

Quit India Movement in Orissa

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled **QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN ORISSA** submitted by **Sri Surya Kant Nath** in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been submitted earlier for any other degree to this or any other University.

It is to recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for their consideration for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy.

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PREFACE

The Quit India movement of 1942 involved unprecedented and unparalleled mass participation. It marked the culmination of the nationalist movement; it was fought in the name of Gandhi, but at the same time witnessed mass violence.

The analysis and discussion of the national movement in many of its histories are sort of glorified histories rather than being critical accounts of the movement. The works of Harekrushna Mahtab¹ and Surendra Nath Pattnaik² primarily deal with the course of the movement, style of leadership and organisation of the Congress in conducting the movement. The researches by Kisori Mohan Patra³ and Prasanna Kumar Mishra⁴, are well-documented and mark a distinct advance over earlier works. They, however, to some extent fail to emphasize the role of the peasants and the colonial context. Surendra Nath Dwivedi,⁵ a revolutionary leader of 1942, gives us a first-hand account of the movement in his autobiography. The merit of the work lies in the fact that it highlights the movement at the lower levels. It brings out the popular initiative outside the purview of the Congress. Yet the work fails to fully discuss or analyse the nature and scope of the movement which went beyond the activities of its underground leaders.

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1. H.K. Mahtab, (ed.), History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vols. IV-V, Cuttack : 1969.
 2. S.N. Pattnaik, Odisare Swadhinata Andolan (Oriya), Cuttack: 1972.
 3. K.M. Patra, Orissa State Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1912-1947, New Delhi : 1979.
 4. P.K. Mishra, The Political History of Orissa, (1866-1936), New Delhi : 1979.
 5. S.N. Dwivedi, August Biplab, Cuttack : 1972, (Oriya)

This work attempts to study the various aspects of the 1942 movement in its sweep, depth and variety of dimensions. This analysis, confined to the regional segment of Orissa, is in the nature of an exploratory design. It hopes to concentrate on a more integrated understanding of the national struggle by constructing the nature of regional internalisation of an ideology like nationalism.

The study of the Quit India Movement in Orissa attempts to look into the nature and character of the process of mass mobilisation with emphasis on its pattern and extent. The objective of such mobilisation was to change the balance of social, political and ideological forces in favour of the struggling nation which in turn would facilitate the very process of overthrowing the colonial state by eroding its concentrated hegemony. Mobilisation in the period of actual mass movement is thus attempted.

A vexing problem in the context of a mass movement is the leader-mass relationship which has been the focus of on-going intellectual debates. We have tried to discuss some aspects of this relationship in the present study.

An interesting area of examination is the immense scope for initiative, creativity and innovation at the mass and cadre level of the movement; this we have tried to highlight in our study. This is important as we reject the notion of the tyranny of the leadership and the organisation and point to the open-ended character of the movement.

Regional peculiarities and the nature of the regional articulation of nationalism in the context of the anti-imperialist movement are the two other aspects of our study. In the introduction we have tried to discuss briefly the inter-relationships of modern forces like colonialism, nationalism and regionalism which formulated the socio-political expressions of the region during the colonial rule.

Chapter-I attempts to discuss the techniques of mass mobilisation - the ideological, political and organisational preparation for the movement. This obviously forms a part of the Indian National Congress's preparations for the Quit India Movement at the national level. Chapter-II deals with the Quit India Movement - the course of the movement, broad features and the extent of the movement in the province. In Chapter-III we have attempted to analyse the various aspects of the movement - its nature, character, extent, pattern, social composition of the emerging leadership and its special distribution in the province.

We have tried to make our analysis as rigorous as possible. In the concluding part we have summed up our analysis and findings. And, finally, it is hoped that our analysis will help to indentify areas which can be taken up for further research at appropriate levels.

The problematics proposed in the study, though promising and full of possibilities, suffer a serious handicap. The study being Delhi-based, according to the rules and guidelines of the Centre for Historical Studies fails to exhaust the primary sources

at a researcher's disposal. Due to resource constraints and constraints of time it was not possible to look into the leading newspapers such as Samaj and Prajatantra and the archival materials in Orissa.

INTRODUCTION

Indian nationalism and the movements inspired by a quest for regional and linguistic identity often supported each other, but sometimes they were also at cross-purposes and posed a dilemma for Leaders who were sincerely devoted to both the causes. The Oriya movement provides an interesting example of this situation. It brought about a literary and educational awakening without which the message of nationalism would not have reached the people of this region. But it was initially a movement of emancipation from the dominance of stronger neighbours rather than from British rule and in later stages its demands for a separate province did not fit in well with the All India strategy of the National Congress. Nevertheless, this movement claimed the loyalty of all those nationalists who were convinced that only a regenerated Orissa which could rise to its full stature would make a contribution to the cause of Indian nationalism. The regeneration of Orissa was not immediately linked with the demands for a separate province. In fact, this demand emerged only after earlier attempts at consolidating all oriya-speaking tracts under the administration of one or the other of the larger British provinces had been frustrated.

Orissa had come within the orbit of the East India Company's political interest after the Battle of Buxar, but actual possession was gained only in the year 1803, after the Second Maratha War. The British defeated the Marathas and brought the mainlands of Orissa under their rule. Subsequently, the feudatory States were forced to submit one by one. However, the difference between

the 'Mughalbandi' and the 'Garhjat' areas created by the Marathas continued.¹

The plain and fertile lands in the coastal region comprising Cuttack, Puri and Balasore districts were kept under the direct management of the British while the wild tracts of lands covered by hills and forests were asked to pay tribute only. This remained the situation till the end of the 19th Century and Orissa remained a divided house being ruled by Twenty-six feudatory Chiefs and three provincial Governments, i.e. Central provinces, the Madras and Bengal presidencies.² Even till 1936, when Orissa became a separate province what Orissa actually meant was the portions of different provinces inhabited by the Oriya-speaking people.³

Under the seemingly peaceful rule of the company there were protests against the British occupation. In the pre-1857 phase, these protests were primarily anti-British in nature and were supported by the local Chiefs. The Khurdha uprising (1817-1824) under Buxi Jagabandhu, Ghumsar uprising (1835-1837) under Dhananjay Bhanja and the Sambalpur uprising (1829-1864) under Surendra Sai

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1. 'Mughalbandi' comprised the plain and open part of the country from Suvarnarekha to the border of Khurdha and was the royal domain paying a regular assessment and the 'Garhjats' includes 26 States covering the wild tracts under a Magistrate who supervised the tributary Mahals.
 2. K.M. Patra, Orissa State Legislature and Freedom Struggle, 1912-47, Delhi: 1979, P.2.
 3. P.C. Acharya, 'Non-Cooperation and its aftermath in Orissa: 1920-29', M.Phil dissertation, CHS, J.N.U., 1986, P.4.

were notable among these. A noticeable feature in all these uprisings was the large-scale participation of the people in it, both directly and indirectly.⁴

However, in the post-1857 phase of political protest the local Chiefs backed out because of the new British policy of leaving princely States alone. While three Garhjat States were confiscated before 1857 revolt,⁵ despite the acknowledged incompetence of some of the rulers and complete mal-administration in the Garhjats.

The pre-1857 movements could not have been anti-feudal because they were led by the local Chiefs and princes who acted as the 'natural leaders' of the uprisings. But in the post-1857 phase when these leaders backed out, the political movements could become anti-British as well as anti-feudal. Here the forms of defiance were attacks on the local Chiefs and other royal symbols, which were now identified with the colonial state.

In Keonjhar uprising (1867-68 and 1891-93) for instance, the tribals such as Bhuyans, Juangs and Kols refused to accept the ruler. The royal palace was attacked and captured for some days. The local Chief had to leave his own palace more than once.⁶

4. Nearly 10,000 people participated in the Khurdha uprising, G.Toynbee, 'A sketch of the History of Orissa (1803-1828),' in P.K. Mishra, Political unrest in Orissa in the 19th Century, Calcutta: 1983, P.26.

5. Ibid, P.190.

6. Ibid, P.171.

The loyalists were attacked and their houses burnt down by the Meli Sardars. The Raja's constables and other officials were held captives.⁷

In the Domapada uprising (1876) the peasants organised by the ex-Diwan Nidhi Pattnaik set up a Meli Durbar or alternative court and ordered their fellowmen to pay rent to meli court and not to the Chief.⁸ The local Chief was socially excommunicated.

All these uprisings were ruthlessly suppressed by the combined forces of the local Chiefs and the British army. These uprisings were spontaneous reactions of the people which lacked a clear understanding of the contradiction with imperialism and the nature of imperialist exploitation. The real force behind the immediate Indian oppressors was never exposed to their concerted attack.

Having passed through political domination and balkanised for nearly three centuries under outsiders - the Afghans, Mughals, Marathas and the British - Orissa, towards the 19th Century presented the picture of a mass of administrative areas "grown up almost haphazard as the result of conquests, supercession of former rulers and administrative convenience."⁹

Such a condition could hardly promote unity among the people for any type of collective endeavour. Moral and material development of the people had suffered a serious setback and the interest of the local population had been grossly overlooked by outsiders who had subjugated them.

7. F.M. Senapati, Atmajibana Carita, Cuttack:1976, PP.134-144.

8. Ibid, P.73

9. R.N. Mishra, Regionalism and State Politics in India, New Delhi: 1984, P.31.

In the Orissa division of the Bengal Presidency, the Bengalis dominated over the Oriyas and were regarded as 'an intermediary ruling race.' Their longer experience with the British rule and their propinquity to the 'seat of Government at Calcutta helped them to emerge in positions of authority in Orissa. The lawyers and teachers were all Bengalis and the facilities of teaching Oriya were almost non-existent.¹⁰

Similarly, the people of Sambalpur and Ganjam were dominated by the Hindi and Telugu-speaking people respectively. The situation came to such a pass that by an order passed by the Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces on 25 January, 1895, Oriya was abolished as the court and official language of Sambalpur.¹¹

The problems of administration and sufferings of the Oriya-speaking people drew the attention of the British authorities at the time of the catastrophic famine in June 1866, in which 'a quarter of the population died of starvation and the diseases that supervened.'¹²

The famine of 1866 forms a major landmark in the history of modern Orissa as it brought about a change in the social and intellectual life of Orissa. The economic insecurity which was evident in agriculture forced the upper strata of the rural population to seek alternative means of employment for which they required modern education. They began to give priority to modern education

10. Ibid, P.33

11. Ibid, P.33

12. C.E. Buckland, Bengal under the Lieutenant Governor, Vol.1, P.330, cited in J.K. Samal, 'Orissa Famine of 1866' in M.N. Das, (ed.), Sidelights on History and Culture of Orissa, Cuttack : 1977, PP.178-184.

and Government Services over agriculture. As a result, the post famine phase marked a significant increase in the number of students and educational institutions.¹³

The famine also produced a considerable stir among the emerging intelligentsia who began to take a fresh look at the nature of the British rule. The unwise famine policy of the Government was largely held responsible for the deplorable situation. The lower level officials were also not spared. The intelligentsia complained that these officials who happened to be mostly Bengalis gave wrong information and largely contributed to the famine.¹⁴

The Oriya-Bengali controversy which had been going on intermittently since 1840's became particularly virulent now. In Southern Orissa the controversy was shaped against Telugu and in West against Hindi.¹⁵

The Oriya identity was in the making as well as at stake. Some Bengali officials posted in Orissa made attempts to replace Oriya by Bengali on the ground that it was but a variant of Bengali. One Kanti Chandra Bhattacharya even went to the extent of publishing a book which said that Oriya was a mere dialect of Bengali.¹⁶

The fear of cultural submersion by the neighbouring regions led many educated Oriyas to resist the domination of the outsiders. Following the outbreak of famine, Sচিত্রা Nanda Das and Gouri Sankar Ray started the Utkal Dipika, the first newspaper in Oriya.

13. K.M. Patra, op.cit., PP.4-5.

14. F.M. Senapati, op.cit., PP.41-43.

15. Two Bachelors of Arts, The Oriya Movement, Ganjam: 1919, P.34.

16. G.C. Mishra, Odisara Bikasare Patra Patrikara Prabhab, Cuttack: 1979, PP.27-28.

thus making it possible for matters relating to Orissa to be publicly debated.¹⁷

The post-1866 phase also witnessed the growth of many socio-religious organisations like the Utkala Bhasa Uddipani Sabha, Cuttack Debating Club, Utkala Brahma Samaj, Cuttack Young Mens Association, Puri Dharma Rakhini Sabha to discuss different socio-religious issues. Utkala Sabha at Cuttack, National Society at Balasore and the Utkala Hiteisini Samaj at Paralakhemundi were also parts of these developments during the late 19th century.¹⁸

Modern press and various other social organisations of the educated Oriyas were primarily an intellectual defence and self-preservation against the Bengali-Bihari domination. As a measure of intellectual defence the educated Oriyas like Fakir Mohan Senapati (1843-1918), Radhanath Roy (1848-1908) and Madhusudan Rao (1853-1912) laid the foundation of Modern Oriya Literature.

The search for a distinct Oriya identity by the emerging middle class culminated with the institutionalisation of the Utkal Union Conference in 1903 to plead for the union of all Oriya-speaking tracts under one presidency.¹⁹ As a reaction to the insuperable handicap the Oriyas were facing in all spheres of life in every province the UUC defined its objectives in clear terms - "...to establish unity among entire Oriya population distributed over different provinces, to work for the allround development of the

17. G.C. Mishra, Odisara Bikasare Patra Patrikara Prabhab, Cuttack: 1979, PP.27-28.

18. K.M. Patra, op.cit., P.7.

19. Two Bachelors of Arts, op.cit., P.10.

Oriyas, to amalgamate the Oriya-speaking tracts and to safeguard the interests of the Oriya people living outside Orissa." ²⁰

Under changed colonial circumstances, as the acquisition of western education had become an important pre-requisite for social mobility, the local Chiefs and the big landlords had started identifying themselves with the new middle class in their move against the outsiders. Since the dealings with the sub-ordinate English officials required a basic knowledge of english, the local Chiefs and the big landlords made attempts to acquire english education. And although many of them could not be educated, they gathered educated men around them in order to acquire a higher social status. ²¹

However, the local Chiefs and big landlords who joined the emerging middle class could not but suffer from inherent contradictions. They wanted to modernise their social and political institutions to collaborate ^{With the Raj for the efficient administration} of Orissa, but they could never forget their past heritage. They participated in liberal activities but at the same time retained old feudal values. Consequently, there was no organic unity between their consciousness and their emotional life. On the plane of consciousness they were liberals but on the emotional plane they remained traditional with old values of status and respectability. Their urban privileges were combined with their feudal inheritance. ²²

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20. N.K.Das, 'Utkala Gauraba Madhusudan', P.52, cited in Nivedita Mohanty, Oriya Nationalism : Quest for a United Orissa, 1866-1936, New Delhi: 1984, P.53.
21. F.M. Senapati, op.cit., PP.112-117.
22. Radhakant Barik, 'Gopabandhu and National Movement in Orissa,' in Social Scientist, Vol.6, No.9, April 1978, P.42.

