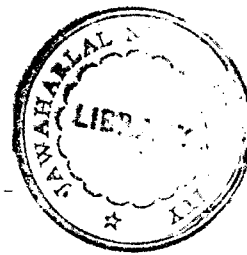


TRADITIONS OF PEASANT MOBILIZATION IN INDIA  
1917-67 :  
A STUDY IN IDEOLOGY

by

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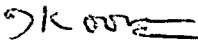
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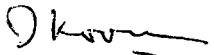
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is approved for submission to the examiners in partial  
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master  
of Philosophy. This dissertation has not previously  
been submitted for any other degree of this University  
or any other University.

  
(T.K. Oommen)  
Supervisor

  
( T.K. Oommen )  
Chairman

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## Chapter I

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The central theme of this study is:

i) to identify the ideological foundations of various traditions of peasant mobilization in the period of our study, and

ii) to examine and analyze the role of ideology in affecting the collective action of agrarian classes and in shaping the organized, sustained collective mobilization in the form of movements either for the attainment of the change in the existing agrarian structure and relations and the system as a whole by a new desired arrangement or for the persistence of the existing system without or with some ultimately inconsequential modifications.

In this chapter we have discussed the conceptual framework for the study and have identified the traditions of peasant mobilization and their ideological background. In the light of this discussion, we have analysed Champaran, Telengana and Nazalbari peasant movements as case studies.

Champaran struggle (1917), by adopting the theory of all classes collaboration and pressure struggles and legal solutions as the dominant form of mobilization represents a tradition which dominated the peasant mobilization during the anti-British movement in the name of political expediency. On the other hand, the Telengana peasant movement (1946-51) was the institutionalized expression of the existing

confrontationist tradition of peasant mobilization. It was thus, a logical extension of a tradition and provided an altogether different orientation to the peasant mobilization in post-1947 India by adopting revolutionary class struggle and militant mass movement as the dominant form of mobilization. Naxalbari peasant uprising (1967) was the higher form of the tradition set by the Telengana peasant movement and also has the distinction of representing the most powerful parallel independent tradition of peasant mobilization in contemporary India.

Two case illustrations for the tradition of confrontation have been taken for the following reasons: Telengana occurred on the eve of 1947. Though it falls under the tradition of confrontation it was ostensibly led and organised by the forces which traditionally followed the path of collaboration and legalities i.e. the CPI. At the local level it defied the central leadership of the party and its ideology, but at the same time the central leadership wielded manipulative and collaborative power so much so that it could unilaterally withdraw the whole movement. It was, thus, marked by an ideological dualism. However, despite this ideological dualism, Telengana was the first organized, ideologically well thought of and sustained expression of the confrontationist tradition of peasant mobilization in the period of our study. And it is in this sense that Telengana marked the beginning of a tradition within a tradition as a logical extension. On the other hand Naxalbari occurred in independent India and was the continuation of a 'withdrawn'

and ruthlessly suppressed tradition of peasant mobilization. It was led and organized by an independent political force and represented the most formidable, all powerful tradition of peasant mobilization in post 1947 India, by continuing, strengthening and developing the confrontationalist tradition.

In post-1947 India, when the external enemy was eliminated and the theory of political expediency could no longer be used, the tradition set by Champaran struggle has emerged ideologically in direct opposition to the tradition of confrontation. In section IV of this chapter the above two traditions will be further discussed.

### I. Ideology

Ideology has emerged as one of the fundamental conceptual analytical tools for the Sociology of social movements. A brief note on the very concept of ideology will be useful not only because our study concerns the determining role of ideology in the traditions of peasant mobilization in the period of our study but also to determine the sense in which we have employed the concept.

Marx (1977: 21) located ideology within the class structure and considered its source in the "phenomenal forms" of a mode of production (Benton 1981: 161-180). Though perception of the material structural conditions (state of external objects) and changes taking place in them due to "development of internal contradictions inherent in the nature of things" (Thomson: 1977: 2), man's mind acquires consciousness which in due course gets "synthesized" into

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"conception, judgement and inference" (Mao 1975: 302) leading to crystallization of theory and ideology with continuous acquisition of knowledge through practice along with advancing forces of production followed by changes in the corresponding production and social-relations. Ideology in turn also makes progress with the advancing forces of production and changing production and social relations from one stage to another and contributes crucially to the further growth of social consciousness to be manifested in higher and higher forms of unexpected collective actions. In the sphere of cognition of social realities and practice, ideology operates at the two levels. Firstly, ideology which distorts, misrepresents and conceals social contradictions and produces "inverted world consciousness" in the interest of ruling class as necessity for the exploitative system (Marx and Engels, 1977: 47; Larrain, 1983: 220). Secondly, the ideology which is the product of the perceptual and rational knowledge of the structural conditions by the dominated, exploited people, developed in the course of their productive labour and invention and development of productive instruments, unfolds the social contradictions and presents them in their actuality with reference to the conflicting interests of various classes operating in the society at a given stage of history. What is most important from the point of view of social movement is to note that in this process, exploited people discover the cause of their exploitation and strive for conscious



struggle under their organization to change the situation in their own favour by removing contradictions. This becomes a necessity because of the internal contradictions of the system which contains conflicting classes and class interests. Thus, it is the ideology through which the base, the production relations, the ideological forms and the social relations acquire new meanings.

Ideology of the dominant class emanates from its historically evolved privileged position in the society and perception of the ruled classes, i.e. "... a class of individuals without this property (private possession of the productive forces) must sell to the former (a class of individuals in possession of productive forces) the use of their labour power in exchange for a wage" (Godelier, 1978: 336). Selling or rendering free labour power, as the case may be, is taken as natural and expected.

Ideology of the oppressed and exploited grew out of their perception, ideas and consciousness which they had constructed in the course of their active interaction with the reality to which they referred. Men do not act only within the confines of visible functioning of the system but they are also capable of discovering internal structure hidden behind the perceptible functioning of the social relations by unfolding the inherent contradiction of the system. They change the very nature of prevalent exploitative ideological forms meant for providing sustenance to the existing mode of production and state. They build alternative structures and reconstruct the

existing ones.

## II. Ideology and Social Movement

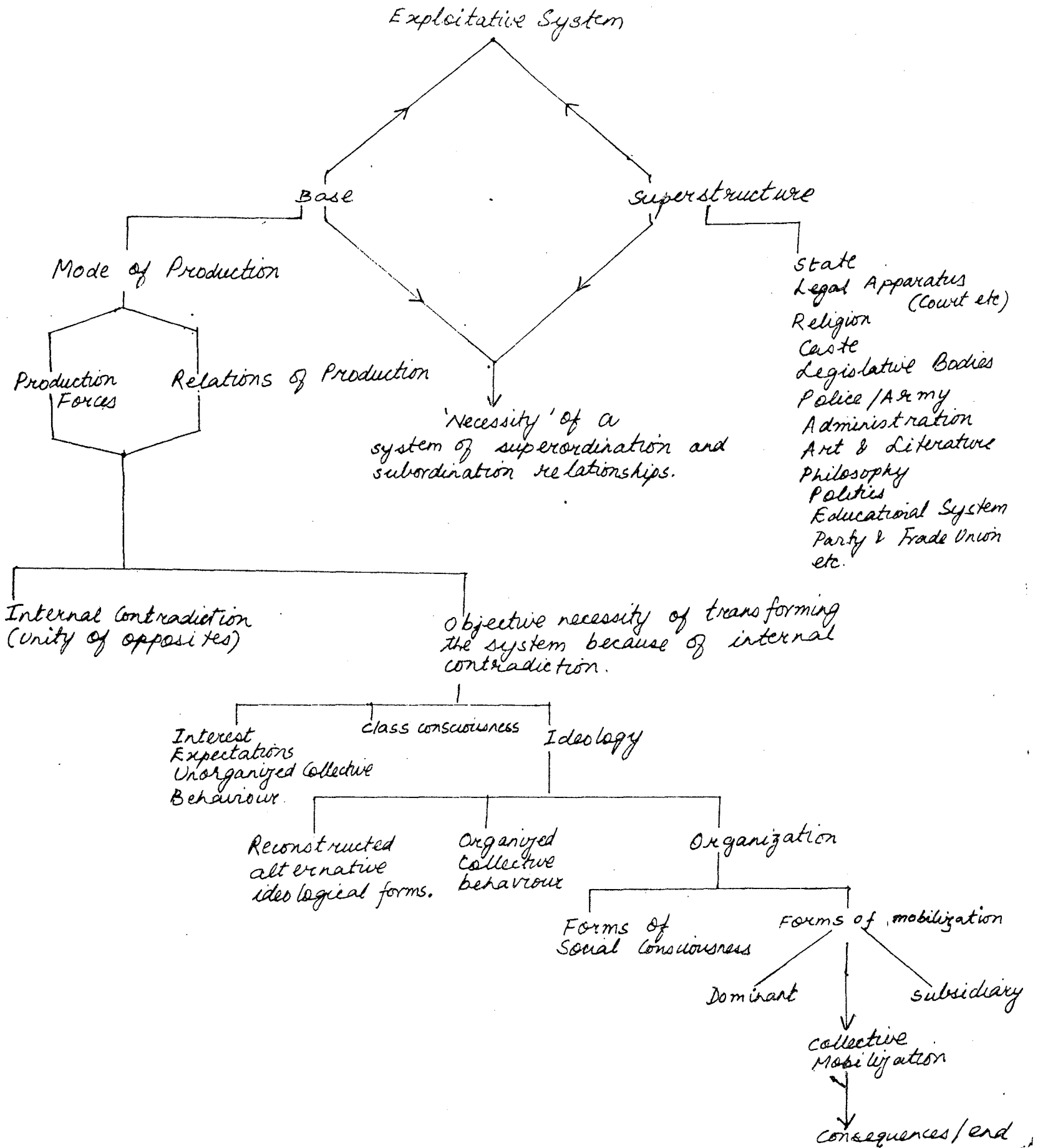
AS a logical extension of the above brief discussion on ideology and its role in moulding the collective actions of people one could argue that: the structural conditions, product of a specific economic base and its ideological forms, produce a certain type of ideology and corresponding collective responses. It may either be change oriented or system conserving.

Exploitative base and its super-structure produce a system of super-ordination - subordination relationships as necessity, manifested in a particular kind of expected collective response; perception of, active interaction with and intervention in such a condition coupled with internal contradiction of the system drive the oppressed and exploited people to replace the system by a higher form of rationality i.e. a system based on equality as a necessity; continued productive labour, acquisition of knowledge through practice and its conceptualization into theories enable the exploited people to grasp the contradictory nature of the system based on exploitation, and they acquire class consciousness and form their own class ideology and alternative ideological forms.

Specific to social movements, this ideology of working people first generates a specific kind of collective behaviour, with interest and expectations which gives birth to an organization. With organization in operation come

various forms of struggle which are indicators of various forms of social consciousness of the people involved. Organizational collective mobilization resulting in a movement brings the consequence/end (See Figure I). With temporary modifications, social movements for system change follow this design. However it is not only the system changing but also the system conserving collective mobilizations taking form of movements that are based and rooted in a certain ideology. It is in this sense that a social movement is a collective form of ideologically governed unexpected/expected social actions. A social movement, thus, is a collective, organized and sustained form of ideologically governed collective social action directed toward a desired goal. Ideology changes the very nature of social/collective actions - for example, violence. Violence against the exploited people is a social action and is expected according to the ruling class ideology, while the violence against the ruling class is also a collective social action and is expected according to the working class ideology. This ideology gives different meanings to the same collective social actions. For any correct understanding of ideology and social movements, it is extremely important to grasp this dialectical relationship between expected and unexpected actions. What is unexpected for the ruling class is expected for the working class, and what is expected for ruling class, is unexpected for the working class.

FIGURE. I



### III. Ideology and "Dominant Form" of Mobilization

Mobilization generally takes place in two phases - phase I followed by phase II. In phase I mobilization is done to channelize the unorganized collective behaviour into an organized collective behaviour, while in phase II there is mobilization of organized collective behaviour in the shape of a movement to achieve the respective goal.

