly espoused by reactionary feudal chiefs and by the Congress Party. The Communist Party has failed to identify the needs of the tribals and to evolve strategy to organise them. In the coastal ^{Orissa, Congress has} limited its electoral victory. In Orissa, the Communist leadership were struck with the problem of distinguishing their ideology from that of the Congress which also pronounces socialistic jargans.

^{in Orissa}
Communist Party has identified itself with the political development of the State. It has participated in the students strike, the state reorganisation movement, and in the movement against political corruption. It has moved between 'no support' to 'limited support' for the Congress government. The policy of congress communist collaboration has cost it very dearly as the parts in Orissa did not accept it wholly. Many votaries of the unity have left the Communist Party to join the Congress as the later has the purse string. This is due to ideological opportunism on the part of the leadership. This clearly indicates

that ideological education in the communist party is very weak and even very often non-existent. Discipline and ideological cohesion are comparatively weak among the leadership. The background of the party leadership has also much to say. The party's leadership is mostly in the hands of the middle class. Very few leaders from the workers and peasants have emerged. Hence right revisionist tendency could be seen within the party and this explained the dissention in a close knit party. The party's weakness also emerged from its financial constraints. Basically a party of the poor could not organise its finance so as to place it in a secure footing. As elections have become very costly, the divided Communist Parties have failed to enter into the electoral politics with remarkable strength. Hence, after the split, the parties' chance of electoral success has become a matter of coincidence. Its future success will be determined by the extent to which its four determinants i.e., ideology, organisation, leadership and strategy show the capacity to identify, involve and integrate the common masses of Orissa in a single thread.

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