On the otherhand, the newly educated groups, which emerged largely from rich peasant and small landlord families, as they were small in number and lacked the avenues for achievement as professionals, had to either depend on the feudatory Chiefs or the Colonial Government. Because of this reason, the feudatory Chiefs and the big landlords acted as major partners in the search for Oriya linguistic and cultural identify.²³

Thus late 19th Century politics was largely dominated by the feudatory Chiefs and big Zamindars. And interestingly enough, the landed interests of this class did not class with the middle class comprising of the professionals like the lawyers, teachers and the Government servants.

Their politics was based on non-confrontation with the colonial rule and minimum linkage with the anti-colonial forces. Their double-personality and social position forced the middle class to ignore the tribal and peasant movements. In their writings they traced the cause of these movements in the oppressive rule of the local Chiefs,²⁴ but contrary to this conviction they themselves were instrumental in their suppression.²⁵

23. The UUC was presided over only by the local Chiefs between 1903 and 1912, Nivedita Mohanty, op.cit., P.53.

24. F.M. Senapati, op.cit., P.134.

25. The middle class was apathetic towards the peasant revolts and even denounced them as sinister feudal uprisings of misguided elements. It also went to the extent of defending its landed interests in the courts of law which were prejudicial to the interests of the poor peasantry. N.K. Jit, The Agrarian Life and Economy of Orissa - A Survey, 1833-1897, Calcutta: 1984, P.291.

As a result, till the first decade of the 20th century the Oriya movement did not go beyond its middleclass boundary: the form of politics being an annual conference at which a few resolutions were passed. Many in those days felt it to be a personal gamble of a few aristocratic Oriyas led by Madhusudan Das who had only charmed the people as demagogues and that the organisation was for the henchmen of the British Government.²⁶

A major factor for the alienation of the Oriya middle class from nationalist politics was the apathy of the Bengal Congress leaders towards the Oriya aspirations.²⁷ Since at this point of time the Indian National Congress contained a sizeable number of Bengalis, identification with the Congress would have meant fighting the Bengali domination in Orissa while having an alliance with them elsewhere. This would have placed the emerging middle class in a very awkward position. As a result, although, between 1886 and 1906, no less than 27 delegates participated in the annual sessions of the Congress, their participation does not seem to have gone beyond the reporting of activities at the Congress sessions in their respective Sabhas.²⁸

The final break with the Indian National Congress came in 1903 when the Madras Session of the Congress passed a resolution

26. Nivedita Mohanty, op.cit., P.65

27. Ms. Sailabala Das, daughter of Madhusudan Das has been quoted in Nivedita Mohanty, op.cit., P.97, as to how her father's repeated appeal to S.N. Banerjee in 1902 to take up the Oriya issue was turned down and how her father became disillusioned with national politics after that.

28. P.K. Mishra, 'First Half Century of the Congress Movement in Orissa : A Review', in Indian History Congress proceedings, 1979, P.637.

stating that "...the Congress deprecates...the separation of Ganjam and Vishakapatnam from the Madras presidency."²⁹ This was clearly against the amalgamation of the Oriya-speaking tracts and hence some leading men of Orissa including Madhusudan Das gradually dissociated themselves from the Congress activities and concentrated their efforts at the regional level.³⁰ Many Oriya Unionists thought that national and regional identities were contradictory to each other and primacy had to be accorded to the latter.

Thus, although the professional section of the new middle class was gradually becoming dominant towards the end of the first decade of the 20th Century, the moderates and the traditional elites dominated the political scenario. But by 1920, polarisation had taken place in the educated circle and the younger unionists who later led the Congress in Orissa were becoming increasingly critical of petty anti-Bengalism within the Oriya movement.³¹ They imbibed a broader view of the national movement and were convinced that the achievement of freedom was to be foremost task and the aspirations of the Oriya people could well be accommodated within the mainfold of the country's interest.

Despite being off-springs of regional nationalist groups, the youth at that time, by and large, due to their inclination to find an alternative to the moderate politics in Orissa, right

29. Two Bachelors of Arts, op.cit., PP.30-31.

30. K.M. Patra, op.cit., P.14.

31. Harekrusna Mahatab mentions that defence against Bengali domination was the only politics of Orissa in the early decades of 20th Century. H.K. Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, Cuttack : 1972, P.22.

from the beginning favoured an anti-colonial movement. While cooperating with the Oriya movement, they thought that identification with the broader anti-colonial movement could also help them in achieving their goal. The founding of the open air school at Satyavadi (Puri) in 1909 and a nationalist study circle, Bharati Mandir (Cuttack) in 1919 meant not only for opening avenues for employment for the new wholetimers but also for imparting political education to the cadres.³² Their pledge to serve the nation was a significant development compared to the moderate politics of the earlier days.

The promotion of the Orissa PCC in 1920 was part of the Congress decision, under Gandhiji's initiative, to recognise linguistic provinces and form PCCs on that basis rather than on the basis of British-created administrative divisions as was the pattern earlier.³³

The formation of the provincial Congress Committee in 1920 marked the formal setting up of links among the nationalists in Orissa with their organisational and ideological affiliation to Congress at a national plane and more hectic interaction between non-Orissa nationalists and nationalists at home. The infant PCC made efforts to carry out the Non-Cooperation campaign in this belt which was hitherto unexposed to the Congress-led anti-imperialist stir, unlike her neighbours in Bengal and Bihar.

32. Two Bachelors of Arts, op.cit., P.334

33. Mridula Mukherjee, 'The Non-Cooperation Movement 1920-22,' in Bipan Chandra and others, India's Struggle for Independence, New Delhi : 1987, P.186.

Although, the political activities in the province got a new lease of life with the setting of district Congress Committees and a large number of Panchayats, the relief works for drought and flood absorbed the energy of the Congress leaders during the Non-Cooperation movement. The NCM was preceded by flood and drought and to a considerable extent had depopulated the Oriya territory.³⁴ It was with this issue of regional discontent with colonial set up that the young nationalists engaged themselves and through their relief work took the ideas of the Congress to the masses.³⁵

Many young men of Orissa left their studies in schools and colleges. Among them were H.K. Mahtab, Nityananda Kanungo, Naba-krusna Choudhury, Nanda Kisore Das and Raj Krishna Bose, who later became prominent leaders of the Congress. Bhagirathi Mohapatra, Jagabandhu Singh and a few others gave up their legal practice. Gopabandhur Choudhury, who was a Deputy Collector, resigned from his job and joined the Congress movement. Pandit Nilakantha Das gave up his teaching assignment in the Calcutta University and came to take charge of a national school and the movement in Sambalpur.³⁶

As a number of students left schools and colleges run or aided by the Government, the Congress leaders decided to establish national schools and colleges for educating their children in a new system. The foremost among them was the Satyavadi School

34. Nivedita Mohanty, op.cit., P.104.

35. K.M. Patra, op.cit., PP.27-28.

36. Ibid, P.37.

under Krupasindhu Mishra. Other national schools were established in Sambalpur, Cuttack, Jagatsingpur, Bhadrak, Balasore and Soro.³⁷

A number of Swaraj Ashrams to organise the Congress activities and to train workers and volunteers were established at Cuttack town, Jagatsinghpur (Alakashram), Sakhigopal, Puri and Balasore (Swaraj Mandir).³⁸ In these Centres the Congress workers were taught to spread the ideas of non-cooperation, the desirability of using 'charkha', of establishing Panchayats, national schools etc. Picketing before the shops dealing in foreign liquor and cloth was widely practised. It was successful to a large extent in the towns like Balasore, Bhadrak, Cuttack, Puri, Berhampur and Sambalpur.³⁹

The most important event of 1921 was the visit of Mahatma Gandhi to Orissa. He came to Cuttack on the 21 March 1921. He visited Bhadrak Satyavadi, Puri and Berhampur. The visit of Gandhiji created unprecedented enthusiasm among the people. By 30 June 1921, 40,000 Congress members had been enrolled, 22 thousand rupees collected for the Tilak Swaraj fund and 15,000 charkhas in use and more than a thousand panchayats formed.⁴⁰

37. Debiprasad Mishra, 'National Struggle in Orissa : 1914-1936,' Orissa Review, Vol.XLV, No.6, January,1989, P.3.

38. Ibid, P.3.

39. The Samaj, 8 October, 1921, cited in K.M. Patra, op.cit., P.38.

40. Debiprasad Mishra, op.cit., P.4.

The political activities during the NCM far outweighed the pre-Gandhi agitations in the province in their scope and dimensions. The NCM marked increased participation of students who formed the main force, in carrying the message of the Congress to the interior. It also marked for the first time the involvement of women and the peasants and tribals who were becoming increasingly conscious of the very nature of the colonial rule. However, the movement was mostly urban-based and confined to pockets which had been centres of political activities previously. Moreover, the movement was dominated by the traditional elite groups, the Brahmins playing a prominent part.⁴¹

Nevertheless, the NCM provided the organisational infrastructure for the later Gandhian mass movements as it led to the formation of district level Congress Committees and village panchayats. It also threw up a host of tried leaders who were to shape the course of the history of modern Orissa.

The Civil Disobedience movement launched in 1930 marked a new high in terms of mass participation. It marked an unprecedented participation of women and the peasants in the movement.⁴² The students played the most prominent part in the CDM and the Congress's efforts to establish links with the remote rural areas were a success. Consequently, areas which had previously seen very little or no political activities became active centres of manufacturing salt.

41. P.C. Acharya, op.cit., P.75.

42. Debiprasad Mishra, op.cit., P.10.

Inchudi, a village in the Balasore district was selected as the sight for breaking the salt law on 13 April, 1930. The first batch of Satyagrahis led by Acharya Harihar Das were arrested. But soon a large number of volunteers in several batches reached Balasore from Cuttack, Puri, Ganjam, Sambalpur, Baripada and other parts of Orissa.⁴³

By the month of May 1930, some new centres for salt manufacture were opened in the long coastal area of Orissa. Besides Inchudi, another prominent centre in Balasore was situated at Sartha where many Satyagrahis including Mathura Mohan Behera, Karunakar Panigrahi and Nilambar Das were arrested. In Cuttack, Kujang was an important centre where a large number of Satyagrahis participated. Its special feature was the participation of Bhagyabati Devi, the head of the Kujang royal family. In Puri several centres at Kuhudi, Singheswari and Latra were opened under the guidance of Nilakantha Das. In Ganjam, Huma, the traditional centre of salt manufacture, was chosen by the Congress leaders as the venue of Satyagraha. About 1600 people participated in the preparation of salt on 9 May under the leadership of Niranjan Pattnaik, Biswanath Das and Sarala Devi.⁴⁴

Manufacturing of salt in Orissa received wide response and in the opinion of many, next to Gujarat, the greatest success in this direction was attained in Orissa.⁴⁵ Satyagraha was not

43. The Samaj, 16 April 1930, cited in K.M. Patra, op.cit., P.74.

44. Ibid., P.75.

45. H.K. Mahtab, ed., History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V (Supplement), Cuttack:1959, P.2.

confined to the manufacture of contraband salt alone. The people also started an agitation against Choukidari tax (Inchudi), picketed excise and foreign cloth shops and distributed proscribed literature. Towards the end of 1931, the Harijan movement was also vitalised and the leaders concentrated their attention on removal of untouchability and entry of Harijans into Hindu temples.⁴⁶

However, the Congress was still divided into two hostile camps. The Swarajists led by Godavarisha Mishra and the old moderates still had a considerable following in the Congress circles. And they often acted at cross-purposes. For the CDM 'Satyavadi' and 'Bharati Mandir' campaigned separately. Non-Swarajists like Gopabandhu Choudhury, Harekrusna Mahatab, Malati Devi and Rama Devi organised salt satyagraha at Inchudi in Balasore while Nilakantha Das organised it at Kakatpur in Puri.⁴⁷

It was in the 30's that the ideological radicalisation occurred in the congress and this lent the movement an added militancy and a spirit of sacrifice. The leadership which took up the cause of the tenants in the British areas and the princely states was remarkably radical. The thrust of the radical ideology inside the Congress was quite significant. The currents of Marxism and Socialism were represented by Congress Socialists⁴⁸ and

46. Debiprasad Mishra, op.cit., PP.11-12.

47. H.K. Mahatab, ed., History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V. (Supplement), P.3.

48. Utkala Samyavadi Karmi Sangha was set up at Cuttack in 1933 as a forum of discussion within the UPCC. H.K. Mahtab, Sadhanara Pathe, P.164.

communists who were functioning principally inside the Congress. The 'Bose' ideology which entered the political scene in the late 30's also exerted a considerable impact, especially on the youth. The 'Left' trend as represented by the Congress socialists and communists was structured into the Congress organisation welded increasing and even a dominant influence.⁴⁹

Separate provincehood for Orissa was attained in 1936 and this gave a definite push to the Congress leadership which was championing the provincial cause in terms of a separate provincehood. This was followed by the formation of the Congress Ministry as a part of the strategy of the Congress movement. The Ministry assumed it as a distinct necessity to seek specific popular linkages through various agrarian legislations to revitalise the Congress movement and take it nearer the oppressed masses. This helped to generate the feeling that a nationalist regime could better represent the popular aspirations. Thus in the context of the Congress Ministry the nationalist movement synthesized the essential needs of anti-colonialism and agrarian radicalism.⁵⁰

In its efforts to integrate all sections of Society into a cohesive group with a common affinity to 'nationalist ideology, the Congress intensified its efforts through a mass contact programme. Constructive activities were emphasized and a host

49, C.P. Nanda, 'Ideological Transformation of the Congress Movement : A study on Orissa of 1935-39,' in Orissa Review, Vol.XLV, No.2, November 1988, P.45.

50. Ibid.

of Harijan institutions came up during the Ministry period. The Congress leadership in the province also made campaigns for getting the Muslims into its fold. By May 1940, on the eve of the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement, the PCC had enrolled 1,23,521 primary members under the mass contact programme as against a total membership of 86,000 in 1937 and 47,500 in 1935.⁵¹

The State People's Movement remained a major issue for the PCC leadership during the late 30's and it provided a great deal of radical thrust for the national movement. The condition of the states' people in Orissa uptill the third decade of the 20th Century was not much different from that in Medieval Europe. Royal hunting, bethi, begari, magana and Rasad etc., the different forms of labour rent as well as rent in kind, were everyday occurrences.⁵² The mass nature, the movement obtained was due to the fact that 95 percent of the states population was peasantry. The other crucial factor in the situation was that the popular Ministry in the British province provided the people in the states with a lot of confidence. The Ministry openly sympathised with the oppressed people in the States.

In protest against the official indifference towards the public opinion in dragging India into the war, the Congress Ministries resigned in 1939 and intending not to embarass the

51. PCC to AICC, AICC Papers, File No.G-28, Part-1.

52. Pabitra Mohan Pradhan, Mukti Pathe Sainika, Part-I, Cuttack : 1949, PP. 40-45.

Government in its war efforts, Gandhi started the Individual Civil Disobedience Movement as a symbolic protest.