Phase I may again start in two forms. Firstly, initiation of mobilization to generate dissent discontent, indignation and sense of protest. Or secondly, mobilization to channelize already generated, yet unorganized, existing dissent, discontent, indignation, interest expectation, due to internal contradiction of the structure, into an organized collective behaviour. However, sometimes mobilization *for* movement may start with phase II, when the micro-level unorganized collective behaviour is already organized under the influence of various factors. In phase II organized collective behaviour is mobilized into concrete, well-defined form of mobilization resulting in movement to achieve the respective goals.

For an understanding of the operative part of the above two phases and the role of ideology, a discussion on the two layers of mobilization i.e. micro- and macro-levels of mobilization, is needed to see how the two are related and united by ideological objectives.

Micro-level mobilization generally starts as dissent, and protest for immediate economic, social, or political grievances at local level and may gradually assume importance

by widening its base area and appeal by (i) linking with other micro-mobilizations of similar nature; and (ii) by establishing a definite or general link with a macro-ideology, which envisages a macro-level dominant form of mobilization. It is this dominant form of mobilization which provides a wider base and acceptance to micro-mobilizations of collective actions by linking them with macro-mobilization/macro-ideology for the attainment of identical objectives and goal. However, micro-mobilization may start as part of the on-going macro-mobilization/macro-ideology which provides them with a perspective to analyse the situation around them in a particular way and get inspiration from the mobilization in other parts.

Macro-mobilization, in a sense, is the cumulative result of identical unexpected/expected collective actions at the micro level, through which existing base and social relations either acquire <sup>new</sup> meanings or the old beliefs are strengthened, so that the system is either replaced by a desired form of ideological rationality or status quo is maintained.

Ideology, as discussed earlier, plays a crucial role in macro-mobilization. It is the ideology which envisages a grand design of macro-mobilization of collective actions either to change the existing system or to conserve it. And this grand-design of mobilization produces a dominant form of mobilization at macro-level as ideology requirement. Dominant form of mobilization is also enriched by identical specific-ideologically governed forms of protest struggles

emerging from micro-level unexpected/expected collective actions.

The grand-design of macro-mobilization is the result of the cognition of reality in general at macro-level. Cognition of reality of the totality involves ideological perception of social, economic, political and cultural realities in their diversity at macro-level. Now the task of the ideology is to see how these realities are inter-linked and interdependent on the one hand, and to establish a connection between these ideological forms and the existing economic base, on the other, so that a macro-strategy for a macro-mobilization could be evolved. This task of establishing definite linkages among various realities; forming a macro-strategy of mobilization; and evolving a dominant form of mobilization, is possible only on the basis of ideological perception of the existing mode of production and the corresponding production and social relations.

For instance, a particular ideology, in the context of peasant mobilization, takes into account the existing dominant character of agrarian structure and relations and character of state. Now, the ideology will formulate a general strategy to deal with the existing macro-situation in this regard. While doing so, the ideology takes into account the strength of ideological forms, state, administrative infrastructure and policies of the state and formulates dominant form of mobilization. It does this

keeping in view the various apparatuses of control of the policy enforcing agency - the state - to counter its dominant ideology, mode of exploitation and oppression to overthrow the persistence of a specific mode of production and class domination. Then the ideology and dominant form of mobilization are to confront a specific macro-situation which is comprised of various identical micro-situations. However, it is important to note that the homogeneity in ideological approach with respect to diversity is possible because of the dominant macro-character of state, economy, and society due to the persistence of a specific form of class domination.

To explain the above, we may take some concrete examples.

For instance, an ideology with respect to peasant movement at macro-level may conceive that: "biggest single problem in the rural areas at present is the crash in prices of agricultural produces especially of commercial crops but also of food grains...") If we are not able to win remunerative prices for the agricultural products, the entire rural economy will be seized by a crisis the magnitude of which affects all sections of the peasantry and the widest mobilization is possible in the struggle for remunerative prices"; as a result of which "fair price for the crops became the major demand of the peasant movement in practically every state" (A.I.K.C. meeting, 1981: 7-8).

In the above quotation, a macro-position has been expounded with respect to the direction of peasant movement in the country as a whole. It is evident that according to



the above macro-position, [the dominant direction of the peasant mobilization at macro-level would be to mobilize the peasants on the question of remunerative prices which has been identified as the 'biggest single problem' but the target group of the mobilization would be the landed gentry who can produce cash crops and have enough surplus to sell.]

Now the issues and approach to the issues are clear. From this the dominant form of mobilization will emerge. In order to examine this process, we have to see what the actual goal is that this ideology intends to achieve. This ideology seeks to establish People's Democracy in India where the bourgeoisie will also share power in the state. It characterises the Indian state as authoritarian and pramonopoly, encouraged by US imperialism. To achieve this goal, the ideology has adopted a peaceful, parliamentary path to establish socialism. Thus, the dominant form of peasant mobilization will also be in accordance with the goal/ideology, and peasants will be mobilized and organized in open, legal bodies, through legal means avoiding any open confrontation with the state machinery. Evolution and adoption of a specific dominant form of mobilisation, thus, is to be located in the class character of the ideology. The class basis of an ideology largely shapes the forms of mobilization to suit the interests of the respective class.

Now, contrary to the above position, an ideology which characterises the Indian macro-situation in terms of semi-feudalism and semi-colonialism, where the comprador bourgeoisie and big landlords are in control of the country's economic,

social, political and cultural affairs, seeks to establish New Democracy. According to this macro-position the main direction of peasant movement will be to mobilize and organize agricultural labourers and poor peasants first, for they constitute the leading revolutionary force because of their location in the production process. This ideology, in order to achieve the goal i.e. establishment of New Democracy, rejects the peaceful parliamentary path and advocates the mobilization of peasants mainly in illegal, underground bodies to wage a war to overthrow the state through armed struggle. Thus, the dominant form of peasant mobilization under this ideological strategy is that of armed struggle. The dominant form of mobilization is supplemented by militant mass resistance movements under this New Democratic macro-position, the existing contradictions that middle and rich peasants have with big landlords are utilized and attempts are made to bring middle and rich peasants into the mainstream against the big landlord-comprador bourgeoisie ruling alliance under the revolutionary leadership of the immediate producers.

#### IV. Traditions of Peasant Mobilization in India - 1917-67: Ideological Foundations

The most important feature of the peasant mobilizations during the period of our study is that they were addressed to a future society and aimed either at revolution or mere change in political authority without any change in class composition with respect to state power and were rooted in one or the other definite ideology. These peasant mobilizations were guided by various ideologies to mobilize peasants/rural masses for

achieving certain long-term goals - either to drive out the British physically or to establish peoples' revolutionary authority where not only British imperialism would be driven out but local exploiters, too, would be eliminated (pre-1947) and to overthrow Congress regime (post-1947). Ideologies of these peasant mobilizations had their specific forms of mobilization affecting the collective actions in their own way.

Judging from the various interpretations and empirical evidence available it could be argued that peasant mobilization in this period took place within the two contending traditions, which draw an ideological dividing line between the various peasant mobilizations in this period. [These traditions can be characterised as:

- a) The tradition of confrontation; and
- b) The tradition of collaboration and legal path. ]

#### A) Tradition of Confrontation

Ranjit Guha (1982) elaborating on the nature of mass resistance in colonial India highlights "the contribution made by the people on their own - i.e. independently of the elite to the making and development of this (Indian) nationalism" (1982 : 3). [Guha's fundamental thesis is that there were two parallel "streams or domains of politics in India - 'elite politics' and the 'politics of the people', the latter was not only 'autonomous' but "one of its invariant features was a notion of resistance to elite domination" (1982 : 5). Many times masses mobilized by the elite to fight for their

own objectives managed to break away from their control (1982: 6). "The co-existence of these two domains or streams was the index of an important historical truth, that is, the failure of the Indian bourgeoisie to speak for the nation" (Guha, 1982: 5).

Launching a frontal attack on elite historiography, Guha emphasizes: "The bankruptcy of this (elite) historiography is clearly exposed when it is called upon to explain such phenomena as the anti-Rowlatt upsurge of 1919 and the Quit India Movement of 1942 - to name only two of the numerous instances of popular initiative asserting itself in the course of nationalist campaigns in defiance or absence of elite control. How can such one-sided and blinkered historiography help us understand the profound displacement which made Chauri-Chaura or the militant demonstrations of solidarity with RIN mutineers possible?" (1982: 3).

Ideological roots of Guha's argument could be traced back to M.N. Roy who in his original draft thesis submitted to the Second Congress of the Third International (1920) had identified "in many countries especially in India..." 'two distinct movements'... one as the "bourgeois democratic nationalist movement with a programme of political independence" and the other as the "mass action of the ignorant and poor peasants and workers. The former endeavoured to control the latter and often succeeded to a certain extent but it would be a mistake to assume that the bourgeois nationalist movement expresses the sentiments and aspirations of the general population" (G. Adhikari, 1971: 124).

Influenced by Roy, the Indian communists popularised the 'fear of the masses theory' under the influence of Third International in the thirties and later by R.P. Dutt. 'Fear of the masses' theory has recently been stated again in the context of peasant movements by A.R. Desai (1979). The essential difference between the Roy-Guha thesis and the 'fear of the masses' theory is that instead of identifying two parallel movements or streams or domains of antagonistic classes, this theory highlights the division between "revolutionary Congress masses" and "bourgeois reformist leadership". According to this approach dull-witted but "revolutionary masses" were "pressed into service" for alien class interests and were denied the opportunity to make revolution by carefully harnessing them to controlled forms of struggles (Desai, 1979). According to the inherent logic of the tradition of confrontation, the revolutionary character of peasants manifests in revolts, rebellions, insurrections, defying the official line and taking independent initiatives whenever possible. Kathleen Gough (1974) writing on the peasant uprisings in India observed that all of the peasant revolts seem to have occurred under conditions of relative deprivation. Gough (1974) notes that peasant uprisings "also amply illustrated the remarkable organising abilities of the peasantry, their potential discipline and solidarity, their determined militancy in opposing imperialism and exploitative class relations, their inventiveness and potential military prowess and their aspirations for a more democratic and egalitarian society. The more impressive

uprisings also show that even in India, where inter-ethnic strife has produced some of the most tragic modern holocausts, peasants are capable of cooperating in class struggles across caste, religions and even linguistic lines to redress their common grievances".

The programme of peasant mobilization based on the ideology of the tradition of confrontation was executed not only by various organizations in different periods, but often this paradigm was followed by peasant masses independently defying the official lines of the central mobilizing organization involved. It is important to note at this juncture that organizationally the paradigm of confrontation was upheld and put into practice as conscious ideology for peasant mobilization mainly after 1947 by Marxist-Leninist party and other groups beginning with Naxalbari. The Marxist-Leninists differed with the CPI and CPI(M) on the question of the nature of society and the character of state and thus on the question of strategy and tactics of Indian revolution. However, before 1947, the paradigm of confrontation as conscious ideology for peasant mobilization was adopted and practised by the local leadership of the united CPI during the Telengana armed struggle also which we will discuss in a separate chapter.

For our purpose, it is essential to note that during the period of our study (1917-69) the paradigm of confrontation was asserted and followed for peasant mobilization on two levels. Firstly, it was practised as the spontaneous, yet conscious, independent initiatives of peasant masses and

local landless against the policies of the collaborationist peasant organizations and their leadership and challenged in their own ways the authority of the local exploitative classes and leadership of the collaborationist organizations which always sought to resolve the issues through submission, compromise, unilateral withdrawal and legalities. The paradigm of confrontation was reflected in the peasants' unexpected collective actions when they defied the dictates of the central organization and leadership and deviated from the expected path. This is evident in numerous peasant mobilizations launched by Gandhi, Congress, Kisan Sabha and the communists. Peasants took independent initiatives and defied the expected path in the 1942 Quit India Movement, in Chauri Chaura, in the peasant revolt of Oudh of early 20s and during the Tebhaga movement - to name a few. However, the paradigm of confrontation may not have always been a conscious class ideology - rather often it was a spontaneous reaction resulting from extreme exploitative existential conditions and collaborationist policies of the organizations. This spontaneous reaction showed the interest of the people to change the situation and had potential to take form of a definite class ideology.

Secondly, this paradigm was adopted in practice by certain organizations consciously to mobilize peasants to achieve revolution. This was done first during the Telengana movement. However it was the post-47 period that marked the end of the era of spontaneity and the beginning of the era of organization in this regard, starting with Naxalbari

peasant movement. These organizations sought to mobilize peasants through revolutionary class and militant mass mobilizations and would not hesitate to adopt violent means of struggle whenever necessary. In fact, the armed peasant resistance and struggle was the dominant form of struggle for these organizations. Naxalbari peasant movement of 1967 and subsequent peasant movements in Lakhimpur Kheri, Misahari, Sriiskulam, Debra Gopiballavpur, Bhojpur under the leadership of CPI(ML) are the notable peasant movements which took place within the tradition of confrontation.

b) Tradition of Collaboration and Legal Path

While the main emphasis of the tradition of confrontation has been on violent revolutionary class struggle and militant mass movements and armed struggle as the dominant form of mobilization, the essential thrust of the tradition of collaboration and legal path is on non-violence and pressure struggles through legal means. For the tradition of collaboration the British rule occupied the all powerful central position for any peasant mobilization during the pre-47 period. There emerged a theory of collaboration to fight colonial rule involving all agrarian classes. As far as the struggle against the exploitation by local feudal lords was concerned, this was done through legal battles seeking concessions from British rule, that too for rich tenants who had economic contradiction with the bigger landlords. The tradition of collaboration and legal path emerged essentially out of the ideology of anti imperialism as





class struggle and unity of all classes theories. Bipin Chandra (1979) an advocate of such a paradigm, states

"... the anti imperialist movement did not merely 'exploit the peasants' mass strength or place its interest at the command of the bourgeoisie or middle classes ... It represented to a certain extent the anticolonial interests of the peasantry. Moreover, it was not as if the peasantry and its movements are 'utilized' by the national leadership or were 'sacrificed' at the altar of nationalism. Nationalism helped arouse the peasant and awaken him to his own needs, demands, and aboveall the possibility of an active role in social and political development" (344-45).

Swami Sahajananda, leader of the Kisan Sabha, and Acharya Narendra Deva, founder of Kisan Sabha and a socialist ideologue, were of the firm opinion that there should be no conflict among various agrarian classes. Acharya declared that "our task today is to carry the whole peasantry with us," (1946:46). Like the socialists and the Congress, the communists also took practically the same ideological position as far as peasant mobilization during anti British campaign was concerned (Alavi: 1965; Comment: 1983).

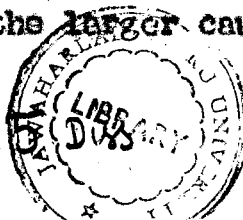
However, rich tenants were mobilized for anti-feudal struggle by putting pressures on the British rule to change laws in favour of tenants. There were two main theses advanced by the upholders of this tradition:

1. that peasants did not question at all the landlord's right to have a share in the produce but what they were not ready to pay was more than the legally stipulated share (Sunil Sen, 1980; Sengupta, 1979).

2. there should be no struggle against the local feudal lords in the interest of the larger cause i.e. elimination of the alien rule.

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Such a wrong notion about peasants' consciousness and class collaborationist thesis was obviously the result of the class basis of these organizations/<sup>and</sup> caused continued misery, exploitation and oppression of immediate producers even after the completion of the larger cause. The most important characteristic of mobilization under this tradition was that it was tenants with enough surplus who were mobilized in the name of peasant movement. The actual producers remained unaffected. The Kaira, Bardoloi, Champaran, Bakshat movement and the Fakhaga movement to name a few are the typical examples of the peasant mobilization launched under this tradition. Whenever peasants took independent initiatives and resorted to violence, Congress, Gandhi, socialists and communists all withdrew their support. [The tradition of collaboration and legal path resulted in debacle of Pedanandipad campaign, Oudh Kisan rising, Moplah rebellion, Telengana movement, Naxalbari uprising — a few among many instances.]

In the pre-1947 period, all classes theory to fight the external enemy "had become the matter of political expediency, while in post 1947 India paper promises and small divisive concessions has become the matter of political expediency" (Gomen, 1983). However, in post 1947 period Bhodan Gramdan movement ostensibly emerged as an alternative to both the traditions but ultimately it too proved to be a system conserving force (see Mukherji, 1978: 83).

After 1947, there was no question of Congress mobilizing peasants as it had achieved its goal i.e. driving

out the external enemy. However, as a matter of post 1947 political expediency Congress party which had now assumed the governmental responsibilities, did enact Zamindari Abolition Act and introduced the Land Reforms policy. But ironically these measures were considered as 'sentimental gains' and again went in favour of non-cultivating rural gentry and the actual tillers - poor peasants and agricultural workers - remained economically, socially as they were before 1947 (Joshi: 1974; Erik Stokes: 1978; Srinivas: 1970, 1980).

The socialists in the post 1947 period remained inactive and openly opposed any peasant mobilization on class lines advocating class collaborationist policies (Alavi, 1965).

As far as communists in the post-1947 period are concerned, except for CPI(ML) the other two parties, namely, CPI and CPI(M) continued to follow the tradition of collaboration and legal path now as part of their ideology of peaceful transition to socialism and their understanding of the nature of society and the class character of state. Along with the Congress, they ruthlessly suppressed the peasant's independent initiatives for revolutionary movement in Naxalbari and other places.

The broad characteristic features of the two distinct ideological traditions of peasant mobilization are present below in a tabular form:

TABLE I

	<b>Tradition of Confrontation</b>	<b>Tradition of Collaboration and Legal Path</b>
<b>Ideology</b>	Class struggle, system changing	Stability of the Social order, system conserving, pro-status quo, conservative.
<b>Social Basis</b>	Immediate Producers	Landlords, rich peasants, rich tenants.
<b>Forms of Mobilization</b>	Open spontaneous revolts, confrontations, armed confrontations, armed struggle, violent revolutionary class struggles, militant mass mobilization.	Compromise, legal path, class collaboration, unilateral withdrawal.
<b>Immediate Motive force</b>	Exploitation, oppression, Class interest, class struggle, exploitation as the inevitably engrained logic of the exploitative system	Maintenance of social order. 1. Class collaboration/pro-landlord in the name of political expediency to drive out British 2. change through legal means post-1947.
<b>Dominant Form of Mobilization</b>	Armed confrontation	Non-violent pressure struggles through legal means.
<b>Observable effect</b>	Unexpected Social Actions	Further strengthening of the expected social actions. Vigorous expected social actions against unexpected social actions.
<b>Goal</b>	Conscious collective action to change the system by desired state of affairs.	Conscious collective action to maintain the status quo or bring changes within the system, without affecting the system.

## Chapter II

### THE CHAMPARAN STRUGGLE : BEGINNING OF A TRADITION

Champanan struggle (1917-18) against the European Indigo planters was started at a time when the Home Rule agitation was at its height in India. It was also the time when the British Government had launched a vigorous campaign to recruit Indians into the British Army which had created a widespread dissent among people (Choudhary, 1979). It was at the time of Champanan struggle that the anti-British movement had gathered momentum in India. It is evident that the struggle was the outcome of the realization on the part of Gandhi and Congress that the rural masses should be involved in an organized fashion in the anti-British movement.

Before the appearance of English planters on the scene in 1782 Indigo was being cultivated indigenously in Champanan. By 1850, the profitability of indigo rose to a point where it replaced the sugar industry. The following four different agrarian arrangements involved the English planter in the cultivation of indigo: (1) Capitalist farming with ownership of land or superior technical rights vesting in the factory, which got the cultivation of indigo done by hired labour under supervision of factory employees. This was known as Ziraat; (2) the factory as proprietor or superior tenure holder, leased out land to tenants on condition that they cultivate indigo in three Kattahs per begha of their leased lands; the factory would supervise cultivation and crop culting; this system was known as asamwar or tinkathia; (3) the factory

entered into agreement with ryots who were not tenants of the Company (Khushki); (4) the factory itself leased in lands from its own ryots and cultivated indigo under its own supervision. The first two were the prevalent arrangements, of which the tinkathia system was the more pervasive form in practice (Mukherji, 1983: 50).

The ryots under the tinkathia system right from the beginning, resented the cultivation of indigo, not only because the cultivation process was repulsive, but also because of the compulsion to cultivate it at unremunerative rates and under oppressive and unwelcome supervision by the factory staff, who also forced illegal exactions out of the tenants. In addition, non-legal customary extractions (abwabs) were also levied from the tenants in a manner similar to that of Indian landlords (Mukherji, 1983 : 50).

It is important to note that much before the struggle was started by Gandhi in 1917, the plight of 'ryots' had attracted the attention of the Provincial Congress Committee. In his presidential address at the annual conference of Bihar Provincial Congress Committee held on 10 April 1914, Babu Brij Kishore drew the attention of delegates:

"whatever good the planters might have done, their dealings with the ryots have brought about a serious agrarian situation and they have resulted in a considerable suffering and misery to the poor and defenceless villagers. It is well known that the ryots' allegations against the planters, which have been held by the courts to be generally well founded, are to the effect that they are bound to execute illegal sathas by methods of coercion including the institution of vexatious taxes; that *fine* and cesses are

unlawfully realised from them and they are ill-treated if they attempt in the least to refuse compliance with the orders of the planters ...." (Rajendra Prasad, 1955, 66-67)

The Bihar Congress Committee passed a resolution demanding an inquiry committee to redress the hardships of the peasantry in Champaran. The 1916 Lucknow Session of the Indian National Congress took up the cause of the Champaran ryots and the following resolution was proposed and unanimously passed on the second day of the Session:

"The Congress most respectfully urges on the Government the desirability of appointing a mixed committee of officials and non-officials to inquire into the causes of agrarian relations between the indigo ryots and the European planters in North Bihar and to suggest remedies therefor" (Freedom Movement in Bihar, Government of Bihar, 1957: 194).

On the practical level, the ryots had revolted against the planters much before the Congress resolutions. "In the absence of the mitigation of their sufferings to any extent or in any form their smouldering dissatisfaction frequently found expression in violent protest in 1907-8. The peasants at the Sathi Factory and other neighbouring factories stopped the cultivation of indigo and organized an agitation. To quell it 19 persons were convicted in November 1908. Nearly 200 prisoners awaited trial at Motihari under different charges, including assaulting the alien planters and arson" (Choudhary, 1979: 227-28).

The actual struggle by Gandhi was launched in April 1917. Gandhi started conducting a systematic and authoritative enquiry into the real nature and degree of

the suffering of the peasants (ryots) at the hands of the planters (Ranga and Sahajananda 1979: 54). When the struggle took place in April 1917, the statements of more than 8,000 tenants from about 350 villages in Champaran against 60 factories of the European planters were recorded under the supervision of Gandhi (Choudhary, 1979: 228). But the provincial Government took fright and prohibited them from pursuing their enquiries. On their refusal to obey this prohibitory orders, there arose a crisis, in which the arrest and subsequent release of Gandhi were followed by the appointment of an enquiry committee with Gandhi as one of its members (Ranga and Sahajananda, 1979: 54-55). Gandhi explained the conditions and grievances of Champaran ryots in his report submitted for the persual of Mr. Mande, the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bihar, on 12 May 1917: "Indigo ... may now be defined as an obligation presumed to attach to the ryot's holding ... under coercion. It is inconceivable that the ryots would agree to an enormous perpetual increase in their rents against freedom from liability to grow indigo for a temporary period, which freedom they were strenuously fighting to secure and honourably expecting.... Under the tinkathia system the ryot has been obliged to give his best land for the landlord's crops; in some cases the land in front of his house has been so used, he has been obliged to give his best time and energy also to it, so that very little time has been left to him for growing his own crops - his means of livelihood ... Inadequate wages have been paid to the ryots ... and even



boys of tender age have been made to work against their will ... There can be no doubt that the latter (planters) have inherited a vicious system. They with their trained minds and superior position have rendered it to an exact science, so that the ryots would not only have been unable to raise their heads above water but would have sunk deeper still had not the government granted some protection. But that protection had been meagre and provokingly slow and has often come too late to be appreciated by the ryots" (Home (Pol.) Department).