The ICDM of 1940, was the first of the Gandhian Movements after Orissa became a separate province but owing to its limited scope and non-mass character it did not generate mass enthusiasm and response in the province. A few leaders in the Congress ranks were disillusioned regarding the efficacy of the Gandhian methods and had started criticizing it openly.⁵³ Nevertheless, the ICDM achieved its primary objective of increasing political feeling and opposition to the Government at a critical period and obstructed successfully the forcible realisation of war funds.⁵⁴

A very disturbing trend in the Congress politics in this province which began in the non-confrontation phase was factional politics within the Congress. This factionalism became one of the major characteristics of the Congress politics in Orissa in the post-NCM and post-CDM phases. 'Satyavadi' and the 'Bharati Mandir' which had been the citadels of Congress political activities in the province were becoming increasingly antagonistic towards each other in the post-NCM phase. And their difference was not merely being Swarajists and Non-Swarajists, the PCC in the post-NCM phase being virtually polarised into Gandhian and non-Gandhian blocs.⁵⁵

53. H.K. Mahatab, Sadhanara Pathe, PP.214-215.

54. Home Deptt (Poll), 'History of the Civil Disobedience Movement, 1940-41,' File no.3/6/1942.

55. P.C. Acharya, op.cit., P.87.

Intra-party rivalries and political opportunism became more evident in the late 30's. Nilakantha Das, an erstwhile prominent leader in the Congress ranks, when not considered for the Prime Minister's post in 1937, which he was sure he would get, openly criticized the Congress leadership and broke away from the Congress with many of his close associates.⁵⁶ It was due to intra-party rivalry that some of the dissidents from the Congress helped in the formation of a coalition Ministry in 1941.⁵⁷

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This trend had a very depressing effect on the youth in the province. Nilakantha Das and Godavarisha Mishra were very prominent Congressmen in their respective districts and since they broke away from the Congress, the Congress activities also suffered to a large extent in those areas. On eve of the ICDM, while 230 Satyagrahis had been enrolled throughout the province, Ganjam's (Nilakantha Das's constituency) contribution was only one.⁵⁸

It was at this time that Japan entered the war and its sweep through South East Asia brought the war nearer Indian borders and an invasion of India seemed imminent. Compelled by circumstances, Churchill was forced to begin a fresh initiative

56. H.K. Mahtab, Oral History Transcripts, Manuscript Section, NMML, P.141.

57. Maharaja of Paralakhimedi headed the Ministry with Pandit Godavanisha Mishra of 'Orissa Congress Swaraj Dal' and Nilakantha Das of 'Forward Bloc' as his Chief associates. H.K. Mahtab, ed., History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V (Supplement) P.41

58. PCC's Report to AICC, AICC Papers, File no.G-28, Part-I

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to solve the Indian political deadlock and Stafford Cripps came to India in March 1942. However, Cripps Mission failed because he was bound by the limits of the Draft declaration and the promise of a post-war Dominion Status was far short of the Congress demand for complete freedom. Slowly but steadily Congress was edging towards a final confrontation and the AICC passed the famous 'Quit India' Resolution on 8 August 1942 at Bombay.

CHAPTER - I

Japan's entry into the war and its subsequent sweep through South East Asia in the early months of 1942 brought the war nearer the Indian borders and the two thousand and odd miles of the Indian coastline became exposed to the danger of a Japanese invasion. The province of Orissa occupied an important central sector of Indian coastline between Bengal and Madras and it suddenly became a vulnerable zone. It was generally believed in the province and even outside that the Japanese might land somewhere on the unprotected coast of Orissa between Baleswar and Chandipur from where they could make the industrial towns like Jamshedpur and Calcutta their targets.¹

While the danger of an enemy invasion loomed large, lack of sufficient protection caused considerable panic in the countryside. The Governor of Orissa wrote to the viceroy on 26 February 1942, '...Orissa is to an exceptional degree a danger point on the map of north-eastern India, nevertheless it is also the only province where no representative of the army command is present with the provincial Government, at the headquarters of the provincial administration....' A handful of armed men may force the provincial Government to surrender without even the smallest show of resistance."²

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1. Home Deptt. (Poll), Fortnightly Reports from Government of Orissa for the second half of January 1942, File no. 18/1/1942. Also, Governor of Orissa's Report to the Viceroy, February 26, 1942, Linlithgow Papers, No.84
 2. Governor of Orissa to the viceroy, 26 February 1942, Linlithgow Papers No.84.

The collapse of the Allied resistance in Burma, Malaya and Singapore and the subsequent British withdrawal led many to apprehend that faced with similar circumstances, the British might withdraw abandoning the helpless population at the mercy of the invading Japanese. Moreover, the British policy of racial evacuation caused much ire and rancour in the minds of disarmed and defenceless population. The Burmese evacuees narrated harrowing tales of racial discrimination and brought with them the message of the immediate collapse of the British rule.³

The evacuees problem also exerted added pressure on the waning public morale and the village economy. Influx of nearly 60,000 evacuees⁴ not only meant more mouths to feed and an added pressure on the agricultural economy, it also meant virtually no money coming in. The evacuees from Burma, Malaya and Ceylon who used to remit. Fifty lakh rupees annually now found themselves unemployed and dependent on families which were themselves helpless.⁵

Exaggerated accounts of the casualties in Rangoon by the evacuees led many to believe that the British were not fully prepared to meet the Japanese invasion and the Government's hasty orders regarding light restrictions and air-raid precautions further added to the growing uneasiness.⁶

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3. Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vo.76, April, 1942-December 17,1942. The Publications Division, Delhi,1979.
 4. Amrit Bazar Patrika, 13 May, 1942.
 5. PCC to AICC, AICC Papers, File no.P.22(Part-1), dated 15.3.1942.
 6. Home Deptt. (Poll), Fortnightly Reports from the Government of Orissa for the first half of January 1942, File no.18/1/1942, Also Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, Linlithgow Papers 14 March 1942, No.84.

Just when Cripps was busy negotiating with the Indian leaders, six to seven British naval ships were sunk near the Kujang coast in Cuttack district on 6 April, 1942. This caused a shock throughout the province as it was followed by a rumour that the Japanese had already landed⁷ (apparently some of the survivors were taken for the Japanese).

The immediate reactions to the heavy firings near Kujang on 6 April 1942, was a large-scale exodus of the people from coastal districts into the interior rural areas. One-third of the population of Cuttack district abandoned the coastal areas and moved to safer places in the interior.⁸ Most of the Government officials, mostly sub-ordinates and the Marwari and Kachhi communities who had a major share in the local trade and business started winding up their business in order to move into the interior with their families.⁹

The local Government admitted the fact that the air-protection of the area was inadequate. There were no anti-aircraft guns.¹⁰ The whole Civil Defence machinery was in shambles. The desperation in which the people ran away from Cuttack presented almost the sight of a city being hit by plague.¹¹

The Government's reactions to the firings on 6 April 1942 was imposition of drastic measures for the security of

7. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, Linlithgow Papers, No.84, 8 April, 1942.

8. Home Deptt. (Poll), Fortnightly Reports from the Government of Orissa for the first half of April 1942, File no.18/4/1942.

9. Amrit Bazar Patrika, 13 April, 1942.

10. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, Linlithgow Papers, 26.2.1942.

the province. The people were ordered to remove all conveyances twenty miles inland and strict restrictions were imposed on the use of lights in the four coastal districts. These orders were rigorously enforced. But what really annoyed the people more was that these orders were carried out often with the threat that if not removed they will all be destroyed.¹² The secretariat staff and other important Government offices were removed to far-off Sambalpur which was called the Base Headquarters.¹³

However, all these measures carried out under threat, instead of allaying fear, only increased the distrust of the people towards the measures of an alien Government. The people had started asking, "when the Government can not save its own staff and offices how can it save us from the Japanese?"¹⁴

Further, the mounting prices of essential commodities during the 33 months of the war had caused considerable disquiet in the countryside. The index for wholesale prices (Base: 1939-40=100) jumped from 119 in 1940-41 to 182 in June 1942.¹⁵

The needs of the war monopolised the thought and activities to such an extent that Government seemed to have no time to think of the many factors that upheld the civilian morale - the most important of which was the provision of food and ruiement for the prople. Distribution of men and goods

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12. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, 26.2.1942, Linlithgow Papers, No.84.
 13. H.K. Mahtab, Sadhanara Pathe, PP.223-224.
 14. S.N. Dwivedi, op.cit., PP.22-23.
 15. N.N. Mitra, ed., The Indian Annual Register, Vol.1, January-June 1942, P.152 (K).

through normal channels of communication - railways, motor lorries, boats, steamers and bullock carts - had broken down so far as the needs of the people were concerned. 200 locomotives and 12,000 wagons were reported to have been sent to the Middleeast from India explaining a part of the difficulty of the transport system.¹⁶

The shortage of wagons explained only a part of the disruption of communications and the consequent hardships. Much of the difficulty however, was man-made often through ignorant and unimaginative officials who had no knowledge of the local conditions. Drying up of canals to prevent the entry of the enemy through water routes while there were virtually no troops to check them on the land was sheer foolishness.¹⁷

The drying up of canals upset all calculations regarding the working of land and left stranded temporarily a number of boats carrying commodities thereby depriving the agriculturists in the interior of the use of canal as a water way for the cheap transport of grain.¹⁸ Similarly, light restrictions imposed during the night while there were no anti-aircraft guns was also quite unimaginative.¹⁹

The drastic measures of the provincial Government combined with the near collapse of the Civil Defence Machinery in the province caused much hardship to the people and con-

16. Ibid.

17. H.K. Mahtab, Sadharnara Pathe, P.222.

18. Governor of Orissa's Report to the Viceroy Regarding Mirabehn's article in the Harijan, 2 August 1942, Linlithgow Papers, No.84.

19. H.K. Mahtab, Sadhanara Pathe, P.221.

tributed largely to the prevailing panic and helplessness. The unavailability of the essential commodities like wheat, paper, salt, sugar, kerosene and food grains throughout the province in the months preceeding the movement caused much uncertainty and insecurity. This general feeling of insecurity is evident from the heavy withdrawals from the post office Savings Banks in those months.²⁰

The war euphoria and the consequent breakdown of social order encouraged the anti-social elements to have their chance and from February to March, the crime rate increased four-fold.²¹ The abnormal behaviour of the market due to hoarding and black marketing also further added to the growing uneasiness.²²

The anti-British feelings had become so pronounced in these months that people had begun to express pro-japanese views openly. Not only the common man but a section of the leadership in the provincial Congress had also started expressing pro-Japanese sentiments.²³

To fill the cup of misery there was a serious rift in the Congress and some of the dissidents had joined the 'Orissa Congress Swaraj Dal' and the 'Orissa Nationalist Party' to form the coalition Ministry in November 1941. The Congress

20. Home Deptt. (Poll), Fortnightly Reports from the Government of Orissa for the months of March and April 1942, File nos.18/3/42 and 18/4/42.

21. Ibid

22. Home Deptt. (Poll), Fortnightly Reports from the Government of Orissa for the months of April and May 1942, File nos. 18/4/42 and 18/5/42.

23. H.K. Mahtab, Oral History Transcripts, NMML, PP.144-145.

was thus forced into a very critical situation where it had not only to counter the dissidence in its own ranks but mobilise the masses for an organised resistance against the Japanese and also to try and organise the struggle for freedom.

The Governor's report in July indicated the reasons why Orissa was important in Congress strategy at this time: "there is reason to think that the Congress themselves may be hoping to give Orissa rather a prominent place in their campaign. Its situation in a potential war zone gives it for their purposes a special attraction; the Gandhi cult of non-violence has always had a marked appeal for the Oriya temperament; the absence of any considerable muslim element in this exclusively Hindu province gives the Congress hopes of an easier course than elsewhere; but in addition to all this the coalition Ministry which has been possible only because of the breakaway of former Congress supporters is anathema to the Congress High Command and they have every desire if they can to restore the Congress position and influence in Orissa."²⁴

These factors might have influenced the central leadership while giving a prominent place to Orissa in their campaign but the overriding consideration of the Congress leadership was undoubtedly to rouse the masses so that they did not surrender to the Japanese in a cowardly manner without even the semblance of a fight.²⁵

24. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, 29.7.1942, Linlithgow Papers, No.84.

25. D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma, Vol.VI, Publications Division, Delhi, 1953. P.84.

The activities of the coalition Ministry headed by the Swarajists and the Forward Blocists at this juncture provides an interesting reading. Although they have often been dumped as opportunists and betrayers of the nationalist cause, both Nilakantha Das who acted as the leader of the National War Front and Godavarisha Mishra who acted as the Finance Minister acted contrary to the expectations of both the Government and the Congress leaders in the province.

Both of them had their roots in the Utkal Sammilani which had contributed a lot to the spread of nationalist ideas in the early decades of the 20th Century and even though circumstances had forced them to join the coalition Ministry, they never wavered in their stand against either fascism or imperialism. They joined the Ministry because they did not have faith in the Congress methods of non-violence and felt that they could contribute more by working from within.²⁶

They had close links with the Forward Bloc headquarters in Calcutta and regularly received instructions from Subhas Bose. They had even posted men on the coast to welcome the Japanese if and when they landed.²⁷

Irrespective of being pro-Japanese both of them openly expressed their dislike for both Fascism and British imperialism. Conscious of the ghastly record of the Japanese and

26. H.K. Mahtab, Oral History Transcripts, NMML, PP.141-145.

27. Ibid.

the Nazis, Godavarisha Mishra criticized them in no uncertain terms. Speaking to a public gathering on 29 April 1942, he said, "Do you all think that Hitler is shedding so much blood of his countrymen to give us independence?" In the same tone criticizing the British methods of solving the Indian political deadlock he said, "we have no power and therefore the Britishers have dealt with us in the manner that Sir Cripps did... if we had hundreds of aeroplanes and machine guns then Sir Cripps would not have followed the methods of solving our problem in the manner he did."²⁸

They did not differ from the Congress in their objective "we do not want imperialism. What we want is that the British empire and the Indian empire should be on an equal footing. We do not want Dominion status of the Westminster stamp We want real Independence."²⁹

This coming from a minister who supported the Government's war efforts, easily sums up the prevalent spirit. The primary contradiction had subsumed all secondary contradictions and even though the different political parties differed in their methods, they did not differ in their ultimate objective of driving the British from India. And in desperation they were even ready to welcome support from any quarter. It was in fact for their secret dealings with Subhas Bose and the Japanese

28. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, Linlithgow Papers, No.84, dt. 19.4.1942.