Ryots' demands were recognised when the Inquiry Committee composed of official and non-official members submitted its recommendation. The outstanding features of the recommendation were that Tinkathin was to be abolished, and Sarahbashi was to be reduced by 20 to 25 per cent in various factories. The tenants were allowed to hold their lands without any obligation to grow indigo. Proper arrangements to prevent unnecessary litigation between the (ryots) and the planters were promised by the authorities. On 29 November 1917, Mr. Maude introduced the Champaran Agrarian Bill in the Legislative Council of Bihar and Orissa. The Champaran struggle reached its final stage when the Champaran Agrarian Act was approved and assented to by the Governor General of India on 1 May 1918.

## II

Analysing the class character of the Champaran Struggle, Ranga and Sahajanand (1979 : 55) writes

"But just as the earlier Congress agitation led by Ramesh Chandra Dutt against temporary settlement, did not embrace the exploitation of our peasants by Zamindars, so also this agitation led by the Mahatma in Champaran did not lead up to any fight against the main causes for the terrible poverty and sufferings of Champaran peasants, namely the excessive rents and exorbitant incidence of debts". It was striking to note that both Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad "remained scrupulously silent upon the ravages of the Zamindari System and the extreme need for liberating peasants from its clutches".

With respect to leadership and economic interests involved, Jacques Pouchepadass (1980), after a careful examination of the Champaran struggle, has concluded that the main agent in the peasant political mobilization was the 'richer peasants' who found the European plantocracy a rival to their ambitions for dominance in land holding and the supply of credit. Similar views have been expressed by Eric Stokes (1978) also. Stokes writes that the same generalization can be applied to the Kisan Sabha and Ekka movement centred around Rae Bareilly and the Eastern districts of Oudh from 1920 onwards. Stokes' observation is a comment on the very ideology of the Champaran Struggle led by Gandhi and Congress Party. However the principal thesis advanced by Pouchepadass that since in Champaran struggle and other similar struggles the main agent was the richer peasant (dominant peasantry' as termed by him) so it has revolutionary potentiality, does not hold any validity.

Pouchepadass himself reveals the character of the local leadership of the Champaran struggle which in turn reveals the very character of the Champaran Struggle. He shows how it was

not actually a peasant struggle i.e. of those who were directly involved in the production process. He writes (1979): "This oligarchy (Local leadership) consisted for the greater part of high caste peasants: Brahmins, Rajputs, (Bhumihar) Babhans, Kayasthas, Muslim Sheikhs etc. Most of those leaders were well-off or rich peasants. None of them enjoyed full proprietary rights, owing to the peculiar landholding structure of the district, which was almost entirely made up of three large Zamindar (Bettiah, Ramnagar, and Madhubani) ... But this was no obstacle to the existence of a class of rich peasants. The average area of holdings in the district was 5.19 acres, that is to say, about three and a half bighas (taking the average bigha of the district). Rajkumar Shukla's holdings ... were seven times larger than the average, those of Sant Rautt, another leading agitator, were seventeen times larger and those of Khender Rai more than forty times. Many of those men, like Shukla, were money lenders; Khender Rai even had money lending of more than one lakh of rupees".

Raj Kumar Shukla was the same person who delivered fiery speech in the Lucknow Session of the Congress Party, in 1916, describing the plight of Champaran peasants. Were Shukla and other local leaders really voicing the plight of the actually exploited oppressed masses of Champaran? Of course not. They were the landed gentry who had economic contradiction and rivalry with the British Indigo planters. Thus it was logical that the Champaran movement remained directed against the European planters and did not touch

the local exploiters. How could they fight against their own interests, when they were interested in maintaining it? It is evident that Champaran struggle was essentially in favour of those rich tenants who sought to remove those obstacles in the way of profitable cultivation of food and sugarcane which were imposed by the English planters. Obviously, thus, the actual tillers of the land were totally unaffected. Moreover this landed gentry of Champaran Struggle was a rival of the planters in the employment of the agricultural labourers for the landed gentry being generally of high-caste, would not till the land themselves. Thus it is evident that the support by Gandhi and Congress to the Champaran landed gentry was with the view of involving the rural elites in the anti-British movement (Judith Brown, 1972). It is clear that the Champaran struggle really had nothing to do with the poor peasants and landless labourer. Dhanagare notes: "Perhaps it was a sense of pity or remorse or both that prompted Gandhi to undertake some relief work for the poor peasants in Champaran. He set up four schools in villages to educate children of the poor... To run schools and other ameliorative activities, Gandhi had to call for workers from Gujrat and Bombay.... Of the 15 teachers in the schools for example, 11 were from outside Bihar, but such a grafting could not hold ground for long in the absence of local initiative and effort. Hence the work had to be abandoned soon. This is all that Gandhi's movement did for vast numbers of poor peasants and labourers whom it failed to mobilise in Champaran" (Quotation in A.N. Das, 1983: 65-66).

Another factor which contributed tremendously in early mobilization of rich tenants by Gandhi was the physical torture and social harassment of high caste tenants by the British planters and administrators. Rajendra Prasad (1949: 29-31) writes: "Among methods adopted were setting Dhangars and Domes, the low caste people, on the high caste tenants beside the policemen tying them down and beating them, and putting logs and wood on their chest. Tenants were forced to embrace a Neem tree with both their hands tied together, and set upon policemen. The red ants on the tree would bite the man tied to the tree. Still other coercive measures adopted against the tenants were the impounding of their cattle, the stopping of their wells, compelling the Chamars to cease to render their services to the tenants..."

#### Conclusion :

Champaran struggle which was launched in the beginning of the anti-imperialist struggle led by Gandhi and Congress, marked the beginning of a tradition in the history of peasant mobilization in India. This was the tradition of compromise, collaboration and system conserving. Gandhian ideology envisaged non-violence as the 'dominant form' of peasant mobilization, which was perfected during the Champaran struggle. It was this tradition of compromise and system conservation and dominant form of mobilization which greatly influenced the peasant movement in the first half of the 20th century. Ideology and dominant form of mobilization betrays the class character and ideological perception of the macro

situation, which left the actual tillers, direct producers - the peasants - untouched during the Champaran struggle and took up the cause of landed gentry alone. Champaran struggle was the first and typical example of the paradigm of collaboration and legal path for the peasant mobilization in the period of our study.

Champaran struggle was started with the second phase of the mobilization, when the dissent, discontent were already generated at the local level and situation was ripe enough to take shape of organized collective behaviour. At the local level ideologically, the class which was affected was that which found British planters as its economic rival. Ideological perception of the situation was localized and limited. Moreover, local dissent had not taken any concrete shape of struggle organizationally. But the arrival of Gandhi on the scene linked this local issue with the grand-design of macro-mobilization against British rule. Gandhi's ideological perception was based on his understanding of macro-situation i.e. the removal of British colonialism and achievement of political independence. For that, as we have seen earlier, he needed to mobilize and gain support of the rural elite about whom it was believed that they are capable of taking all sections of peasantry including poor and landless peasants with them in case they need any mass support. For this, non-violence and legal path as the dominant form of mobilization was essential pre-condition so that local rural elite are not challenged by the most oppressed and exploited people (see also Roychoudhury, 1955).

## Chapter III

### TELENGANA PEASANT MOVEMENT: TRADITION WITHIN A TRADITION

Having identified and discussed the two traditions of peasant mobilization in Chapter One and having examined the Champaran peasant struggle to illustrate the tradition of collaboration and legal path, now it remains to present the case studies to illustrate the peasant mobilizations under the tradition of confrontation. This will be done by examining the Telengana peasant movement in this chapter and Naxalbari peasant uprising in the subsequent chapter. Telengana movement occurred on the eve of 1947. Though it falls under the tradition of confrontation it was ostensibly led and organised by the forces which traditionally followed the path of collaboration and legalities i.e. CPI. At the local level it defied the central leadership of the party and its ideology, but at the same time central leadership wielded manipulative and collaborative power so much so that it could unilaterally withdraw the whole movement. It was, thus, marked by an ideological dualism. However, despite this ideological dualism, Telengana was the first organised, ideologically well thought of and sustained expression of the confrontationist tradition of peasant mobilization in the period of our study. And it is in this sense that Telengana marked the beginning of a tradition within a tradition as a logical extension.

The Telengana peasant movement was the first organised move with a definite ideology to mobilize the peasants - the immediate producers - who constituted not only the main force

but also the leading force of the movement. And it is in this sense also that Telengana was the beginning of a tradition - a tradition that was to become the most dominant one in post-1947 India. It was the beginning of a tradition also because it was in the Telengana movement where for the first time an organized, sustained, armed peasant struggle took place in Indian history and where peasants displayed unexpected collective action in an organized fashion in total defiance of the traditional expected social order. Telengana was the beginning of a tradition again because for the first time the ideology of New Democracy was translated into practice for the cause of Indian Revolution under the leadership of a Communist Party. And finally it was the beginning of a tradition because Telengana movement was the first sustained armed peasant struggle for the seizure of political power, which affected the life, thinking and collective actions of peasants in a big way in the movement region.

#### (1) Socio-Economic Structure

The Nizam State consisted of 16 districts with three linguistic areas with 8 Telengana districts, 5 Marathwada districts and 3 Karnataka districts. The Telengana region comprised almost half the area of the state. It was the eastern half of the state having an area of 44,000 sq. miles. The state had a population of 1.5 crores, one crore being the Telengana people. It was a totally feudal state. It was completely dependent and subservient to the British rule. <sup>However</sup> the Nawab of Nizam State had full powers over the state with his own army, his own currency, his own postal and custom



services. There were no elections in the State. The Nawab had only an advisory council with no executive powers.

The state could roughly be divided into two parts - Khalsa and Non-Khalsa. Khalsa was that part which was under the direct control of the Nizam government and which covered 2/3 area of the state, while Non-Khalsa was the one under the control of Jagirdars and Zamindars subservient to the government of Nizam state and covered 1/3 of the state area. The non-Khalsa area was under the control of small states, Paigas, Jagirdars, Mahthas and Deshmukhs (Reddy, 1976: 4).

In the non-Khalsa area there was no settlement of the land. The people had no right either over the land they tilled or over the houses in which they lived. If the people were to leave the villages, they would have to go empty handed. They possessed nothing of their own (Reddy, 1976: 4).

The Nawab of Nizam state was himself a big feudal land lord owning about lakhs of acres of land spread in 18 taluks of the state. Some of the rulers of the smaller states under the Government of Nizam state even had their own revenue and police and other powers. In the Raiyat <sup>wari</sup> areas also landlords owning about hundreds and lakhs of acres of land used to exercise control over the political affairs of the state.

All the fertile lands and water resources belonged to landlords. Community bazar lands and gardens also belonged to them. The people had no rights over anything.

Added to this, the Muslim bureaucrats belonging to the upper classes and the officialdom dominated everything.

The mother language of the various peoples of the state was suppressed, and the official language was Urdu. As a result there was no encouragement for the other native languages.

Agriculture was the main occupation of 85 per cent of the population in the state. About 60 per cent of the land in the state was under the Raiyatwari revenue system and the remaining 40 per cent was under the direct control of the Nizam - the overlord - and the Sub feudal lords such as Jagirdars and Maktedars. Even in the non Jagirdari areas almost every village was under the control of landlords - locally called Deshmukhs and Deshpandes - and the village hereditary officials. These landlords owned major portions of the lands in villages. All this gave rise to absentee landlordism and an oppressive system of land tenure (Sundarayya, 1972).