29. Ibid.

that the Ministry was dissolved when the intelligence sources came to know about the whole ring.³⁰

Immediately after the British ships were sunk in the Bay of Bengal near the Kujang coast in Orissa, Gandhiji deputed Mirabehn to tour Orissa.³¹ But the Congress in the province had started its activities for mobilising the people for the final battle long before. Since its repression in 1934, the Congress had made vigorous campaigns in the countryside to erode the colonial hegemony. A mass contact programme had been started in 1937 and the Congress acceptance of office in 1937 had further contributed to the increasing influence of the Congress in the countryside. The Congress membership had been constantly increasing all through these years and while in office the Ministry had made every effort to bring the Congress nearer to the oppressed masses, through ameliorative agrarian legislations. The primary membership which in 1935 was 47,500 had increased to 86,000 in 1937 and by May 1940, it had reached 123521.³² Deliberate efforts were made to undertake campaigns for bringing in the Muslims. AICC was asked to send urdu literature for the purpose of distribution among the nationalist muslims.³³ The Congress Committee had been restructured on the eve of the ICDM and added emphasis was being given after its withdrawal on constructive activities.³⁴

30. H.K. Mahtab, Oral History Transcripts, NMML, P.145

31. Gandhiji had deputed Mirabehn, Khurshedben Naorogi and Mridula Sarabhai to carryout propaganda on his behalf in Orissa, Bengal and Bombay respectively. N. Mansergh.ed., Transfer of Power, Vol.II London,1971,P.154.

32. PCC to AICC, AICC Papers, File no.G.28, Part-1, dt.11.5.40.

33. Letter from Gopabandhu Choudhury to the President, AICC, AICC Papers, File no.P.21, dt.4.5.1938.

34. H.K. Mahtab, History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V (Supplement), P.41.

The Congress activities in the province received a definite boost with the arrival of Mirabehn. She toured extensively throughout the province with the prominent Congress leaders and her general plan was to develop the Congress propaganda on the lines that "...if trouble comes here, the Government will withdraw; but even if the districts are overrun by the invaders, the Congress will stay with the people and look after them."³⁵

She was deputed to Orissa to form an opinion of the conditions and morale of the people, but she did not confine herself only to collecting information regarding the hardships caused to the people. She also demanded adequate compensation for the people displaced and explained to the Congress workers Gandhiji's policy of non-violent resistance against the Japanese aggressor. She pointed out that the Congress intended to "... build up a system which would be competent enough to take over administration with a view to protect the people in the event of the invader's aggression."³⁶ She stayed in the province for over a month and after going back wrote an article criticizing the Government's measures regarding the immobilisation of boats, closure of canals and restrictions on the formation of volunteer organisations by the people themselves in Harijan.³⁷

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35. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, 25 May 1942, N. Mansergh, (ed.), Transfer of Power, Vol.II,P.121.
36. History of Freedom Movement Unit (HFMU) Papers, R-I, File no.31/3, P.69.
37. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, Linlithgow Papers, No.84, dt.2.8.1942.

As the AICC directions implied, the movement was to be decentralised and the central control was to be the minimum. 'The Freedom Struggle Front' document containing instructions read, "the detailed application of general principles in concrete acts and manoeuvres should be left to the primary fighting units. The purpose of the machinery was to outline the general policy and direction and provide a loose and flexible coordination of the work of already existing parties, groups or individuals to whom the widest discretion was to be left to carry out day to-day programme."³⁸

Volunteer organisations like the Swavalambi Khadi Centres, Youth Leagues, Peace Brigades (Shanti Senas) and a number of 'Helping Committees' were formed each having four to five villages under its supervision. Village Defence Committees were also set up to defend the villagers against external invasion and the preserve internal security.³⁹

This decentralisation was provided in order to safeguard the movement against Government suppression. One of the underground documents clearly stated, "The 'enemy within' is well entrenched in our cities and towns. It will be best therefore, for all who can do so to concentrate in rural areas and educate the masses into active cooperation in this supreme effort to live."⁴⁰

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38. Home Deptt. (Poll), 'The Freedom Struggle Front,' A document containing instructions for the Congress Movement Purporting to have emanated from the Bombay AICC group, File no.3/83/42.
39. PCC to the AICC, AICC Papers, File no.P.22 (Part-1), dt. 15.3.1942.
40. Underground Documents of the Quit India Movement, No.2, dt. 11.10.1942, AICC Papers.

The Congress leadership realized the limitations of the urban-based movements from its past experiences and consequently it emphasized for exclusive preparations in the interior. For example, the AICC document said: "The most extensive and significant work lies in the countryside where our peasantry offers the biggest reserve of manpower and where village economy is threatened with imminent breakdown. Let peasant representatives in the villages be approached by our central agents. The agents themselves must be selected from tried workers of existing organisations and parties such as, Spinner Associations and Krishak Prajas who have already established connections in the interior. Let them select initial targets for assault in each village or a group of villages."⁴¹

Thus it is evident that the foci of the cong preparation were the villages. The Congress policy was obviously to mobilise the people on the basis of their day to-day problems and to convince them that it will continue so long as colonialism was not overthrown. The strategy was that the objective must be immediately appealing to the common man and clearly defined so that it could be easily grasped by the people. As the AICC document suggested: "Local problems should be encouraged by working up and bringing to a head particular local grievance which is most accute in any area. It may be the shortage of food grains at one place, the exaction of rent collection in

41. Home Deptt. (Poll), 'The Freedom Struggle Front,' a document containing instructions for the Congress Movement purporting to have emanated from the Bombay AICC group, File no.3/83/42.

another, the refusal of permission to irrigate the land in some other or realization of collective fire in still another. Each such problem is the focal point for the initiation of the movement in that area..."⁴² The Congress attempted to relate these local issues with wider and bigger issues.

There was a definite change in the Congress policy with regard to the Formation of Volunteer Organisations also. The AICC contemplated broad-based volunteer organisations. "Our previous Volunteer Organisations were subject to many rules and a fairly severe disciplinary code and confined to Congressmen. This time we have thrown open the doors of the organisation to all our countrymen irrespective of political affiliations, the only condition being adherence to peaceful methods. One may be a Sanatanist Hindu, or a musalman or a parsee or a Mahasabhite or a Christian, a brahmin or a Harijan, a Congressman or a Muslim Leaguer, it makes no difference on any other consideration. In-fact an English person like Mirabehn who throws her lot with the oppressed and the downtrodden will be cordially welcomed."⁴³

Thus it is evident that anyone looking for the country's freedom was invited to join the struggle. The nationalist sentiment was so dominant that the Government even started suspecting the isolationist stand of the communists vis-a-vis the Congress. The S.P., Special Branch, Orissa, in his weekly report on

42. Ibid.

43. Underground documents of the Quit India Movement, No.2, dt. 11.10.1942, AICC Papers.

7 February 1942 reported, "The view expressed by a prominent communist and Krushak worker of this province on the CPI's recent declaration should not be taken at its face value." The secret object of the communists, he opined, "is to enlist in various branches of the army as combatants, war technicians etc. in order to cause dissention and meeting among the troops and factory workers by inculcating in their minds doctorines of communism."⁴⁴

In the field of organisation, the enrolment of members, expansion of organisational network, and the restructuring and reshaping of various existing organisations was emphasized by the Provincial Congress leadership. The PCC was revitalised and the main thrust of the Congress activities was aimed to concentrate on the maintainance of internal peace and order.

The districts were divided into zones of ten or twenty, each in charge of a mohalla in the city or of a village or a part thereof in rural areas. The units were instructed to confine themselves to the service and protection of their respective localities. The volunteers were to help in organising Mohalla meetings and otherwise carrying on the constructive programme. 'Watch and Ward' committees were formed to guard villages during the nights and to help in carefully evacuating the people from coastal areas.⁴⁵

44. HFMU Papers, R-1, File no.31/3, P.62.

45. PCC to AICC, Regarding Volunteer Organisations, AICC Papers, File no.P.22 (Part-1), dt. 15.3.1942.

Seven training camps were formed in Cuttack where 50 workers were trained. The wholetimers were sent to Bari for expert training to take charge of Mofussil Swavalambi Khadi and Volunteer Centres. 22 Swavalambi Khadi Centres were opened with each having four to five villages under its supervision. Swavalambi Khadi Centres and a number of helping Committees were opened in various parts of the province.⁴⁶

The peoples Volunteer Brigades were given training in first-aid, evacuation, Relief work and air-raid precautionary measures. As the Government had put restrictions on unofficial Volunteer Organisations to operate individually, the PCC warned the public against associating with Government organisations since they lacked popular support. However, the people were instructed not to obstruct the work of such organisations unless they were hostile to the Congress policy regarding maintainance of order.⁴⁷

Special efforts were made by the PCC towards preparing the masses for accepting Congress administration in any area affected by foreign invasion. The S.P., Special Branch, Orissa, in his confidential report of 23 June, 1942 wrote, "From some quarters it is reported that Mr. Gandhi's present policy is directed to so influence the masses that they will readily submit to Congress administration in any area evacuated by the Government at the time of an enemy invasion even if the period between

46. PCC to AICC, AICC Papers, File no.P.22(Part-1), dt. 15.3.1942.

47. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.31/3, P.63.

the removal of the Government and the occupation by the enemy be for a day..."⁴⁸

Regarding the nature of the movement no strict guideline was framed by the Central Congress leadership and the local leaders were free to take initiative in response to the attitude of the state. Although a general picture might emerge if one takes into account the hints given by the Congress leaders like Patel,⁴⁹ the provincial leaders were undoubtedly in the dark regarding the nature of the movement.

The Provincial Government's view was that Ramnandan Mishra (the C.S.P. member from Bihar who had visited Cuttack in July) was in possession of the secret Congress programme by some day prior to 27 July and he passed it on to Nabakrusna Choudhury who purposely did not attend the AICC meeting so that he could be in readiness in Orissa to lead the campaign as soon as the Congress decided to start it.⁵⁰

This seems highly improbable, because Mahtab and Dwivedi were close aides of Nabakrusna Choudhury and any secret Congress

48. HFMW Papers, R-I, File no.31/3, P.71. This is also borne out by S.N. Dwivedi's discussions with Gandhi at Sevagram towards the end of June 1942. S.N. Dwivedi, op.cit., PP.26-27.

49. Patel had hinted in as early as June 1942 that the proposed movement would include all the items adopted in the previous movements from strikes to boycott and civil resistance. The struggle would be short and swift and would be finished within a week. Home Deptt. (Poll) Fortnightly report from Bombay for June 1942, File no. 18/6/1942

50. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/31/42

programme which the Government claims to have been handed over to him by Ramnandan Mishra would have been mentioned in their autobiographies.

On the otherhand, Mahtab's views regarding the nature of the movement immediately before his arrest does not seem to go beyond the rehearsal of the old Civil Disobedience formulas.⁵¹ And Dwivedi who had met Gandhi towards the end of June does not seem to have brought any concrete programme for the movement. Leave aside the secret Congress Programme, Ramnandan's visit even doesn't find mention in his autobiography.

The non-violent character of the movement depended more on the nature of the colonial state and hence meaning and scope of non-violence was expanded in order to cope with the change in the attitude of the colonial state.

In the very expectation of naked suppression by the colonial state, the Congress leadership made the movement elastic and local leaders were free to take initiative on their own in the absence of Congress leadership, unlike the previous movements. But the movement can not be termed 'spontaneous' in the real sense of the term only due to the lessened central control. Since the movement proceeded in the name of Gandhi and very much under the Congress banner, the more suitable term would be that it was a decentralised movement.

51. H.K. Mahtab, Sadhanara Pathe, PP.234-235.

CHAPTER - II

Though Gandhiji had been talking of the coming struggle for quite some time, it was at the working committee at Wardha on 14 July 1942 that the Congress first accepted the idea of a struggle and the All India Congress Committee meeting at its Bombay Session on 8 August later ratified the "Quit India" Resolution.

In his speech to the AICC after the adoption of 'Quit India' Resolution on August 8, 1942 Gandhiji said: "The actual struggle does not commence this moment. You have only placed all your powers in my hands. I will now wait upon the viceroy and plead with him for the acceptance of Congress demand. That process is likely to take two or three weeks." He went on in the same speech to advise different sections of the society (Government Servants, Students and others) as to what they should do in the period of waiting "till the time that I frame a programme for the struggle."¹

The Government, however, was in no mood to either negotiate with the Congress or wait for the movement to be formally launched. In the early hours of August 9, in a single sweep all the top leaders of the Congress were arrested and taken to unknown destinations.

The top leaders had the possibility of a Government crackdown in mind and hence the resolution had clearly stated

1. Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol.76, PP.391-395.

that : "A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people when no Congress Committee can function. When this happens every man and woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide." Gandhiji, anticipating his arrest had given his famous speech of 'Do or Die'..."Let every man and woman live every moment of his or her life hereafter in the consciousness that he or she eats or lives for achievement of freedom and will die if need be, to attain that goal."²

In order to justify large scale arrests, Ameny, the Secretary of state, charged the Congress of conspiracy with intention of disrupting communications, destruction of public property, uprooting of railway lines etc. The Government had prepared a list of 36 items which intended to create serious trouble for the Government. The list comprised of "Formation of wherever possible of a parallel Government... general social boycott, particularly of Individual Britishers who were to be harmed in every possible way,...the withdrawal of money from banks. Gandhi to declare himself a rebel, to disclaim British nationality and to fast on to death... demolition of bridges..incitement to Government Servants to resign, stopping of trains on railways.. interference with telegraph and telephone communication including cutting of telegraph wires...mass ticketless travel on railways."³

2. D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma, PP.151,161,166.

3. Home Deptt. (Poll), I, File no.3/15/42.

But the fact is that there was nothing new in the items and all of them had been applied in the past. The difference might have been in the degree but Ameny's publicity of these charges made the people believe that the Congress had such items in its agenda. They now started indulging in such activities. Ameny's intention was obviously to denigrate Congress before public opinion. But to his great disappointment the Congress received enormous response of the people. Various underground revolutionary organisations and groups exploited this situation of confusion by issuing pamphlets calling for mass sabotage in the name of Gandhi and AICC.

The movement can be broadly divided into three phases, overlapping each other. Beginning of the second phase did not imply the complete cessation of the first but only indicated that from then onwards that was the predominant trend within a wider spectrum. In the first phase, the trouble erupted in the urban centres immediately after the arrest of the Senior Congress leaders. The tempo and technique varied from region to region.

In Orissa, the movement initially erupted in Cuttack, Puri, Balasore, Koraput and Sambalpur Districts. It was urban-based and hartals, strikes, burnings and protest marches comprised the main form of activities. There were a few acts of violence as the clashes with the police were few.

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The students of Ravenshaw College led by Bhagirathi Mishra, Upendra Mohanty, Narasingha Tripathy, Biren Mitra, Durgacharan Mohanty and Manmohan Mishra organised public meetings to condemn the Government's arrest of the Congress leaders and exhorted the students to lend whole-hearted support to the Congress movement. On 10th, 11th and 13th there were public meetings outside the premises of Ravenshaw College, and most of the prominent leaders were arrested for making objectionable speeches. On 15 August, agitated by the arrest of their leaders, the students forcibly entered the College offices and laboratories and burnt the records and furniture. The prominent leaders were arrested and most of the educational institutions in the town were closed.⁴

In Koraput, the movement was initiated by two boys of Jeypore carrying the Congress flags who on 13 August read out a message from Gandhiji contained in a cyclostyled leaflet that was posted to the district from Bombay.⁵ The Congress workers arranged hartals and started no-rent campaigns preaching among the people that the country was no longer ruled by the British. Hartals, protest meetings and picketing before excise shops were also marked in Baleswar and Sambalpur districts.⁶

4. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no. 31/3, P.82.

5. The leaflets titled "Gandhiji's last message" were sent to all the District Congress Committees by S.N. Dwivedy from Bombay on 9 August 1942, but it seems only Koraput DCC received it. S.N. Dwivedi, August Biplab, P.99.

6. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.46/3, PP. 21,33

This phase continued for over a week. The demonstrations were undertaken on a small-scale at first as the political parties of the province were taken aback by the sudden and unexpected arrest of the senior leaders and required time to formulate a concerted programme to be put into action.

Giving his review of the political situation in Orissa for the week ending 15 August 1942, the S.P., Special Branch, Orissa, wrote : "The Government measures against the Congress have so far had no serious repercussions in this province. With their leaders arrested unexpectedly local Congress workers are uncertain about the policy to adopt and some time will be spent on deliberation before any concerted programme is developed and put into action. There have naturally been demonstrations such as partial strikes in schools, hastily-arranged protest meetings at which some objectionable speeches have been made, temporary and partial hartals at one or two places and threatening posters pasted on the walls surreptitiously, but all have been on a small scale and confined to the larger towns. The people in the interior districts have not grasped what is going on."⁷

But roughly from August 15 onwards, the focus of political activities started shifting towards the countryside and smaller towns. In order to evade arrests the students escaped

7. Orissa Police Abstract Intelligence (OPAI), Special Branch, 1942, Vol.III, Cuttack, 15 August 1942, No.30, P.125 in HFMU Papers, R-I, File no. 31/3, P.77.

to the countryside. Moreover, the Government itself had shut down all schools and colleges as a part of precautionary step because it was expecting further spread of the movement with the schools and colleges as hostile centres.

The Quit India Movement in Orissa developed in vehemence towards the latter part of August 1942. In Koraput district, the movement was violent though it lasted for a short period.

Koraput was a partially excluded area and it was not normally administered by the laws and regulations of the province. It was chiefly noted for its tribal population who lived in the forest and hilly areas of the district and its literacy rate was the lowest in the province. However, the people of the district were not unaware of Gandhiji's message. In the second week of August, when cyclostyled leaflets of Gandhi's message were circulated the news spread that Gandhiji had given a call for open rebellion and the people started no-rent campaigns. with the belief that the British rule had come to an end.

'Shandies' (Village hats) in Kundili, Nandipur, Pukuli, Sembliguda, Padwa and Peppadahandi became centres of hectic activities as those were the points where the people were exposed to a variety of external influences ranging from market forces to rumours. They served as important centres of discussion and were used for meetings to decide future action and to mobilise support.⁸

8. HF MU Papers, R-1, File no.46/3, PP.4-5.

Opium and the liquor shops were the common targets of the mobs. Opium and liquor shops were raided in Badhigar (16 August), Kongrabeda (17th), Sindhabeda (18th), and Pushapalli on 19 August by crowds (composed of tribals and non-tribals like gaudas) who destroyed the pots containing fermented mohwa and the distillation apparatuses.⁹

The purpose of these demonstrations was to prevent the Government from obtaining revenue from these sources. Some owners surrendered and some who hesitated faced the wrath of the crowd. Several shops at Pukuli Shandy in Pottangi taluk were burnt.¹⁰

On 16 August, two persons were arrested near the Koraput Shandy for making objectionable speeches. Their arrest infuriated a mob of 1000 who threatened to use force and reserve the arrested persons. The police resorted to lathicharge and the mob was dispersed. But the same evening 3000 men threatened to bring down the Jeypore police station if the arrested Congress men were not released. They were however, driven away at gunpoint, some receiving injuries. The people retreated but on the way blocked the entrance to Jeypore Station by cutting and felling trees on the roads.¹¹

On 17 August, a large crowd led by some Congress volunteers gathered near the sembliguda restshed of Jeypore and

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9. Biswamoy Pati, "Storm Over Malkangini : A note on Laxman Naiko's Revolt, 1942," in Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), The Indian Nation in 1942, New Delhi; 1988, PP.195-197.
 10. H.K. Mahtab (ed.), History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V (supplement), P.87.
 11. Ibid

demanded the surrender of Dasmanthpur police station on the claim that the British rule had ended and that the Indians had attained Swaraj. The Congress Volunteers were dispersed by the police and the leaders were arrested. The sameday at Laxmipur police station the assembled crowd burnt the records and demolished a portion of the reserved forest and bridges lying on the Ampani ghat near the Koraput-Kalahandi border.¹²

Mathili was the epicentre of a very widespread campaign which had stirred up Malkangini and the western portion of the neighbouring Jeypore taluk (especially Ambaguda and Udaygiri). On 21 August, the opium shop at the Revenue Inspector's office was raided.¹³ Following this a crowd of about a thousand people reached the Mathili Police Station around 9.30 AM singing the Ramdhun and carrying Congress flags. It raised slogans like :

We are warriors, the British Government has gone,
Mahatma Gandhi is our King, Maharaja of Jeypore is
dead, the British King is dead, the country is ours.
We have got independence, rise brethren, all of you
take part in this war. Mahatma Gandhi ki jai.¹⁴

The people were stopped by the police about two hundred yards east of the police station. After an argument with the

12. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no. 31/3, P.80.

13. H.K. Mahtab (ed.), History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V (Supplement), P.88.

14. S.N. Dwivedy, op.cit., P.42.

policemen, the crowd withdrew to the nearby hat in procession. There, Laxman Naik, the leader, made a speech informing the audience that the British Government was gone : 'Gandhiraj had replaced the British raj and the standby dues and the forest dues no longer had to be paid.'¹⁵

It is clear from the contemporary records that the crowd remained peaceful. Its basic aim was to disobey Government orders, have a meeting and hoist the Congress flag on the police station as a symbol of defiance and court arrest.¹⁶

In the tussle that followed when the crowd marched to the police station around 2 PM, the police found a pretext for lathi charge and subsequent firing. Laxman was injured in the lathi charge and fell down unconscious and it was the police firing that killed Rammaya, a forest guard and some nine to eleven other demonstrators.¹⁷

In the trail that followed, the crowd was described as a 'violent mob' which wanted to burn down the police station, kill the officers and loot the Malkangini treasury. Since Laxman was viewed as a potential threat by the estate as well as the colonial administration he was singled out and charged with the murder of Rammaya. The authorities unleashed a reign of terror to smother the storm and to secure witnesses. Laxman was given a death sentence and finally hanged on 29 August 1943.¹⁸

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15. The Patna High Court Decision, cited in H.K. Mahtab(ed.), History of the Freedom movement in Orissa, Vol.IV, PP.44-48 (Appendix).
 16. Nityananda Das, "Martyr Laxman Naik: A Hero of the Freedom Movement", Adivasi, Vol.IX, No.1 (April,1967)P.25, cited in B.Pati, op.cit., P.197.
 17. Dasarathi Nanda, Saheed Laxman Naik, Berhampur: 1977, P.35.
 18. H.K. Mahtab (ed.), History of the Freedom movement in Orissa, Vol.IV, P.91.

The situation in peppadahandi area of Nawrangpur Taluk was worsening due to the news of police firing and other repressive measures in other places of the province. On 24 August an armed mob of about four to five thousand approached Peppadahandi with the intention of demolishing the bridges and the police station. The police party met them on the road and warned them to disperse. The mob paid no heed to their warning and started attacking the police party. The Subedar received a lathi blow and a constable was hit with an axe below his ear. As the small police force was in fear of being overwhelmed it resorted to firing. Thirty-two rounds were fired as a result of which 12 died on the spot, 14 were injured and three more died in the hospital.¹⁹

The police party was reinforced by the addition of twenty armed constables deputed by the neighbouring Raja of Bastar state. Large number of suspected participants were arrested and the Government ordered the seizure of the country-made muzzle-loading guns, bags of gun powder, caps and sword-sticks.²⁰

The statistics for Koraput district was : Total arrests-1970, jailed-570. Death in jails-50, Lathicharge on 24 occasions. Total rounds fired by Police-41, Total Killed in police firings-25, Total injured-2147 and Total fine imposed Rupees 11,200.²¹

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19. H.K. Mahtab (ed.), History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V. (Supplement), P.88.
20. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.31/3, P.81.
21. Sriharsha Mishra, Swadhinatara Jayajatra, Cuttack, 1980, PP.105-106.

The repressive measures by the authorities quelled the movement to a large extent and in September and October except for minor clashes with the police, there was not much action in the Koraput district.

The Quit India movement was most widespread in the districts of Cuttack. The masses were so stirred that in Jaypur sub-division alone there were 71 revolutionary cases in one week during the month of August and these included 26 cases of burning of police uniforms, 6 cases of arson in Canal Revenue offices, 4 in post offices, 5 of excise shops, 6 in Zamindar kutcheries and 4 P.W.D. bungalows.²²

The Congress ashram at Bari which had been the centre of intense activity during the non-cooperation and the Civil Disobedience movements had been declared illegal and its properties attached by the Government immediately after the passing of the Quit India Resolution. On 16 August, some Congress volunteers attacked the policemen kept in charge of the ashram and set fire to the properties captured by the police.²³

Post offices in Kaipara (17 August), Kumanpal and Bali-chandrapur (22 August) were attacked by mobs often numbering hundreds and the records and furnitures were burnt. The Canal Revenue Offices at Bari (16 August), Dharamsala (20 August) Neulpur and Dasarathapur (22 August) were set on fire and the P.W.D. bungalows in Rampa (18 August) and Gopalpur

22. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.31/3, P.83.

23. Ibid.

(21 August) also received the same fate. On 22 August the records of the Tehshil office at Balichandrapur and Arai were burnt and the embankments of canals in Akhuapada cut. Telegraph and telephone wires were cut at several places and poles uprooted in Zobra and Hadisahi on 27 August, Barang on 22 August and Jenapur on 28 August.²⁴

On 26 August, a police party escorting prisoners in Birjharpur P.S. jurisdiction was attacked by a mob of three thousand. One among the crowd is reported to have struck the D.S.P. with a Lathi, The DSP fired a revolver shot at the man who dropped down dead. Firing was ordered soon after. In all 21 rounds were fired. The casualty according to the police report amounted to one dead and 12 injured.²⁵

Defence organisations were started by the people in different places in the district with the objective of self-protection against police oppression. A batch of Youngmen of the village Bagalpur in Govindpur P.S. led by Gourang Charan Das trained themselves in lathi in order to fight the police in the event of the arrest of the Congressmen. Organisations like 'Rakta Bahini' (Blood sacrificers) and 'Marana Bahini' (Death squads) were formed by the Youngmen of Batimura village with the object of combating the police and to organise cutting of roads, telegraph and telephone wires and demolition of bridges.²⁶

25. Extract from the Report of the DSP, 28 August 1942, Collector of Cuttack, Col.12, File-Misc.1942, cited in Ibid, P.67.

26. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no. 31/3, P.84.

On 27 August, in defiance of the Government prohibition against processions and assemblies Congressmen led by Padmanav Ray proceeded from the Jajpur town towards the police station in order to capture the S.D.O.'s office. The police party was taken aback at the sight of 30,000 strong crowd. Since telegraph wires had been cut there was no hope of any reserve forces coming to their assistance. Luckily for the police, an aeroplane flew a little over the scene and started machine gunning from the air. The crowd was dispersed. But nearly half of them reassembled again and on their way back burnt all government buildings. A punitive tax of Rupees six thousand was imposed on the neighbouring villages.²⁷

During the first week of September the post offices and police stations at Ersama, Tirtol and Jagatsinghpur were burnt. Some of the Congress workers also moved about in the coastal areas telling the people that the Japanese would attack India from that side and that they would like men who would kill officials and burn govern properties.²⁸

In the Angul sub-division of Cuttack, on 7 September, a group of people attacked a police party, rescued the arrested Congress leaders and injured the magistrate and some police men.²⁹ Elsewhere, in Kendrapava subdivision post offices, Canal

27. S.N. Dwivedy, op.cit., P.103.

28. H.K. Mahatab (ed.), History of the Freedom movement in Orissa, Vol.V. (Supplement) P.72.

29. Home Deptt. Poll (1), Fortnightly Reports for the month of September 1942, File no.18/9/42.

Revenue Offices and PWD bungalows were burnt. Armed with Lathis a crowd of three thousand attacked a police party on 26 August. The police opened fire and one person was killed.³⁰

The movement in Balásore district was also equally wide-spread. On 17 August 5000 villagers led by a student Baisnab Chavan Nayak attacked the police station at Bhandaripokhari and set fire to it. They also burnt the post office of the locality nearby and demolished a road-bridge to prevent the police force from reaching the place. The next day a police party reached Bhandari pokhari and arrested the leaders. A punitive tax of Rupees six thousand was imposed on 12 villages.³¹

In the third week of September, in Dhamnagar a crowd of about four thousand led by Muralidhar Panda extorted paddy from the inaccessible regions of the Thana and burnt the uniforms of the choukidars. A police party in pursuit of the rioters met the mob near Katsali. As the mob threatened to attack the policemen, the police fired in self-defence killing 8 and injuring 7.³²

On 27 September, a mob of 400 armed with lathis, bows and arrows rescued their arrested leaders in Khairadiha. The police party was surrounded from all sides by the mob and some of the policemen also received lathiblows. The police fired but there were no casualties. The crowd was dispersed. The very next day, the police entered the Khairadiha village in order to arrest the ring leaders. The policemen entered

31. Amrit Bazar Patrika, 7 September 1942.

32. HFMU Papers, R-1, File no.31/3, P.23.

the house, the house was set on fire and the angry crowd surrounded the house from all sides. The police party managed to escape and in the subsequent firing two were killed and one seriously injured.³³

On the same day (28 September) the most tragic event of the August Revolution in Orissa took place at Eram in Basudevpur where 29 people were killed and more than hundred injured in a single instance of police firing.

Basudevpur was almost inaccessible during the rainy season being surrounded by two rivers and the sea. For that reason, the Congress men had complete control over this island of twenty-five villages. The local people led by Kamalakanta Kar had build up a 'parallel administration' in this inaccessible area in complete safety. For nearly a month they had complete control over these 25 villages. They had established a system of communication by means of conches and it was reported that there was a jail and different officers to man the administration. The choukidars of this area had sided with the people and so the Government was in the dark about the happenings in these areas.

In the previous weeks looting of the paddy of the rich landlords of the area and an assault on the staff of the coastal watching station at Kulikati had been reported to the police.

33. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.31/3 P.24.

On 19th September three Congress leaders had escaped after being arrested. So the DSP was ordered to arrest these leaders and bring the situation under control.

On 28 September the D.S.P. left Eram with a party of 18 armed constables and the sub-inspector. As they crossed the river Gomai, the people were alerted by blowing conches of the arrival of the police. Nearly four thousand men with lathis gathered in no time. The chowkidars were following the police party with the kit. As the police party had advanced a bit far, the chowkidars were surrounded by the mob who assaulted them and snatched away the kit. One chowkidar managed to escape and informed the DSP about the occurrences. The DSP returned to the area where the people had gathered and as the mob started surrounding the policemen, they were ordered to fire on the people. 129 rounds and 14 revolver shots were fired killing 29 people and injuring more than hundred.³⁴ The mob ran away and as it was evening the police party took refuge in the house of a local Zamindar.