The conditions in the Jagirdari areas were worse. While many Jagirdars were Muslims, the landlords were mainly Hindus and mostly belonged to the Brahmin and other high agricultural castes such as Reddys and Velamas.

The customary forcible extraction of labour from the poor and exploited people of Telengana by the landlords, Patels, Patwaris and other officials was the dominant feature of the superordination - subordination relationships in the region at the time of the movement. This system applied not only to Harijans, washermen, barbers, Kummaris and merchants but the poor and the rich peasants could also not escape from this "bonded labour" (Reddy, 1976: 6). For instance, they first had to complete the sowing of the lands of the landlords

and then only they would sow their own lands. Institutionalization of the superordination value system had taken place through the system of extraction of many kinds of illegal taxes from the labouring poor by the feudal lords. For instance, taxes for pounding their grain and the instruments used for it, taxes for marriages, taxes at the attainment of puberty of the girls, taxes for births and deaths were to be paid to the Jagirdars, Deshmukhs and big landlords of the villages. Taking high rates of interest was another form of exploitation.

(II) Ideology, Prevalent Situation  
and Forms of Mobilization

The Communists of Telegu speaking area of erstwhile Hyderabad State of Nizam organized and led the peasant armed struggles "often in defiance of the central leadership of the Communist Party of India and the International Communist Movement" (Mohan Ram, 1973: 1025). According to available information the first communist groups came into being in Telengana in 1939-40. They worked illegally and functioned through the Andhra Mahasabha, a mass organisation to champion the cultural and political cause of Telegu speaking people in the Nizam state. In 1943, the Andhra Mahasabha came under the domination of Communists and by the time of the Bhubangiri Mahasabha conference in 1944, there emerged distinct leftist and rightist lines of thinking within the organization. From 1944 onwards, Communists in the region were organizing independent militant struggles against landlordism and feudal exploitation (Sundarayya, 1973; C.P. Reddy, 1976; K. Ranga Rao, 1978; Mohan Ram 1973; D.V. Rao, 1974).

It is important to note that the Telengana peasant armed struggle under the leadership of the local communists was not in accordance with the CPI's national policy. In 1942, the party's change in policy from the Imperialist war to the People's war slogan, its support to the British war efforts and the reluctance to support the demand for transfer of power did not permit the party during the Second World War to demand the end of the Nizam rule, the abolition of landlordism and the implementation of a radical agrarian programme in the state. A change in the CPI's policy coinciding with the post-war national upsurge, enabled the local unit to plan more radical and more militant struggles (D.V. Rao, 1974).

By mid-1946, the movement had acquired the characteristics of a national liberation struggle to free the people from the rule of the Nizam and the feudal system. When the British formally announced their decision to transfer the power in June 1947, the CPI found itself "confused about the meaning of the transfer of power to take place on August 15" (Mohan Ram, 1973: 1026). Following the inaugural meeting of the Cominform in September 1947, the Communist Party of India in its Second Congress held in February-March 1948 adopted the thesis that India is already a capitalist country and that the party should "intertwine" the democratic and socialist stage of revolution into a single stage through an attack on the entire Indian capitalist class.

The Andhra Communists had already taken the Telengana peasant movement to the level of partisan armed struggle, and

the Party's 'reformist' general Secretary P.C. Joshi was removed from his post at the Second Congress. As a result of the Andhra communists' insistence on the "revolutionary significance" <sup>of</sup> the Telengana struggle to the "present epoch of maturing democratic revolution in India", the new leadership of the party appeared to support the struggle seriously. The Second Congress gave a call to launch similar struggles in other parts of the country and for working class movements in support of Telengana, all ultimately leading to armed insurrection because it could hasten the working class general-strike-cum-armed-insurrection which it had banked upon in the post-war revolutionary situation.

However, in May 1948, the communists in Andhra challenged the Second Congress thesis and its reliance on the general-strike-cum-insurrection weapon. The Andhra thesis categorically stated that the Indian revolution, in many respects, differed from the classical Russian Revolution and that it was to a great extent similar to the Chinese Revolution. Thus, their perspective would be that of a dogged resistance and prolonged civil war in the form of an agrarian revolution culminating in the capture of political power by the democratic front rather than a general strike and an armed uprising. Therefore, where a good proportion of the masses were with the party (in Andhra, Kerala, and Bengal) it was time to think in terms of guerilla warfare (the "Chinese Way") against the military onslaughts of the Nehru government bent on liquidating the

party. Armed guerilla resistance had to be developed in several parts of the country and these areas were to be converted into liberated areas with their own armed forces. Later, towns were to be liberated by the armed forces from the liberated areas (Wohan Ram, 1973: 1026).

Thus, as a result of the clash between the two ideological perspectives with respect to the existing situation held by the central and Andhra leadership, there emerged two distinct forms of struggle for effecting the social revolution in India.

The Andhra thesis had advocated a united front, where the rich peasants and the middle bourgeoisie would be allies of the proletariat in the people's democratic revolution, and asserted that such a wide front of armed struggle could take shape under the leadership of the party and that the objective conditions for realising these were fast maturing. Only prolonged armed resistance as in the Telengana would bring about the needed revolution leading to the structural changes of cardinal importance (P. Sundarayya, 1946: 6).

Such a strategy of two stage revolution propounded by the Andhra communists as opposed to the strategy of one-stage revolution advanced by the Party's central leadership, was based on Mao's ideology of New Democracy. The new leadership of the Party rejected the Andhra thesis. In the debate on the legitimacy of Mao Tse-tung's theories as a part of Marxism-Leninism, B.T. Tanadive, leader of the Party seriously questioned its relevance to Indian context: "... Some of Mao's formulations are such that no communist party can accept them;

they are in contradiction of the world understanding of the communist parties" (Ranadive, 1949).

At the time of Ranadive's anti-Mao polemic, the Chinese Revolution had not ended. It was not until 1950 that the Cominform endorsed the formulations of Mao's 'New Democracy' (N. Ram, 1973: 1026).

In its sharp ideological struggle with the central leadership, the Andhra leadership found itself heading the party. Rajeshwara Rao took over as General Secretary of the party in May-June 1950. The Telengana line of peasant partisan warfare triumphed inside the CPI, but Moscow's ideological deviation and intervention was to suppress this trend later.

The ideological line of the new CPI leadership was: (a) rejection of the programmatic understanding of the Second Congress, subsequently elaborated in what was called the "Tactical line" by the leadership; (b) rejection of the thesis of the single stage revolution; i.e. the intertwining of the two stages of the Indian revolution into one; (c) rejection of the idea that the entire bourgeoisie, including the rich peasantry had become enemies of the people's democratic revolution; and (d) upholding of the concept of the Chinese path for the Indian revolution which meant developing the Telengana type of agrarian struggle extensively wherever possible (P. Sundarayya, 1972: 337).

The new Central Committee, on 1 June 1950, highlighted the role of armed struggle for securing national liberation and claimed that the preconditions for starting such struggles were

already there. But this did not mean that the armed struggle could be launched immediately anywhere and under any conditions. The accent was on armed guerrilla warfare linked to an agrarian programme wherever the party's strength permitted it. The Central Committee pledged to extend the Telengana struggle to other parts of India. It wanted to put the party on the rails of armed struggle in the countryside and rebuild the movement in the cities and working class centres on the basis of the new line and tactics.

However, the entry of the Indian armed forces into Hyderabad and the subsequent accession of the state to the Indian Union created a new situation in the Telengana struggle areas. The Nizam's forces and the Razakars had failed to suppress the armed struggle. But after the surrender of the Nizam, the communists had to deal with a military campaign of 50,000 to 60,000 troops, whose sole purpose was to stamp out the communists who had liberated zones covering 3,000 villages, complete with village Soviets, people's courts and people's militia. The guerrilla squads retreated to the forests, leaving small groups behind to operate in the plains. The government tried a strategic hamlet plan similar to the famous Briggs plan in Malaya (Reddy, 1976: 32).

The national leadership of the CPI was divided on the issue of continuing the armed struggle after the accession of the Nizam to the Indian Union late in 1948. The present CPI is of the view that the struggle should have been called off when the Nizam's rule ended (C. Rajeshwara Rao, 1972: 31-33).

But the Visalandhra communist committee as a whole was in favour of continuing the struggle. This is because



(a) the one million acres of land distributed among peasants had to be defended and not allowed to be snatched away; and (b) the national and international situation was favourable for armed partisan struggle. The Visalandhra committee was of the opinion that the Telengana struggle was the beginning of the liberation struggle and it was evident that the Indian revolution was more like the Chinese revolution than the Russian revolution. So the Telengan armed struggle continued (Sundarayya, 1972: 393-4).

The ideology and the political line of the Andhra committee were opposed both by the party headquarters in Bombay and the communist party of the Great Britain. A letter from the political committee of the CPGB late in 1950 did not rule out the armed struggle for India, but said that the situation in the CPI and the country did not hold immediate prospects for such a struggle. It suggested that the CPI could utilise all opportunities for legal activities and prepare for general elections. This letter was circulated to exert pressure on the Rajeshwara Rao leadership on the eve of the December 1950 Central Committee meeting, which reorganized itself as well as the politbureau to provide representation to all the trends. P. Sundarayya writes that the differences in the CPI related to two sets of issues. One concerned the programme - the class assessment of the transfer of power in 1947, the exact stage of the Indian revolution and the class strategy <sup>or</sup> alliance for it - and another to the tactics and the possible path of the Indian revolution - Russian or Chinese, the nature of the

Telengana armed struggle, the different phases of partisan peasant struggle and the problem of equating these peasant partisan struggles with the armed struggle for political power, etc. (1972), p. 399).

Meanwhile pressure from the CPGB continued. As per the CPGB directives peace movements had to be stepped up against Anglo-United States imperialism and for the liberation of Asia. Nehru's foreign policy should be reappraised in the light of his attitude to the Korean war and to China's admission to the United Nations. Peace and freedom went together and India needed a "broad democratic front" from above on the basis of a common action programme for peace and independence. Finally, armed struggle was not the correct path for India for the present (Palme Dutt, 1951). Elaborating the concept of armed struggle, Dutt was insinuating that the Telengana struggle was little more than individual or squad terror. Thereby he was endorsing the faction demanding its suspension (Mohan Ram, op. cit., 1028). Dutt's concern was with the peace movement because the cold war had replaced class struggle on the Cominform agenda to suit Soviet foreign policy interests. Thus, for the CPI, peace movements became "one of the most important weapons for building a front of all sections of Indian people ... which may lay the basis for the National Front for national liberation" (Deven and Bal Krishna, 1951).

The CPGB intervention gave an impetus to the campaign launched by the CPI central leadership which opposed the Telengana armed struggle. The crisis within the CPI continued

until a top-level delegation clandestinely visited Moscow early in 1951 for consultation with the Soviet party leadership. The main conclusion of Moscow Consultation, concerning the programme were incorporated in the Draft Programme published in 1951. Apart from the Draft Programme, an accompanying document, "Statement of Policy" was also issued. The Statement of Policy was the legal or open version of a larger unpublished document prepared by the CPI team which visited Moscow. It was entitled "Tactical Line", <sup>later published in</sup> "Communist Conspiracy at Madurai". (Democratic Research Service, Bombay, 1964). This is the first published version of the secret document and the CPI denounced it as "forgery". But Sundarayya has now vouched for its authenticity. (Mohan Ram, 1973: 1032).

It is important to note that parts of "Tactical Line" were not included in the "Statement of Policy" and the omitted passages dealt with the elaboration of some of the theoretical issues and principles and included details of the discussions. On the basis of this misrepresented "Statement of Policy", the CPI was projecting itself as the party which had denounced violence and was setting for parliamentarism. In the May 1951 Central Committee meeting, Rajeshwara Rao had resigned as General Secretary and Ajoy Ghosh had replaced him. The Central Committee resolution made it clear that the Telengana struggle was not started and was not being continued to overthrow the Nehru Government, but to end feudal exploitation, (Sundarayya, 1972: 417 ff). Thus, came the end. In October 1951, A.K. Gopalan announced the withdrawal of the struggle.