The Government was severely criticized for the police firing and ultimately forced to institute an official enquiry into the matter.

The disturbances in Ganjam, Puri and Sambalpur were not that widespread and there were not many cases of mob violence in those districts. Except for a single instance of police firing at Nimapara (Puri) on 16 September in which

34. Collector of Balasore to the Chief Secretary, Government of Orissa, 3 October 1942, HFMU Papers, R-I, File no. 31/3, PP.1-4.

one was killed and 16 injured.³⁵ The situation in these three districts was quiet. In Ganjam district a large portion of the reserve forest was cut by the people of Ghumsar Taluk.³⁶

The Quit India Movement was not confined to British India alone. It made deep inroads into different princely states and inspired the people there to make their contribution to the cause of India's independence.

There were demonstrations initially against arrest of the Congress members in Nilgiri, Dhenkanal and Talcher states.³⁷ But the movement really caught up with the escape of Pabitra Mohan Pradhan from Talcher jail on 31 August 1942.³⁸

The Movement was most widespread in Dhenkanal and Talcher states as the state repression was most brutal there. Regarding the Dhenkanal affairs the political agent wrote on 23 September 1942. "The Raj family has, I more than suspect, been guilty of minor oppression in very recent years. The Raja himself must be the most unpopular man in the Agency. With his malicious, tortuous mind he delights in carping at his employees without ever setting them a good or bad. As I have said elsewhere about Nilgiri, if I lived in Dhenkanal, I should probably be one of the worst agitators myself."³⁹

35. H.K. Mahtab (ed.), History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V (Supplement), P.83.

36. Ibid, P.85.

37. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/90/42

38. 'History of Talcher Prajamandal', HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.57/3, P.17.

39. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/90/42.

The situation in Talcher was no way better. In the same telegram the Political agent reported: "Talcher on the otherhand is well administred; but I think that the very factor which makes for the strength of the administration is also liable to lead to the production of an opposition party. I mean the fact that the administration is very much a family business. Apart from the Raja the Yuvraj is the state judge, the second son is the Chief Executive Officer, a cousin is the Superintendent of the police and other relations occupy such posts as those of S.D.O.... For the most parts the states already impose taxation without representation. This need not itself be a bad thing but it becomes bad if it develops into taxation without compensation."⁴⁰

In Dhenkanal, the movement was led by Baisnab Charan Pattnaik who had been the Secretary of the Prajamandal as well as a member of the AICC. On the night of 5 September Baisnab with his armed men attacked and burned the thana and the subdivision building at Murli. The next morning he moved to Malpura and aided by the villagers looted a debottar grainary. Twenty thousand rupees were looted in cash and grain in addition to the 4 muskets and 75 rounds seized from the police at Murli.⁴¹

On the next day while planning an attack on the Durbar, Baisnab Charan Pattnaik was wounded in a police firing. Somehow he managed to escape with a bullet in his left arm to

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

Cuttack and then from there to Calcutta.⁴² The leadership was then provided by Debraj Patra, a close aide of Baisnab who organised loot and robbery and burning of Government buildings in the state.⁴³ But the movement soon lost its force in face of brutal state repression.

The movement in Talcher state was led by Pabitra Mohan Pradhan who escaped from the state jail on 31 August and build up a separate parallel 'National Government' in the area.

The 'chasi-mulia' (peasant-labour) Sarkar led by Prajamandal established panchayat administration in every village in Talcher. The peasant force was armed with all available weapons and named the 'Talcher Militia.' This force destroyed all the papers, offices and the agencies of the Government officials of all ranks burnt their uniforms and badges and joined the people taking oath to recognize the Government of Prajamandal instead of the royal Government. Roads, buildings and bridges were demolished by the militia on their way to the capital. For sometime practically the entire state except Talchargarh (the palace) had fallen into the control of the Prajamandal.⁴⁴

On 7 September 300 people uprooted and lifted to one side the complete railway lengths near level crossing just near Talcher borders. They also cut the wires of railways and Telegraph System.⁴⁵

42. Baisnab met Dwivedi at Cuttack and then went to Anada Prasad Choudhury who was staying at Calcutta. S.N. Dwivedi, op.cit., P.127.

43. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/90/42.

44. 'Histry of Talcher Prajamandal'; HFMU papers R-I, File no.57/3, PP.17-19.

45. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no. 3/90/42.

Then the crowd led by Pabitra Mohan Pradhan moved on towards the Talcher town planning to capture the royal palace. By the time he reached the palace the crowd had swelled to five thousand. Apprehending an attack the Durbar had asked for protection from British India and they came to his rescue when the armed men had virtually overpowered the state police. The people were machinegunned from an aircraft killing 6 and injuring 23 others. The state police followed the crowd and arrested 243 persons. A collective fine of Rupees 24,000 was imposed on the 'Congress Villages' and muzzle-loading guns were recovered from the people.⁴⁶

The captains of the militia decided to stop the programme of open confrontation and organised a batch of gunners, 'the guerilla force,' which conducted brief struggles with the object of protecting the people from royal atrocities.⁴⁷ It successfully worked till May 1943 but owing to lack of competent leadership (most of the prominent leaders including Pabitra Mohan Pradhan who escaped to Bengal to evade arrest by the Durbar and some escaped to the bordering British province) the movement gradually petered out.

The movement in Nilgiri and Nayagarh states were also widespread. After the arrest of K.C. Mohanty, a member of the AICC on 13 August there was a complete boycott of the state servants and the people looted the granaries and seized

46. Ibid

47. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.57/3, P.19.

hold of the pockets thereby stopping supplies to the state. 22 choukidars in Nilgiri complained that they were not even allowed to walkover the ground of boycotters and their cattle not allowed to be taken out for grazing. However, the movement soon lost its tempo as the leaders were arrested and collective fines imposed on villages.⁴⁸

In Nayagarh after the arrest of the prominent Prajamandal leaders, Sridhar Das, Banchhanidhi Senapati, Laxman Moharana, Sukru Behera, Udaynath Prusti and Vidyadhar Mantri, the people burnt the thana and the school at Nuagaon. In the clash with the police on 10 October 2 were killed and nearly 50 injured. One of them died in the jail.⁴⁹ There were, however, no more incidents of looting or arson in the state after 15 October 1942.

II

An examination of the main incidents which took place in course of the mass upsurge in August-September 1942, makes it clear that the Communication System, i.e., railways, posts and telegraph received special attention of the people. The people believed that by disrupting the communication network they could capture a few isolated tehshils and thanas as a first step towards the occupation of the district headquarters. Attacks on the communication lines were also intended to hamper the Allied war efforts and thus bring pressure on the British Government.

48. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/90/42.

49. S.N. Pattnaik, Odisare Swadhinata Andolana, Cuttack:1972, P.179.

In case of post offices the mobs first entered and took out the furniture, forms and records and made a bonfire of them. In some cases the telegraph and other instruments were smashed in a few cases cash, stamps and other valuable articles were looted. However, no harm was done to the staff working in the offices.⁵⁰

There were attempts to destroy the public buildings and Government offices. Attempts were also made in many places to hoist the Congress flag on the public offices. These attempts sometimes resulted in police-mob scuffles and firings. Quite a large number of government buildings, inspection bungalows and Revenue offices were destroyed by the mob.⁵¹

One of the most remarkable feature of the Quit India Movement was that barring a few cases, private property was not attacked. Despite the eruption of widespread violence, peasants did not put forward their agrarian demands and anti-zamindari violence did not take place.

The Youth both educated and uneducated played a leading role in the mass upsurge. The Youth accepted the challenge of the arrest of the Congress leaders and were in command everywhere. The students came to the forefront in all the provinces. Regarding their role in the movement linlithgow wrote to Amery :

50. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/16/42.

51. Home Dpett. (Poll), File no.3/33/42.

"In all the disturbances the students have been prominent...the volume of revolutionary propaganda spread throughout the country by communist and other organisations combined with the nationalist and anti-British preachings of Congress has had a cumulative effect on the educated and impressionable youth of the country. To the younger generation the 'non-violent non-cooperation' of Gandhi has never made a really strong appeal. Either they have deliberately seized control and exceeded the instructions of the Congress or the Congress leaders themselves may have instigated and subsidised a revolt, the violence of which may have gone beyond their expectations, or there may have been more sinister forces at work. What matters for the moment is that youth is in command and has been putting into execution a revolutionary programme which could hardly have sprung into existence at a moments' notice."⁵²

However, contrary to the viceroy's thinking the 'revolutionary programme' had indeed sprung into existence at a moments' notice. The programme generally followed all over the country had not been formally drawn up by any group either before or immediately after the momentous AICC meeting in Bombay. There was no central organisation to direct the movement. The junior Congress leaders who had got together in Bombay on 9 August prepared the 12 point programme of course

52. Viceroy to the Secretary of State, dt. 22 August, 1942, Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/16/42.

transmitted it to all parts of the country.⁵³ They functioned in the name of AICC and issued circulars and appeals from time to time. It cannot, however, be said that the mass upsurge in the various parts of the country grew under their directions. There were no provincial organisation worth the name during the early days.

As Linlithgow assessed the situation within ten days of the outbreak of the disturbances:

"Taking the country as a whole, the disturbances, though evidently planned by a common source, do not appear now to be coordinated by any single centre and are sporadic in incidence. I have not much doubt that desire of students to initiate subversive or destructive activities of students in other provinces of which they became aware, and anxiety of hooligan elements to turn so good an opportunity to profit are responsible for a good deal, helped no doubt in certain areas by plans being worked out or already in existence and implemented by Congress support."⁵⁴

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53. Regarding Gandhi's last message, Pyarelal denied that Gandhi gave any 'last message' to him. His own view is: "This so called last message, as a matter of fact, is only an assortment of pointers from Gandhiji's AICC speeches on the 7th and 8th of August 1942 as recapitulated by the present writer to groups of Congress workers who came to Birla House on the morning of 9 August 1942, and recorded by some of them." Pyarelal (comp.), Gandhiji's Correspondence with the Government 1942-44, P.XXV, cited in A.C. Bhuyan, The Quit India Movement: The second world war and Indian Nationalism, Delhi:1975, P.66.
54. Linlithgow to Ameny, 16 August 1942, N. Marsersgh (ed.), Transfer of Power, Vol.II. 'Quit India', 30 April-21 September 1942, P.731.

Infact, there was no lack of organisation, but such organisation was of a purely adhoc and local nature.

Tottenham's report regarding the disturbances raised the issue of 'spontaneity' versus 'centrally-directed' which has been a matter of debate in recent years. This debate has become more complex because of the very violent character of the movement. Was the violent outburst really centrally directed?

Tottenham in his report basing on Gandhi's speeches and writings in the months preceding the movement attributes the violent character of the movement exclusively to Gandhi. He, however, failed to see that during this period Gandhi on a number of occasions made it a point to emphasize the non-violent character of the movement. Gandhi infact, combined this creed of non-violence with the demand of immediate independence. As he put it:

"I may be enveloped and overwhelmed by the flames that threaten all of us. That is why I have decided that even at certain risks, which are obviously involved, I must ask the people to resist the slavery. But even that readiness let me assure you depends on the non-violent man's unflinching faith. All I am conscious is that there is not a trace of violence in the remotest corner of my being and my conscious pursuit of Ahimsa for the last fifty years, cannot possibly fail me at this crisis."⁵⁵

55. Gandhi in Harijan, quoted in P.N. Chopra, (ed.), Historic Judgement on Quit Inida Movement: Justice Wickenden's Report, Delhi : 1989, P.49.

Just before his arrest Gandhi had scribbled a note and given a note and given it to Pyarelal. These were his last instructions. According to Tendulkar the note said:

"Let every non-violent soldier of freedom write out the slogan 'Do or Die' on a piece of paper or cloth and stick it on his clothes. So that in case he died in the course of offering Satyagraha, he might be distinguished by that sign from other elements who do not subscribe to non-violence."⁵⁶

According to the Government's report the message was slightly different. "Everyman is free to go to the fullest length under ahimsa by complete deadlock, strikes and other non-violent means. Satyagrahis should go to die and not to live. It is only when individual go out to seek and face death that the nation will survive. Karengé ya Marengé."⁵⁷

Despite there being different versions of Gandhi's last instructions it is clearly evident that Gandhi had an unflinching faith in non-violence. The people were permitted to do whatever they liked but the only restraint was that of non-violence. The Congress did not break this barrier even under enormous pressure and the changed atmosphere of 1942.

Closely linked with the controversy of violence and non-violence is the level and extent of direction. The then Congress President Maulana Azad revealed the Congress thinking

56. D.G. Tendulkar, op.cit., P.216.

57. Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances, 1942-43 (Government of India, New Delhi, 1943), P.74.

later, "From 14 July to 5 August, my time was taken up in a series of meetings with Congress leaders from the different parts of the country. I wanted to impress upon them that if the Government accepted our demand and allowed us to function, the movement must develop strictly according to Gandhiji's instructions. If however, the Government arrested Gandhiji and other Congress leaders the people would be free to adopt any method to oppose the violence of the Government in every possible way. So long the leaders were free and able to function they were responsible for the course of events, but if the Government arrested them, the Government must take responsibility for consequences."⁵⁸

Gandhiji called out to each individual to feel free. The appeal was direct to the individual and the response was to be direct. This feature invested the movement with flexibility and deathlessness. The movement was decentralised and the scope of central direction was deliberately loosened. As the 'Freedom struggle front' document suggested, the detailed application of general principles in concrete acts and manoeuvres must be left to the primary fighting units." It further added that "the purpose of the machinery was to outline the general policy and direction and to provide a loose and flexible coordination of the work of already established parties, groups or individuals to whom the widest possible direction is to be kept in carrying out day to-day programme."⁵⁹

58. M.A.K. Azad, India Wins Freedom, Calcutta:1959, PP.81-82

59. 'The Freedom Struggle Front', Home Deptt.(Poll), File no. 3/83/42.

The decentralisation was provided in order to safeguard the movement against Government suppression. As the document contained "...in administration as in programme, the greatest decentralisation should be provided for. In that rather than in secrecy for which the scope is strictly limited as a movement of this character lies the biggest safeguard against suppression."⁶⁰

Thus it becomes clear that the movement in its later stages was centrally organised but violence was not. It emerged out of concrete circumstances and due to the fact that enough scope was provided for local initiative which led to the extension of the meaning of non-violence and also because of very heavy Government repression.

The absence of a well-established central organisation with its branches in all parts of the country made the task of the Government in suppressing it less difficult than it would have otherwise been. Though the Government found the forces wanting at some places employed the requisite force to suppress the upsurge. Firing was frequently resorted to. According to the statistics available to the Government on 15 September, three hundred and fifty injured as a result of police firing. The army was extensively used and the troops too were ordered to open fire on many occasions. The Airforce was also used, particularly for reconnaissance and patrol. Besides on one or two occasions after warnings had no effect aircrafts also opened fire on Mobs.⁶¹

60. Ibid

61. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no. 3/89/42.

A number of ordinances were specially promulgated to deal with the movement. To prevent the recurrence of attacks on lines of communications the Government imposed collective fine on inhabitants of certain areas. To keep the Muslims away from the movement, the Government even exempted them from payment of collective fine. ⁶²

To keep the excesses committed by the army and the police from the public the Government also imposed strict press regulations. ⁶³

Aided by its ruthlessness of intention and execution, the Government was further helped by the fact that by and large the people were unarmed and the movement lacked a well-established central organisation. Within weeks the task of suppression was over. However, faced with brutal repression some of the leaders went underground and indulged in terroristic activities to paralyse the Government.

Roughly from end of September the movement entered its longest but also the least formidable phase. This phase was characterised by terroristic activities by the youth. It was during this phase that a secret parallel 'national government' functioned in Talcher state.

In Orissa, in organising the underground activities and co-ordinating the branch offices in different districts, Surendra

62. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.83/43.

63. H.K. Mahtab (ed.), History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V (supplement) P.59.

Nath Dwivedi, who evaded arrest while coming back from Bombay on 9 August played a conspicuous role. Making his friend Mathura Nanda Sahu's home in Alisabazar the central office for providing directions and bringing out Congress bulletins, Dwivedi till his arrest on 13 October 1942 had set up a well-established network of underground organisation even linking it with the underground organisations in Bihar and Calcutta.⁶⁴

The bulletins circulated mostly by the students were issued to let the people know about what all was happening in and outside the province and to exhort the students, policemen, merchants and the general public to play their part in this supreme efforts to achieve independence. Appeals were made to the Government servants to give up slavery (often with threatening letters to their person) and to the villagers to establish panchayats and to refrain from paying fines. Directions were also provided in the bulletins on how to disarm and overwhelm the police parties.⁶⁵

Giving a brief description of happening in other parts of India, a bulletin 'The final Revolution for Independence of India' read :

"....Dear friends, let us not spare the British who have sucked our blood so long, and let their blood be dropped at least one day in India. There is no time let us awake. Let

64. Dwivedi mentions how the Congress workers were sent with special instructions to meet the underground activists in a Khadi bhandar on the college street, Calcutta, S.N. Dwivedi, op.cit., P.127.

65. Ibid, P.60.

all the government offices be burnt. Let telephone and electric wires be cut. Let treasuries be looted and poor paid the money. Then thousands of people will follow. Then we will get rid of the Government. Let cars be detained and sahibs (Europeans) be assaulted by night. There is none to order you to work. If anybody want to do good to his motherland, let him die. Only GOdness Bhagavati can help us. Long live this revolution. If anyone is asked to leave his job for the sake of his motherland and he does not obey then let him be killed..."⁶⁵

Another bulletin addressed to the people of Cuttack read:

"Inhabitants of Cuttack! Will you keep aside from this great sacrifice? Don't delay and plunge into this hightide with firmness and courage. Paralyse Government administration. Burn records of police station,s courts and other offices. Sabotage telegraph, telephone and railway communications, uproot the posts. Demolish railway stations. Drag your brothers - police, Deputy Magistrates and clerks-from the slavery of the enemy. Don't sell anything to those who are helping the Government. Let the atmosphere created by you spread to the muffasil..."⁶⁷

To the fellow countrymen in the Government services an appeal read:

"Comrades ! the zero hour has struck. You have heard Mahatma Gandhi's call. The liberation of our motherland is

66. HFMU Papers, R-1, File no.31/3, P.120-123.

67. Utkal Congress Bulletin no.6, Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/31/42.

at hand and Gandhiji wants you to play a heroic role...will you not respond to this call? Your interests lie entirely with your own men not with a few English masters who will leave you as soon as their interest is gone. The postrity will not forgive you when it will know that a tottering foreign administration survived only with the support of a few Indian officers if it survives at all!...In the name of India and its teeming millions who bravely face bullets today for the cause of our own liberation, I appeal to you to play a noble part. Decline to obey immoral orders. Resign Government service at once. Declare yourselves free. Recognise no other authority except the Indian people..."⁶⁸

The 'Congress Varta' a bulletin issued immediately before Dwivedi's arrest and on the eve of Durgapuja read:

"The mother wants destruction. Salvation lies in destruction. Take the charm of destruction, be war like and reduce the administrative camp of the enemy British to ashes. Drive away this power from our country. Wipe out all its symbols and colours. Let a stream of blood flow by your bloodshed. Play a blood 'holi'. The real worship of the mother (Goddess Durga) will be performed.

The purpose of these bulletins was to rouse the masses and incite them to indulge in mass sabotage and destruction.

68. An appeal by Bhairab Mohanty who had resigned the Government service and later tried for his role in the 'Dwivedi conspiracy' case, Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/31/42.

Nevertheless, some of the bulletins carried instructions to remain non-violent. One such read:

"Take care! Do not adopt violence to anybody. Victory to non-violence."⁶⁹ Even in dealing with armed forces the instructions were "If we threaten and exasperate them by our fruitless action (violence) then they will think us as their personal enemy. Moreover, their oppressions will take a brutal shape. So we will not only refrain from killing, but we will also by our behaviour give them definite assurance that their lives are safe..."⁷⁰

Although the Government records mention about the wide circulation of these bulletins and the existence of a widespread network of underground organisation in Cuttack and Balasore districts, it does not mention any direct involvement of the underground leaders in the subversive activities. However, as evident from the letters of the B.O's (Branch offices) to the C.O. (Central office) the leaders actively participated in the destructive activities atleast at places like Badudevpur, Govindpur, Ersama, Tirtol and Jajpur.⁷¹

The underground resistance, however, soon lost its force after the arrest of Dwivedi on 13 October and seventeen others later.⁷²

69. Utkal Congress Bulletin no.6, Ibid

70. Utkal Congress Bulletin no.10, Ibid

71. S.N. Dwivedi, op.cit., PP.51,86, 113-119.

72. Ibid, PP. 188-198.

The 'chasi-mulia' (peasant - labour) Sarkar led by Talcher Prajamandal which had established panchayat administration in the Talcher state during September also could not sustain itself in the face of the brutal repression of the state. The 'Talcher Militia' carried on guerilla warfare successfully till May 1943. But once its prominent leaders escaped to Bengal and other British provinces, it also gradually petered out.⁷³

Elsewhere in the province, the Congressmen who had been released after short-term imprisonments tried to keep up the enthusiasm of the people by leading attacks on remote police stations and post offices.⁷⁴ But these isolated instances did not pose any effective obstruction to the normal administration in the province. By end of November most of the underground activists had been rounded up and by the beginning of 1943 the situation had become quiet. Moreover, much of the time of the Congressmen who were still around or who had been released was devoted to organising relief work for the people affected by a cyclone which swept over north Balasore on 15 and 16 October 1942.

73. 'History of Talcher Prajamandal', HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.31/3, P.19.

74. H.K. Mahtab (ed.), History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V (Supplement), P.90.

CHAPTER - III

The narrative accounts of the events in the preceding Chapter makes it clear that the Quit India Movement was widespread in Orissa. The intensity of the movement in the province had a good deal to do with the wartime conditions. The location of the province in a potential war zone, the denial policy adopted by the Government, the influx of refugees from Burma and the **wartime** restrictions all added to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and desperation which prompted the people to apprehend that the British rule was crumbling.

Its distribution in the province was also determined by a number of contingent factors: the immediacy of the war, the Government's preparedness to put down any resistance that might interfere with the war efforts and the sharp difference of opinion amongst the provincial leaders on the stand to be adopted in face of the national crisis of 1942.

A remarkable feature of the Quit India Movement was that it was an all-embracing nationalist movement. The central thrust of the August movement was nationalist. Even when its programme in many cases was not Gandhian and took place outside the domain of the Congress, Gandhi enjoyed supreme influence over them and they owed adherence to Congress.¹

Except for the muslims every other section of the society participated in the movement or atleast seemed to have sympathy

1. Underground leaders brought out bulletins in the name of AICC and Gandhi but at the same time incited the people to indulge in mass sabotage. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/31/42.

for the Congress.² Even the muslims, although they did not participate in large numbers, they were not hostile to the movement and only remained away from the movement as a community.

The communists (mostly students) going beyond the stand of the central organisation also actively participated in the movement.³ And it was not without any reason that the Government was suspicious about their stand, and had many of them arrested. The Quit India movement not only eroded imperialist hegemony but also furthered national consciousness.

Devoid of a high level of nationalist activity, Orissa was a recognized strong hold of Gandhian Congress. Since the first world war the Congress had build up a strong base and both the Kisan Sabhas and the communists were quite backward in comparison with Bihar or U.P. where the movement was intense.

The CSP as its name suggests functioned within the Congress and played the most prominent role in the movement. The CSP often differed in its methods from the Congress, but it had been the dominating creed within the Congress since the 1930's often dictating the Congress leadership in the province⁴. CSP thus provided a good deal of local leadership in the course of the 1942 uprising.

2. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.46/3, P.4.

3. H.K. Mahtab (ed.), History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V (Supplement), P.62.

4. H.K. Mahtab, Sadhanara Pathe, PP.177-178.

The coalition Ministry led by the Swarajists and the Forward Blocists, which functioned during this period was also sympathetic towards the Congress cause. As Dwivedi mentions, the repressive measures of the Government were taken without the knowledge of the Ministers.⁵ In another instance, Ram Nandan Mishra, the veteran CSP leader from Bihar after his meeting with Dwivedi at his underground office in Cuttack on 20 August was in fact provided with a car by Jadumani Mangraj (Parliamentary Secretary in the coalition Ministry) so that he could move around without being detected by the police.⁶ Though indirectly, Mangraj also promised all possible help to Ram Nandan Mishra in organising the underground activities in the province.⁷

The nationalist ideology had penetrated into all sections of the society irrespective of what they professed. The Government also acknowledged this fact, "the arrest of the Congress leaders appears to have induced the so-called communists, socialists, forward blocists and student federationists of this province to give their support to the Congress cause workers from these parties are concentrating on propaganda amongst students."⁸

There was a general loss of confidence and morale among officials in the wake of the spread of violence in the province.

5. S.N. Dwivedi, op.cit., P.94.

6. Ram Nandan Mishra was provided with the car of the Finance Minister (Godavarish Mishra), Ibid, P.94.

7. Ibid, PP.93-94.

8. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.31/3, P.77.

Lower level Government officials were more particularly sympathetic to the movement. At some places the policemen reluctantly obeyed orders of their superiors. As the Governments' report mentioned, "...there were a few instances of unnecessary timidity and lack of Voluntary Cooperation with the Magistracy and the police in suppressing lawlessness." Regarding the other services the report said, "the attitude of the teaching profession has not been very helpful, particularly of those serving under local bodies dominated by Congress ideas. Postal officials too were of little help and in several cases where Government property had been destroyed, remained undetected as they declined to give evidence. The village chowkidars are reported to have been almost useless in the worst affected areas."⁹

These instances of petty officials and chowkidars who supported the movement even at the risk of their livelihood shows the depth of penetration of the nationalist ideas. This was important since the movement was primarily a hegemonic struggle between the imperialist and the nationalist forces. No section of the society remained untouched and even landlords the natural allies of the British did not remain unaffected.¹⁰

On the spot leadership emerged from almost all sections of the society. However, the students played the most prominent

9. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.46/3, P.6.

10. S.N. Dwivedi, op.cit., P.117.

part in the movement. As in other parts of the country, the students and more particularly, the students of the Ravenshaw College in Cuttack took the leading part in the 1942 uprising. When all the senior Congress leaders were arrested in the province, the students of Ravenshaw College and some schools in Cuttack (Academy School) assisted Dwivedi in organising the underground activities in the province.¹¹

The Government's Report Regarding the role of the students stated : "The students played an important part in the movement specially those of Ravenshaw College, Cuttack and appeared to be largely affected by an appeal by the local Congress which read as follows:

'Live Dangerously,' ought to be the motto of every youngman of India. Live life to the fullest and best effect. The nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat. The best of life lies nearest to the edge of death. So be up and doing. The Congress has sent its clarion call. Mahatmaji is jail-rotting in a British dungeon. It is upto you Youngsons of India to take up arms and march abreast. No youngman is worth his salt who hesitates and falters. Remember the battle of Balasore. The hour has struck. Leap the parapet.

Rise like lions after slumber

In unvanquishable number!¹²

11. Ibid, P.70

12. Chief Secretary to Government of Orissa to Additional Secretary to Government of India, dt.11.1.1942, Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/34/42.

The students also took the leading part in the movement in the princely states.¹³

In absence of a considerable muslim population the August disturbances did not witness any instance of communal violence in the province. The Muslim Community, as a whole, kept aloof from the movement.¹⁴

Industrially backward, there were not many labour strikes in the province. However, the labour was sympathetic towards the Congress cause. On 12 August about 300 labourers working on the aerodrome at Choudwar struck work for few hours as a protest against the arrest of the Congress leaders.¹⁵

Women's participation was evident in the initial phase of the movement when the disturbances were confined to the urban areas. Large number of women comprising of mostly school and college girls participated in the demonstrations.¹⁶ But as the movement started shifting towards the countryside, active women's participation almost ceased to exist. The reason for this was the eruption of violence which was not conducive for active women participation. Their sphere of activities remained limited to the constructive programme of the Congress. The women, however, had to bear the burnt of repression more severely. With the arrival of troops, the men abandoned their villages leaving behind women who were subjected to torture by the troops.¹⁷

13. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/90/42.

14. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.46/3, P.4.

15. Home Deptt.(Poll), Fortnightly Reports from the Government of Orissa for first half of August,1942, File no.18/8/42.

16. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no.46/3 P.12.

17. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/90/42.

Other than picketing of liquor, ganja and tari shops, Congress also presented an alternative to the Government by its constructive programme. The crux of the Congress constructive programme was encouragement of local self-sufficiency. Farmers were asked to shift to food crops and to store food grains in this extra-ordinary situation. Charkhas were distributed to reduce the dependency on market for clothes and this programme received encouraging response from the people.¹⁸ The Congress tried to project itself as an alternative to Government in the wake of general belief that the downfall of the British empire was a matter of days. Attacks on ganja, tari and liquor shops were one of the essential ingredients of constructive programme. It was widespread in the tribal areas of Koraput district.¹⁹

An interesting feature of the Quit India Movement was that even when in its second stage, it had spread out from bigger towns to the countryside it led to a very few anti-landlord actions. The targets of attack were limited to the symbols of British authority. Despite the eruption of widespread violence, the peasants did not put forward their agrarian demands. This was marked in contrast to the pattern of events in the earlier campaigns of mass agitation against the British launched by the Congress in 1920-22 and 1930-34. This can be attributed to the intensity of anti-British feelings in the unusual circumstances of 1942 which meant that all other contradictions were pushed into the background.