The surrender was tame and unconditional, because the party gave the peasants no guarantee about protecting their hard-won gains. The withdrawal of this struggle meant surrender of all the guerrilla zones and liberated villages to the Indian Army, and with it, the other gains (Reddy, 1976).

However, even after the general election in January 1952, the cadre in Telengana continued to be divided. The government's hunt against the underground squads continued even after the elections and arrests and persecution did not stop. The government's argument was that the arms had not been surrendered and therefore the hunt could not be relaxed. As the logical step to the withdrawal of the struggle, the CPI decided to surrender arms (Mohan Ram, 1973 : 1030).

This counter-ideology and intervention produced a form of struggle, namely peaceful transition to socialism, as opposed to armed struggle for state power.

### III. Ideology, Structure of Events and Collective Action

Political activities in the State were almost ruled out till 1930 (Dhanagare, 1983: 184). However, after 1920 some educated people had started working under cultural organizations. In 1928 the Andhra Conference was formed to mobilize public opinion for administrative and constitutional reforms, schools, civil liberties, etc. (Sundarayya, 1972: 12-19). The Congress started a Satyagraha in 1938 for political reforms. But the agitation soon came to be dominated by the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Congress, acting on Gandhi's advice, abandoned it to lessen political confusion (Dhanagare, 1983; Reddy, 1976).

During the World War II, the Andhra Conference expanded its work in the Telengana villages by taking an active interest in agrarian problems such as vetti-chakri. In the Telegu speaking areas of the Madras Presidency, a political movement for the unification of all Telugu speaking regions into a separate 'Visalandhra' was launched by the Andhra Mahasabha. In the Telengana region, the Andhra Conference and Andhra Mahasabha worked in close cooperation. Following the Satyagraha the Congress was banned in 1938, and so was the CPI with the result that the Conference and the Mahasabha were the only organizations left for political activities.

The communists arrived on the Telengana scene only during the latter half of the war (Dhanagare, 1983 : 190). They had been active in the Andhra delta districts since 1934 when the Andhra Communist Party was established. By 1940 the communists were firmly entrenched in the Andhra delta politics. During the ban (1940-42) they operated through front organizations like the Kisan Sabha, Andhra Mahasabha and so on (Dhanagare, 1983 : 190).

The growing influence of the Andhra communists greatly influenced the leadership and workers of Andhra Conference in the Telengana region. Disillusioned by the Gandhian Congress ideology which eschewed mass movements, the radical elements within the Andhra Conference turned to communism and converted the cultural mass organizations into militant mass organizations against the Nizam's government, (Sundaryya, 1972: 19-20).

Through the Andhra Conference, the young Communists voiced the peasants' grievances, paid more and more attention to the agrarian problems in Telengana and mobilized opinion against landlordism and the oppressive vetti system. But until 1942, the organizational network of the Andhra Conference and Mahasabha was dominated by Liberals and moderate politicians. After the Government of India lifted the ban on CPI in 1942, the Communists were able to remove the right-wing leadership and establish their hold on the Conference and Mahasabha. Finally in the Bhuvangir session of the Mahasabha (1944), it came under the leadership of the Communists (Reddy, 1976: 6; Sundarayya, 1972: 20-21).

After the Bhuvangir conference, branches of the Andhra Mahasabha, under the name of "Sangham" were formed in many villages. A big agitation was started throughout the state against bonded labour, illegal taxes, against compulsory collection of levy grain and against forcible eviction of peasants from their lands.

The Nizam had announced concessions to the people which were never implemented. Therefore at this stage the whole aim of the movement was to get these concessions implemented in actuality. But the agitation against bonded labour, illegal taxes, and against the forcible eviction of peasants from their lands did not go beyond the legal framework (Reddy, 1976: 7).

During this period two land issues were tackled by the movement in the villages of Kondari and Palakurthi, which demonstrated the changing confrontationalist mood of the peasants.

In the village Mendari, the Lambadi tribal peasants were tilling about 30-40 acres of land belonging to Katari Ramachandra Rao, a notorious landlord. When the stipulated period of occupation was over, the landlord came with a gang of roudies to reoccupy the land. All the Lambadi peasants organized themselves for resistance. The reserve police and the goons of the landlord on the one side and the Lambadi peasants armed with sticks, and other village implements and red flags on the other - were ready to fight against each other. However, when the reserve police was ready to shoot, the peasants had to retreat (Reddy, 1976: 7).

In the village of Palakurthi, the Deshmukh of Visnur, Napaka Ramachandra Reddy, tried to forcibly occupy the land under the occupation of Chakli Ilamma. He sent his goons to forcibly take away the standing crops. Eighteen peasants under the leadership of the Andhra Mahasabha, armed with sticks and other village implements fought in solidarity to save the standing crops of the poor peasants. The goondas were beaten back and the crop was safely restored to Ilamma. Next morning, the police arrived and arrested the workers of Sanghan. They were severely beaten and inhumanly tortured at the police station. Inserting sticks into the rectum, putting chilli powder into the eyes, pouring urine in the mouth - were some of the methods of torture used by the police and the goondas (Reddy, 1976: 7).

With the Mendari incident, the issue of the lands forcibly occupied by the landlords had come to the agenda and such a problem could not be solved within the legal

framework. The people had to go beyond the legal framework and occupy such lands. This could be achieved only through people's struggles (Reddy, 1976: 7).

This was the period of World War II. There was a tremendous food scarcity everywhere. At the same time, the big landlords and deshmukhs continued their exploitation of the tenants, agricultural labourers and other service castes. Forced labour still continued. However, the masses were no longer the subservient as before and began to resist these exploitative measures.

In many villages of Nalgonda district, struggles between the peasants and the landlords started to take place. The big landlords got together to fight the peasants' militancy. But the masses of peasants put up a tough resistance and fought the police and the landlords' goons. During this period the Andhra Mahasabha and the Communist party trained many volunteers to fight the police with lathis and slings. Women volunteers used to throw chilli powder, stones and boiling water at the police and local goondas (K. Panga Rao, 1978: 157; P. Sundaraya, 1972).

In 1946, a great agitation was started by the peasants of Janageom Taluk against the most notorious landlords such as Vishur Ramachandra Reddy, Puskur Raghvarao, Katari Ramachandra Rao etc. The struggle of Janageom peasants against the atrocities of these landlords and against the bonded labour system provided great fillip to the people's movement throughout Telangana. Reddy (1976: 8) notes that



the landlords could not tolerate the oppressed peasants who had begun to acquire a new consciousness and had started to mobilise and organise themselves, revolted against the atrocities of the landlords. The landlords started attacking the people with police and goondas to crush the onrushing people's movement. They openly came out with their guns and began shooting the peasants and their leaders.

Against this background, the struggle of the peasants of Kadivendi village against the Deshmukh, Vismur Parachandra Reddy of Janagan Taluk and the murder of Dobby Komarayya, was a "historical event", "a big milestone" in the advancement of the peoples' movement in Telengana (Reddy, 1976). The structure of this event reveals sufficiently the typical pattern of peasants' resistance, revolt, and struggle against the age-old feudal exploitative system. Chardrapulia Reddy (1976) has provided a vivid picture of this event. In the following we would briefly give an account of this event to show the ideologically governed pattern of peasants' resistance during the Telengana movement.

An analysis of such events is of great sociological importance to us. For, such an exercise would reveal the altering traditional system of social superordination and subordination. Such an account would reveal the inner dynamics of the movement "revealing the methods adopted, levels of involvement of the various sections, types of alliances and conflicts, ingenious devices adopted for mobilization, organizational innovations and forms" (Desai, A.R., 1979: XI-XII).

Deshmukh Visnur Ramachandra Reddy had organized his goondas and got the help of the police to murder the leaders of the Sangham.

In July 1946, in the village of Kadivendi, the goondas of the landlord, fully drunk, began attacking the houses of the leaders and workers of the local Andhra Mahasabha. Volunteers of Andhra Mahasabha immediately gathered and took out a big procession with red flags, shouting slogans of 'Revolution Zindabad', 'Andhra Mahasabha Zindabad'. When the procession came near the Zamindar's mansion the goondas began shooting directly at the volunteers.

Doddi Mahalayya and Manga Kondayya, who were leading the procession, were seriously wounded. Doddi Komarayya, the leader of the village received a gun shot in his stomach and died on the spot.

The anger of the people knew no bounds. The people of the whole village gathered and surrounded the hut where the landlord's goondas were hiding. The people began shouting that they would take blood for blood. The goondas were terror-stricken at such a large response and raced into the landlord's mansion for protection. The angered people surrounded the landlord's mansion. As soon as this news spread to the surrounding villages, the people ran to the help of the Kadivendi village expressing their class solidarity. That day about 2,000 people gathered in Kadivendi. The people made plans to burn down the landlord's mansion. On hearing this news, the son of the

Deshmukh, Baburao gathered about 200 goondas armed with guns, spears, and other dangerous weapons and ran to protect his mansion. Hundreds of peasants who were keeping a watch, raised thunderous slogans of 'Andhra Mahasabha Jai' and began attacking the goondas. A torrent of stones fell on the goondas, driving them away three miles back. <sup>They</sup> mercilessly beat all those who fell into their hands and destroyed the big mango garden of the landlords.

In this fight the peasants caught hold of the leader of the goondas, a notorious agent of Deshmukh. The peasants, then and there formed a people's court and put this agent of Deshmukh on trial. A large number of peasants openly came forward to give evidence against his crimes. The people's court immediately passed death sentence on him. However, when the 'scoundrels' regretted his crimes and appealed to the people for forgiveness, the people's court forgave him and rescinded the death sentence previously passed against him.

Thousands of people participated in the big funeral procession of Poddai Komarayya. All of the Deshmukh's agricultural operations were brought to a halt in that village. Chandrapulla Reddy (1976) notes "Komarayya was a great martyr. With his sacrifice, the Telengana movement reached a new high stage. New People's poets were born among the people. Everywhere people began singing 'Anargeevi Komarayya, Andukojoharlu Komarayya'. It soon became the most popular song among the people".

With the murder of Poddai Komarayya, the Telengana peasants rose up in a great struggle. They held meetings

and organized demonstrations in each village. They would go in a procession to a village, form the village Sangham and then proceed to the next village. Everyone was armed with village implements. With the resounding of revolutionary slogans, the landlords were terror stricken everywhere. During this period the question of those lands which the landlords had forcibly taken away either through violence or as payment for their debts came prominently on the agenda. The Communist Party and Andhra Mahasabha took up this issue to intensify the movement and take it to a higher level.

According to Reddy<sup>(1976)</sup> the people began guarding their villages throughout the night. They stored stones and sticks and kept them ready over every house top. Every person armed himself or herself with sticks and vadicalas. The women armed themselves with mirchi powder. If one village was attacked the people of the surrounding villages came forward in defence of that village and collectively fought against the government police.

To suppress the growing people's movement the Nizam established military camps in many villages, and for months raids on the villages were carried on. Peasants were tortured and forced to resign from the Andhra Mahasabha. This brought a temporary setback to the movement. The peasants began to surrender in those villages where the military raids were intensive. Landlords who had previously run away from their villages again returned and started suppressing peasants. A "temporary demoralization had set in some villages" (Reddy, 1976 : 13). However even in such a situation the

party and Sangham started action against notorious goondas and worst landlords. Reddy ( 1976 ) writes that people themselves took initiative. They would "stick handbills to the houses warning the people's enemies". With the growth of such activities, the landlords were again terror-stricken and again ran away to the towns for military protection.