18. Reports from PCCs, AICC Papers, File no.P.22(Part-1), dt.15.3.1942.

19. H.K. Mahtab (ed.), History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V. (Supplement), PP.86-88.

The Quit India Movement was most widespread in the coastal districts of Cuttack and Balasore and this had a good deal to do with the immediacy of the war and the pattern of mobilisation. Exposed to the danger of an enemy invasion which seemed imminent in the early months of 1942, the denial policy of the Government and the consequent widespread of rumours caused hardships to the helpless population and to a large extent added to the feeling of insecurity and frustration. The common man in the coastal areas was guided by the feeling that the British were fighting their last battle to hold on to their positions in the country. The anti-British feelings had become so pronounced that the people had even started expressing pro-Japanese sentiments openly. The Sub-Inspector of police of the Erasma P.S. reported that Congress workers of the area were moving about in the coastal villages, and telling the people that the Japanese would attack India from that side and they would like men who would kill officials and burn government properties.²⁰ It was on these issues of local grievances that the Congress mobilised the population for the Quit India Movement.

Moreover, the coastal districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore had been the traditional centres of nationalist activities during the earlier mass movements. Their longer association

20. H.K. Mahtab (ed.), History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V. (Supplement), P.72.

with the British ideas and institutions²¹ had helped the people of these three districts to be in a position of authority. Naturally, most of the prominent provincial leaders hailed from these districts and the two Congress Ashrams 'Bharati Mandir' and 'Satyavadi' which had been the citadels of political activities in the province were situated in Cuttack and Puri districts respectively.²² As evident from the increase in membership and popularity of the Gandhian constructive programme, the DCCs, were better organised in the coastal districts than in the interior.²³

Puri district which had been a traditional centre for nationalist activities during the previous mass movements remained quiet during the Quit India Movement. In Ganjam also the movement was not that widespread.²⁴ This to a large extent can be attributed to the fact that the leaders in these districts did not actively support the Congress-led movement. It was due to their dominant influence in those areas that the masses stayed away from the movement. The 'Satyavadi' group led by Godavarish Mishra and Nilakantha Das had become very critical of the provincial leadership during the late 1930's

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21. When East India Company conquered Orissa in 1803, it established direct rule only in the Mughalbandi districts, Cuttack, Puri and Balasore. The districts of Sambalpur, Koraput and Ganjam districts joined the British province later. N.K. Jit, op.cit., PP.2-3.
 22. Two Bachelors of Arts, op.cit., P.334.
 23. PCC TO AICC, AICC Papers, File no.P.22(part-1), dt. 15.3.1942.
 24. HFMU Papers, R-1, File no.46/3, PP.27-33.

and had openly expressed their disapproval of the Gandhian methods.²⁵ Nilakantha Das and Godavarish Mishra subsequently had broken away from the Congress with their supporters and formed the coalition Ministry in 1941.²⁶ It was largely due to their following in Puri and Ganjam districts that these districts remained quiet during the Quit India Movement, thus pointing to the critical role of the leadership.

In the absence of a tradition of high level of nationalist activity, Sambalpur district was quiet during the Quit India Movement and the demonstrations against the arrest of the Congress leaders in the district did not go beyond occasional protest meetings and two instances of burning records in schools.²⁷

The Government's report regarding the disturbances in the Koraput district makes an interesting reading : "In the Koraput district where the trouble for a time being was widespread, the ignorant hill tribes who had no idea of politics had been duped, partly by attractive promises that there would be no rents, no taxes, no forest laws and no shandy dues in a full Congress regime and partly by playing on their superstition. The rise in prices and lack of food stuffs and other articles of popular consumption spread a sense of grievance. There is however, no evidence to show that this was the main

25. Governor of Orissa to the Viceroy, Linlithgow Papers, No.84, dt. 29.4.1942.

26. H.K. Mahtab, History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V. (Supplement), P.41.

27. HFMU Papers, R-I, File no. 46/3, P.34.

incentive behind the disturbances or more than a mere contributing factor.²⁸

The report sought to create the impression that the hill tribes were duped and their superstitions played upon for bringing them out. The illiterate masses were misled by the Congress and came out only to share the loot.

But the fact remains that the Quit India Movement was not the only occasion when the Congressmen had mobilised the population of Koraput against the oppressive rule of the colonial administration. Although the Congress had not struck any roots in the district till the 1930's, office acceptance by the Congress in 1937 and subsequent intensive efforts by the Ministry to popularise Gandhi's creed and the Congress ideals had been a great success in this part of the province. The increase in the Congress primary membership was striking. In October 1938, it stood at 50,048 (Koraput district was second only to Cuttack district which had a membership of 58,878).²⁹ The enthusiasm generated by the PCC was such that there was virtual deification of Gandhi and at some places "temple ritual took place at the Congress office."³⁰ The effect of Gandhi's popularity in the area can be seen from the fact that Laxman Naik,

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28. An Account of the Congress disturbances in Orissa, Home Deptt. Special Section, Government of Orissa, 1942, cited in H.K. Mahtab, History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V. (Supplement), P.52.
29. Home Deptt. (Poll), Fortnightly Reports, November, 1939, File no.18/11/39.
30. N.N. Mitra ed., The Indian Annual Register, Vol.II, July-December 1942, P.194.

the President of the Congress primary Committee at Mathili and many adivasi supporters had given up hunting and eating meat.³¹

Moreover, Malkangiri, where the Movement was most intense in Koraput district had a rich legacy of popular movements. Koraput had a long tradition of fituri and Laxman Naik (who led the movement in Malkangiri) had come in contact with Ramachandra Kutia, a Koya youth who had joined the fituri and Sitaram Raju who had raised the banner of revolt against bethi and oppressive forest rules in 1922-24. His association with these rebel leaders gave him the opportunity of going round the area as did his subsequent interest in astrology and medicine (known locally as Desari traits). This in turn helped him to strike roots among the people of Malkangini area.³²

The wartime hardships and the repressive measures of the police and the estate had stirred the hill tribes to strive for establishing a 'national government' where there would be no rent, no taxes, no forest laws and shandy dues. The Government puzzled at the unexpected enthusiasm demonstrated by the illiterate tribals and eager to blame the Congress for the disturbances charged it with the responsibility for inciting the tribals thereby understating the depth of penetration of the nationalist ideas and the economic issues involved.

31. S.Sanganna, 'Revolts in Orissa - Martyr Laxman Naik: A hero of the Freedom Movement,' in V. Raghavaiah, ed., Tribal Revolts, Nellore, 1971, P249.

32. B. Pati, op.cit., P.191.

An analysis of the available list of 26 persons of the 29 killed in police firing at Eram (Badudevpur)³³ suggests that the participants came from wide spectrum of the rural society. 25 have caste affixes in the following proportion: 5-Beheras (Gauda, chasa, fishermen, hadi), 4-Das (Gauda, Brahmin), 3-Majhis (Tribals), 3-Maliks (Kandara), 2-Routs (Khandayat), 2-Panigrahis (Brahmin), 1-Sahu (Teli, Bania, Sundhi), 1-Pradhan (Chasa), 1-Naik (Pan), 1-Panda (Brahmin), 1-Swain (Khandayat, Karan) and 1-Dey (Kayastha).

The above data shows that the participants came from all stratas of the society. While the participation of the upper castes is quite evident at the same time roughly 8/9 persons belong to Kandara, Pan and hadi castes, the most deprived castes of the region. There was thus mass participation irrespective of caste and class. This analysis however, cannot be applied to other parts of the province, in the absence of other data.

A distinguishing feature of the Quit India Movement was the underground resistance movement and the establishment of secret parallel 'national governments.' With a view to channelise the sporadic and uncoordinated energies of the people into an organised movement, Surendra Nath Dwivedi decided to establish underground cells throughout the province as a necessary preliminary stage towards a mass upsurge in the province.

33. H.K. Mahtab (ed.), History of the Freedom Movement in Orissa, Vol.V. (Supplement), P.95.

However, Dwivedi's activities were confined to Cuttack and Balasore districts only as no Congressmen of importance were outside the jail in the other four districts.³⁴

A distinct handicap for Dwivedi was that he was the only prominent leader in the Province who had evaded arrest and his arrest would have meant a virtual collapse of the underground movement. For that he had to be very cautious and was virtually confined to his underground office in Alishabazar.

Despite the frequent appeals through the pamphlets, not many higher officials resigned their jobs. This as Dwivedi points out was due to the fact that most of the higher Government officials were outsiders (non-oriyas). Dwivedi also mentions that he wasn't very well known in the government circles where he could influence the higher officials to resign.³⁵ But the officials at the lower level were quite sympathetic towards the Congress cause. Many police and lower level officials helped financially and in circulating the bulletins.³⁶

But the underground movement lost its force once Dwivedi was arrested on 13 October 1942. The failure of the underground movement is aptly attributed by Jayaprakash Narayan to the "Lack of organisation, absence of a full programme of revolution, and lack of knowledge and training the people who failed to create their own power and resist the reconquest of the liberated areas."³⁷

34. S.N. Dwivedi, op.cit., P.100.

35. Ibid, P.92.

36. Ibid, P.101.

37. Home Deptt. (Poll), File no.3/64/43.

Most of the underground workers in Orissa as Dwivedi mentions were students from schools and colleges who had no formal training or any links with the Congress organisation.³⁸

With the establishment of parallel 'national governments' a point was made by the Congress : the very invincibility of the British rule was broken. It was the ultimate culmination of the nationalist hegemony and the final blow to the hegemony of the British rule. It demonstrated that from then onwards, the British could stay in India only on the basis of force. It is a fact that the nationalist control over Talcher or Basudevpur was short-lived, but given the nature of things it would have been too much to expect that an unarmed crowd could maintain its hold in face of the vastly superior armed might of the British.

What is however, more important is that victory was achieved - no matter for an hour or a day. This victory was symbolic and it was achieved through the capture of the symbols of the British invincibility. It provided a crude reminder to the Government that the Congress in future could successfully plan for the seizure of power if the British refused to bow to the popular will. The movement was a great morale-booster for the freedom fighters. Though the British restored law and order by deployment of troops the amount of resources exhausted in the process was enough indication for the British to quit India.

38. S.N. Dwivedi, op.cit., P.86.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

From an analysis of the Quit India Movement some basic features can be clearly derived. The most important feature of the Quit India Movement was that it marked a complete erosion of the colonial hegemony. This was significant because the Indian National Movement was primarily a hegemonic struggle between the nationalist and the imperialist forces.

A remarkable feature of the Quit India Movement was that it displayed little evidence of any internal social conflict while confronting the colonial state. Private property was not attacked. The target of attack was confined to the symbols of British authority. Despite eruption of widespread violence during the second phase of the movement, the peasants did not put forward their agrarian demands. This was in marked contrast to the pattern of events in the earlier campaigns of mass agitation launched by the Congress in 1920-22 and 1930-34. This can be attributed to the intensity of the anti-British feelings in the unusual circumstances of 1942 which meant that all other contradictions were pushed into the background.

Even more remarkable was the manifestation of symptoms of unrest among the subordinate sections of the bureaucracy and the police. The lower bureaucracy was particularly vulnerable to nationalist hegemony. In several places they were found quite sympathetic to the Movement and in most cases did not show either promptness in dealing with it, as they had invariably done in

the past. The infection of hitherto immune sections of the bureaucracy gave a clear warning to the British that they could not rely upon them any more.

Leadership of the Movement generally came from the Congress rank and files though sometimes also from outside the domain of the Congress but even then owing allegiance to Gandhiji and Congress. Gandhiji's instructions were interpreted differently from place to place but he remained what Chandan Mitra calls the 'symbol of mainstream nationalism.' Junior Congress leaders were very much active in the Movement and exhorted the people to commit sabotage. What was, however, more important was that even in cases where leadership was emerging spontaneously the link with Gandhi in some form was always there. 'Gandhiji ki jai' was a common slogan during the movement.

The central thrust of the Quit India Movement was nationalist. Except for the Muslims every other section of the society actively participated in the Movement. Moreover, the Muslims were not hostile to the Congress-led movement. They only remained aloof from the Movement as a Community.

The Communists (mostly students), going beyond the stand taken by the party, in many cases actively participated in the Movement. Even the Swarajists and the Forward Blocists, who formed the coalition ministry during this period, were sympathetic to the movement often going to the extent of assisting the underground leaders in the province. This points to the depth of penetration of the nationalist feeling and ideology.

An important component of the Quit India Movement was intensive constructive programme launched by the Congress. When violence was order of the day some people were quietly giving shape to Gandhi's constructive programme. The crux of the constructive programme was the encouragement of self-sufficiency at the local level. Farmers were asked to store food grains in the extra-ordinary situation. Charkhas were distributed to reduce the dependence on the market for clothes and this programme received encouraging response from the people. Congress tried to project itself as an alternative to the Government in the wake of the general belief that the end of the British empire was a matter of days.

In Orissa politics the CSP had been the dominating group in the Congress since late 1930's; and during the Quit India Movement it provided a large part of the leadership. It was due to the efforts of S.N. Dwivedi that the underground resistance movement in the province functioned successfully for a few months.

The intensity and the distribution of the movement in the province was determined by various factors: the immediacy of the war, the Government's repressive measures to put down any resistance that might interfere in the war efforts and the sharp difference of opinion amongst the provincial leaders on the stand to be taken in face of the national crisis of 1942.

The movement was most widespread in the coastal districts of Cuttack and Balasore and this had a great deal to do with the immediacy of the war and the pattern of mobilisation. These two districts had been the traditional centres of nationalist activities.

Puri and Ganjam districts remained relatively quiet and this was largely due to the leadership in these two districts who did not actively support the Congress-led movement.

The movement was quite widespread in Koraput and this was due to the wartime restrictions and the repressive measures of the police and the estate which stirred the hill tribes to strive for establishing a national Government where there would be no rents, no shandy dues, no forest law and no taxes.

With the establishment of parallel governments, another political, hegemonic point was made by the Congress. The very invincibility of the British rule was broken. It was the ultimate culmination of nationalist hegemony and final blow to the British rule. It was demonstrated that from then onwards the British could stay in India only on the basis of force. It is a fact that the nationalist control over Talcher or Basudevpur was short-lived, but given the nature of things it would have been too much to expect that an unarmed crowd could maintain its hold for long in face of the vastly superior armed might of the British.

What is, however, more important is that victory was achieved - no matter whether for an hour or a day. This victory was symbolic and it was achieved through the capture of symbols of British invincibility. It provided a clear warning to the Government that in future the Congress could successfully plan for the seizure of power if the British refused to obey the popular will. The movement was a great morale booster for the freedom fighters. Though the British restored law and order by the deployment

of the army and troops, the amount of resources exhausted in the process was a clear enough indicator to them of the events to come.

There is no doubt that the Quit India Movement had something to do with the achievement of independence. The movement certainly failed to end the British rule in India; but it did reflect, on the other hand, the anger of the people and their capacity to strike a severe blow at the government, and the limitations of the government forces in handling such a situation. It became clear that the Government would not be able to suppress another movement of this type with the forces available to it.

Now there could be little bargaining between the Congress and the Government on the issue of independence itself. As Mridula Mukherjee points out, "the great significance of this historic movement was that it placed the demand for independence on the immediate agenda of the national movement." It was a clearly sent signal to the British to look for an honourable withdrawal.

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