On the eve of 15 August 1947, the Nizam of Hyderabad refused to join the Indian Union and declared his independence on 27 August 1947. With this a big movement started for the merger of the state with the Indian Union. The Communist Party started mobilising people with slogans of responsible governments and 'Visalandhra'. Boycott of schools, colleges and courts was intensified. The reverent in the village took a form of burning the village records of Patel's and Patwa, no tax campaign, and destruction for custom offices on the borders. Again the 'Guthapulu Sangham' began to rise and grow. Bonds of loan were burnt. Thus the communists took opportunity and "anti-Nizam struggle merged itself with the anti-landlords struggle" (Reddy, 1976). The people began attacking the mansions of landlords and distributed the grain among themselves in large quantity. So far the movement had confined itself to the struggle against evictions and for the reoccupation of land under the forcible and illegal occupation of the landlords. Now the primary question was of distribution of the lands of the landlords. The communist leadership made a study of the whole situation and "arrived at the conclusion the field was fertile for armed insurrection and guerilla type warfare. They procured arms from various parts of the

country and established regular armed squads all over Telengana" (K. Ranga Rao, 1978: 159). By the end of 1947, it was estimated that the communists had succeeded in distributing the land of the rich landlords among the poor and established local rule in about 3,000 villages (K. Ranga Rao, 1978: 160). In the programme of land distribution, the village United Front was developed and preserved. Unless they were people's enemies the lands of rich peasants and small landlords were not touched. The land was distributed first to the agricultural labourers, then the poor peasants and next the middle peasants. The panic-stricken Nizam of Hyderabad resorted to inciting Muslim communalism. Majlis-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, an organization which had supported the Nizam in not joining the Indian Union on the eve of 1947, came forward. The Majlis had developed a cadre of volunteers who were called Razakars, and these Razakars began to rouse the feelings of the Muslims against Hindus. The Razakars used to raid, burn and loot whole villages. The people mobilized themselves for the defence of their villages. Every village had its own sentries. These sentries, noticing the advancing Razakars, would immediately warn the whole village with the help of the Nagara. Immediately the whole village would get mobilized in self-defence. But sticks, spears and chilli powder were not sufficient to resist the armed Razakars and the Government, police and military. Chandra Pulla Reddy (1976) writes: "People willingly handed over their ordinary guns, swords and spears to the party and the Andhra Mahasabha. People

themselves seized guns from the landlords. The self defence of the villages and securing of weapons were conducted side by side. Refusal to pay the levy grain, no tax campaign and land distribution were being conducted at the same time. The people's enemies were being punished according to the crimes they committed." In order to encounter the armed Razakars, the police and the military, the communists formed armed squads in each Taluq. Squads were formed at the village level also. All the youth in the villages while continuing to work on their farms would participate in these village squads. Regular armed guerrilla squads were formed out of those youth who were prepared to abandon their villages and work as whole-timers. These regular squads trained by the communist party were mainly formed to resist the armed Razakars and the military. These squads would consist of 10-25 members each. Reddy ( 1976 ) writes: "Sons of ordinary peasants who upto now knew only farming acquired modern weapons from the enemy itself, learnt warfare through warfare and experience; even without ordinary education they grew into commanders of the regular guerilla squads." The peasant guerilla squads attacked the Razakar and the police camps and seized weapons. Such resistance was carried on in hundreds of villages.

Despite the big concentration of military force and the raids on villages, despite mass murders, Telengana movement advanced to newer and newer areas. At the village level the Nizam's organs of state power had been destroyed.

In about 3,000 villages, Gram Raj (Local Rule) had been established (Reddy, 1976). In the Gram Raj all such groups who had participated in the anti-Nizam struggle were given representation. The agricultural labourers occupied leading positions in these village committees. Every village had one village committee consisting of 5-11 persons. Women with necessary 'capabilities' were represented in these committees. These village committees would settle all the village disputes.

Under the local Gram Raj, lakhs of acres of Banjar and Banchari lands had been distributed among the people. People had reoccupied all those lands that had previously been forcibly and illegally occupied by the landlords. Apart from the Banjar lands, about 10 lakhs of acres of land belonging to landlords had also been distributed among the people. These lands had been distributed among the agricultural labourers, poor and middle peasants. Agricultural implements and the cattle of the landlords had also been distributed among the people. All the lands of the people who had joined the enemy were completely confiscated and distributed. Land revenue was abolished and loans were cancelled. Socially, the right of divorce was granted to women and was implemented when necessary. Untouchability was abolished and old beliefs and superstitions were destroyed. Political propaganda and cultural activities were extensively carried on. Night schools were set up and lakhs of people received elementary education.



This full scale armed revolt was not supported by the Congress party both at the national and state levels (K. Ranga Rao, 1978: 160). However, despite active opposition of the Congress party, the communists increased the number and strength of their squads. Village squads with about 10,000 members and regular guerilla squads with more than 2,000 members were formed (Sundaryya, 1972: 60). According to a field survey of eight villages in Suryapet Taluq carried out by K. Ranga Rao (1978) in each village between 3 and 23 members joined the village communist 'band', and the majority of them belonged to the lower caste peasant groups. Some also belonged to the dominant Nedy and Brahmin castes (p. 160). This indicates that the Telengana movement was able to break the caste and class barriers.

The Union Government of India could no longer tolerate the growing agrarian revolution in Telengana and took police action on 13 September 1948. Though the police action was apparently against the Nizam of Hyderabad who had refused to join the Indian Union, it was obviously against the communist revolutionaries and was called upon to save the 'crumbling feudal system of exploitation'. After the police action, military rule was established. The Razakar terror was curbed and its leader Quasim Rizvi was put behind the bars. With the arrival of the army, landlords made efforts to take back the land which the communists had distributed among the poor. The Congress party was the main adviser to the military government. Landlords and

other well-to-do sections of the population began to support the Congress. Within a week, the Nizam of Hyderabad surrendered to the Union army. Military rule was established under Governor General J.N. Choudhury. Zamindars, Jagirdars and Deshmukhs who had previously fled from the villages, returned to the villages and established themselves. The Union army, with the help of Congress workers, began making raids on the villages on a large scale. They carried out extensive searches for the hide-outs of the guerilla squads in each village. Arrested people were tortured. In order to encounter the new situation, the Communist party decided to revitalize its armed struggle against the new Government so that the gains of their struggle in favour of the poor peasants and the rural labour force would be consolidated. Guerilla warfare again spread to different villages and the communist squads took shelter in the villages in the plains and slowly moved to the forest tribal areas as well. As a result of this, the landlords and village officials again moved to towns and cities for shelter. However, with the army action the communists had received a serious set-back. The army made large-scale arrests and killed the communist guerillas and their supporters in the villages and tribal areas. The Congress and the local leaders openly supported the army in its raid on the communists (K. Ranga Rao, 1978 : 162). The Communist party did not have a sufficient amount of weapons to fight the Indian army. Hence the Communists established their own centres of production of arms in the

forest areas. However, the pressure from the army with sophisticated arms and the debate within the party on ideological questions led to the withdrawal of the struggle in 1951.

#### IV. Conclusion

In the above we have discussed the ideological foundation of the Telengana movement in its different phases, and how the ideology and struggle affected the life and social actions of the people economically, socially and culturally. The following are a few striking features of the Telengana movement:

- (1) The most important gain the Telengana struggle was that it clearly demonstrated that the often characterized 'passive', 'docile', 'under the obligation of masters' peasants, the actual tillers, have the tremendous revolutionary capacity to launch armed struggle aimed at capturing the statepower in countries like India.
- (2) The most far-reaching ideological gain of the movement was that neither the Nizam's nor the Nehru's Government could completely suppress the peasant armed struggle and only in the most difficult circumstance where it faced serious opposition not only from outside but also from inside, the struggle was withdrawn.
- (3) Telengana was the first well-organized peasant armed struggle for state power in the Indian history resulting in a liberated zone of about 16,000 square miles covering 3,000 villages. For 12 to 18 months the entire administration in

these areas was in the hands of the village peasant committees. About 4,000 party and peasant militants were killed and over 10,000 communist cadres and other were thrown into prison or detention camps for three to four years.

(4) Sociologically, the system of superordination and subordination and traditional distribution of power were challenged and overthrown in the liberated zones.

(5) The Telengana struggle successfully challenged the traditional feudal authority and the rural elite. The village committees in the liberated zones implemented the agrarian programme. Though the agrarian programme could not be implemented completely, over 3 million acres of land was redistributed, the system of forced labour was abolished, illegal extractions and feudal oppression of various types were brought to an end.

(6) The Telengana peasant movement brought the question of agrarian revolution to the forefront and compelled the Congress government to enact the land reforms acts.

(7) During the Telengana movement, a proper co-ordination between the dominant form of mobilization and subsidiary forms of mobilization could be achieved.

(8) The Telengana movement paved the way for later communists to evolve people's war and armed struggle as the dominant form of mobilization in Naxalbari and after.

(9) Telengana peasant movement reveals that ideology can cause internal disintegration if it faces opposition from within.

## Chapter IV

### HAKALBARI PEASANT MOVEMENT : INNOVATIVE DEPARTURE

#### Background

There occurred a vertical split within the United Communist Party of India (CPI) resulting in the formation of the CPI(M) in 1964. The formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) - CPI(M) - was not only the outcome of the intense ideological debate within the International Communist Movement following the 20th Congress of the CPSU, where the theory of 'peaceful transition to socialism' was propounded, but also of the differences with respect to the situation in India and the path of revolution to be followed. In the beginning, the CPI(M) took a pro-Chinese, anti-CPI and anti-USSR stand. However, for three years (1964-67), it could not formulate a clear-cut programme for Indian revolution - nor did it take a stand on ideological issues that divided the CPSU and CPC. The party leadership during this period had moved considerably towards the right, with equivocation on the question of peaceful and non-peaceful struggle and finally with a return to parliamentarianism (Sen Gupta, 1972: 324; Mohan Ram, 1969: 11). In the very first Congress of the CPI(M) an intense two-line struggle between the leadership and the militant ranks of the party emerged. Three amendments were moved for resolution in the Congress. They were:

(1) The foreign policy of the Indian Government was a fake non-alignment policy and that it was actually subservient to that of US imperialism; (ii) the demand for the right of

self determination of the Nationalities be recognized; and (iii) the Indian state is a neocolonial one and that a programme of armed struggle should be adopted. The first and third amendments were rejected and the leadership managed to postpone the discussion on the second (TNPST, 1982: 32). And soon the CPI(M) proved to be no different from CPI when it entered in the 1965 Kerala Assembly by-elections. The CPI(M) leadership acknowledged that the situation in India was not yet ripe for revolution and opted for participating in legislative politics with which other kinds of struggles could be combined (Mukherjee, 1978: 23). But soon electoral politics became the only activity for the CPI(M) and when the United Front Government with CPI(M) participation came into existence in West Bengal in February 1967, the CPI(M) declared that "the fortunes of the entire Party at the present stage of development are closely linked with the successful running of ministries" (Roy, 1978: 74). Thus the CPI(M)'s policy at the national level turned out to be a class collaborationist, revisionist policy, not basically different from that of the CPI's. It was essentially wedded to the theory of peaceful transition of Soviet revisionists (TNPST, 1982 : 32-33). This led to an open revolt by the revolutionaries within the CPI(M) against its leadership. Communist revolutionaries in the Darjeeling District Committee of the CPI(M) in West Bengal under the leadership of Charu Majumder were in the forefront of this revolt against party leadership. They did not confine their activities to the

theoretical level alone because, as Mazumder (1982) declared, "The real fight against revisionism can never be begun unless the peasant starts it through revolutionary practice."

Against this background, this chapter is divided into three parts. Part I will discuss the ideological orientations of the Naxalbari peasant movement. In Part II we will briefly discuss how the movement affected the peasants' social action and brought a change in the overall traditional relationships in the areas of struggle. In Part III, an attempt will be made to analyse the movement in the light of the means employed and ends achieved.

### Part I Ideology

It was the famous Eight Documents written by Charu Mazumder during the period 1965-67 which formulated almost all important ideological political issues for the origin and development of the Naxalbari struggle. However, Mukherji (1978: 42-43) does not agree with such a position. We will examine his views at a latter stage in this section. In 1965 Charu Mazumdar formulated the basic points of agreement for unity with different groups which had split away from the CPI(M) or any such group. The four points for agreement which Charu Mazumdar raised were:

- (1) Acceptance of Mao Tse-tung as the leader of the world revolution and his thought as the highest form of Marxism-Leninism of this era;
- (2) belief in the view that a revolutionary situation existed in every corner of India;
- (3) belief in area-wise seizure of power as the path for taking the Indian revolution forward; and
- (4) belief in

guerilla warfare as the only mode through which the development of and adherence to this revolution was possible (TNPST, 1982: 36). These four points were later to become the basis for the formation of an independent political party called Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) CPI(ML) in 1969. Of these four points, the concept of area-wise seizure of political power is the cornerstone of Charu Mazumder's revolutionary line. The CPI and the CPN projected the concept of capturing the political power at the national level at one stroke. As we had discussed in Chapter III, the CPI had argued during the Telengana struggle that the conditions were not conducive to start armed struggle to capture power at the national level. Rejecting such a view, Mazumder wrote: "In other words, the strategy and tactics of these struggles will be area-wise seizure of power .... In the era of socialism, all the elements of area-wise seizure of power are present in our frame-work" (1982: 9). In another article he declared "Yes, Comrades, today we have to speak out courageously in a bold voice before the people that it is the area-wise seizure of power that is our path" (1982: 16). According to Mazumder, the Tebhaga movement of 1946-47 failed because "we hesitated ... to carry forward the revolution by collecting arms locally and seizing power area-wise" (1982: 10).

For area-wise seizure of political power Charu Mazumder insisted on the party's revolutionary politics and refuted the primacy of mass organisations. He wrote in the 2nd document (1982: 8): "Our primary task today is to build up a correct revolutionary party fighting uncompromisingly



against this revisionist thinking. (1) The first farous revisionist thought is to regard Krishak Sabha (Peasants organization) and trade union as the only Party activity... They (party comrades) do not realize the political tasks of the party cannot be carried out through peasant's organization and trade union. But it should be remembered at the same time that the trade union and the peasants organization are one of the many weapons for serving our purpose. On the other hand, to regard peasant's organization and trade union as the only work of the party, can only mean plunging the party in the mire of economism. The proletarian revolution can not be made successful without an uncompromising struggle against economism. (2) Some comrades think and are still thinking today that our political task ends with the launching of a few movements on demands and they regard a single victory through these movements as a political victory of the party. Not only that, these comrades seek to confine the responsibility of carrying out the political tasks of the party within the limits of these movements only. But we, the true Marxists know that carrying out the party's political responsibility means that the final aim of all propaganda, all movements and all organizations of the Party is to establish firmly the political power of the proletariat. It should be remembered always that if the words "seizure of political power" are left out, the Party no longer remains a revolutionary Party" (emphasis added).

Later on, summing up the experiences of the Srikkulam struggle Charu Mazumdar (1969:7) wrote: "Is it that without mass organization or mass movement this war (guerilla war) cannot be fought out? Revolutionary masses have proved through their guerilla warfare that for guerilla warfare mass movements and mass organizations are not necessary. What is important is the propaganda of revolutionary politics i.e. Mao thought.

This propaganda is possible only through party's secret organization. Only through secret organization guerilla squads can be formed and used against class enemies. Only through secret organization unity can be forged among masses. Guerilla action encourages broad masses to participate in it, while on the other, mass movements and mass organization take the masses towards economism, which slowly turns into revisionism. There does not remain any secrecy and it becomes easy for the enemy to attack. Thus, for guerilla squads, mass movements and mass organizations are obstacles."

It is in this context that the relationship between the legal and illegal works acquires importance. Charu Mazumdar (1982: 19) explains the position: "... no movement of the peasants on basic demands will follow a peaceful path. For a class analysis of the peasant organization and to establish the leadership of the poor and landless peasants, the peasantry should be told in clear terms that no fundamental problem of theirs can be solved with the help of any law of this reactionary government. But this does not mean that we shall not take advantage of any legal movement..."

So among the peasant masses the most urgent and the main task of the party will be to form party groups and explain the programme of the agrarian revolution and the tactics of area-wise seizure of power. Through this programme, the poor and landless peasants will be established in the leadership of the peasant movement." Thus the poor and landless peasants are the backbone of the agrarian revolution. "The peasant movement will become militant to the extent we establish the leadership of the poor and landless peasants over the entire peasant movement" (1982: 18).

Exposing the Government's inability to provide food and the repressive measures taken against peasants, Charu Mazumdar (1982: 23) warned "If they (peasants) are deprived of the crops in the field, they will have to die of starvation next year. So prepare yourselves now. How can the struggle to preserve the crops be conducted? (1) Organize armed forces in every village. (2) Make arrangements so that these forces can collect as much arms as they can and fix secret places to keep the arms. (3) Fix places for hiding the crops. In every area, every peasant will have to make a place to hide the crops under the earth... (4) Besides armed units, small bands of peasants should be formed to keep guard, and maintain communications and other work. (5) Every unit will have to be given political education and political propaganda should certainly be carried on..." Mazumdar gave a clarion call to lay the foundation of the New People's Democratic India by building liberated peasant areas through peasant revolts. He wrote: "The people's

Democratic Revolution can be accomplished only by building up revolutionary bases in the rural areas through agrarian revolution, under proletarian leadership and subsequently by encircling the urban centres by expanding these revolutionary bases by organising the people's liberation forces from among the peasants' guerilla forces and by leading the revolution to victory by capturing the cities, that is, by putting into practice the tactics of people's war as formulated by Chairman Mao." (Quotation in Banerjee, 1980: 38)

As stated earlier, the Eight Documents prepared by Charu Mazumdar formed the ideological, political, and organizational basis for the 1967 Naxalbari peasant uprising which necessitated a nationwide process of peasant movements aimed at agrarian revolution. Later on a document prepared by some Naxalbari activists called 'Naxalbari Shiksha' also admitted that "we adhered to and worked according to the advice of our respected leader (Comrade Charu Mazumdar) in Naxalbari and from 1966 through small movements with the help of peasants' struggles, we were able to overcome our shortcomings. That was why we saw the massive upheaval in 1967 (TUPST, 1982 : 34). However, Mukherji ( 1978 : 42-43) does not agree with such a position and calls it " ahistorical explanation of the causes of the peasant movement". His argument is based on Kanu Sanyal's Document "More About Naxalbari" which was prepared in 1974 and goes against his own Terai Report of 1968 which represented the majority opinion. Sanyal's contention that "Naxalbari uprising is a living protest to the eight documents" has successfully

been challenged by [TNPST, 1982]; Roy, 1975, etc. One wonders how Mukherji could come to the conclusion that tracing the origin of the Nazalbari revolt to eight documents is "rather ahistorical explanation of the peasant movement". For, a careful examination of eight documents, as presented earlier, reveals nothing but a historical explanation of the causes of the peasant movement. And what is more important is to note that the ideology and programme of eight documents was carried out in the Nazalbari area with some modification which was evident from Sanyal's 1968 Terai Report. Thus Mukherji's argument is nothing but one sided which led him to support Sanyal's main criticism of the Documents that they were ahistorical in as much as the present struggles prior to 1965 were not analysed (Mukherji, 1978: 44). The purpose of these documents as evident from them was not to analyse the pre-1965 peasant struggles but to provide ideological, political and organisational guidelines on the basis of existing socio-economic situation which does not exclude the past experience of communists in India and other countries. Moreover whenever necessary, Masumdar has done so. As, in Document 2 (1982, : 8), Masumdar carefully analyzes the Tebhaga movement. He was fully aware of the great importance of the lessons to be drawn from the past movement. He wrote: "Our party has a very long history of struggles. We gave the leadership to the peasants and workers movements in the extensive countryside of North Bengal. Naturally, we shall have to examine and analyse the movements of the past and draw lessons from them and we shall have to move forward

new in the present revolutionary era" (1982:9). It is surprising to note that nowhere in his 73 page long article Mukherji ( 1978 ) has bothered to look into Mazumdar's writings himself.

## II

In this section we will discuss how the ideology and political programme affected the peasants' collective action and necessitated a process of change in the system of superordination and subordination challenging the traditional rural authority. We will also see how in the face of the peasants' revolt the Repressive State apparatuses were used to suppress the peasant movement. This will be done by presenting the events in a narrative-descriptive style.

We have already discussed the circumstances which led some of the CPI(M) workers in the Nazalbari area to revolt openly against the party's ideological positions. On 18 March 1967 - just 16 days after the formation of the CPI(M) led United Front Government - a peasant conference was held under the auspices of the Siliguri sub-division of the CPI(M) leadership (Banerjee, 1980). The conference was most crucial in terms of decisions which led to further peasant mobilization. All the Eight Documents of Charu Mazumdar were discussed in the presence of nearly 5,000 peasants (Mukherjee, 1978 : 44).

According to Terai Report of Kanu Sanyal (1968), "The Siliguri sub-division peasants' convention gave out the call to: 1) establish the authority of peasant committees in all matters of the village; 2) Get organized and be armed

in order to crush the resistance of the Jotedar's monopoly of ownership of the land and redistribute the land anew through the peasant committees."

The conference also warned peasants of the opposition of the Centre and the State and gave a call to prepare for a protracted armed resistance. This conference was followed by a series of militant peasant actions. Between September and December 1966, the tea gardens were rocked by strikes. The movement for seizure of crops had already begun in November-December 1966 and "thousands of organized armed peasants harvested paddy and also snatched guns" (Sanyal, 1974). In a meeting in Naxalbari on 26 December 1966, the Kisan Sabha asked its members to remain vigilant against the police who may come with search warrants to recover the paddy for the Jotedars. In such an event they were to be prepared with bows and arrows to resist them. In January 1967 meetings were held where the cultivators were urged not to give any levy to the government, to gherao government offices if they demand it, and the adhiars were encouraged not to share their crop with the Jotedars (Mukherjee, 1978 : 45).

Against this background the above mentioned peasant conference proved to be a great success. According to Sanyal's <sup>(1968)</sup> Terai Reports: "Almost all the villages got organized during the period from the end of March to the end of April 1967. Whereas, previously, the membership of the Kisan Sabha could not be increased beyond 5,000, the membership now jumped to almost 40,000. About fifteen to twenty thousand peasants began to do wholetime work and built up peasant committees in

the villages. The young men of the villages who had never been seen in the front rank of the Kisan Sabha now occupied the place of veteran peasant cadres. With the speed of a storm the revolutionary peasant in the course of about one and a half months, formed peasant committees through hundreds of group meetings and turned these committees into armed village defence groups. In a word, they organised about 90 per cent of the village population." After getting organised the peasants went into further actions which — challenged the traditional rural authority. Terai Report (Sanyal, 1968) says: "The revolutionary peasants, through their actions, made their decrees the law in the villages: 1) a blow was dealt at the political, economic and social structure in the villages based on monopoly land ownership which dragged the peasants more and more into the depths of pauperisation. 'No, not the deeds and documents - what is required is the order of the peasant committee', declared the peasants. They marked out all the land in the Terai with their ploughshares and made it their own... The old feudal structure that had existed for centuries was thus smashed through this action of the peasants. 2) All the legal deeds and documents relating to the land had been used to cheat them. They held meetings and burnt all the receipts, acknowledgements, plans, deeds and documents. 3) The Jotedars and money lenders, taking advantage of the poverty of the rural folk, got them committed to unequal agreement, relating to the mortgage of land and bullocks. The peasants declared all such agreements as well as the huge burden of



interest imposed on them null and void. 4) The hoarded rice which is used as capital for carrying on usurious and feudal exploitation was confiscated by the peasants and distributed among themselves.... 5) All Jotedars in the villages who were known for a long time as oppressors and those who tried to oppose the peasant struggle were all subjected to open trial and sentenced to death. 6) The wicked ruffian elements and flunkies who were used to preserve the political, economic and social authority of the Jotedars in the villages and those who co-operated with the police were all brought to open trial... In some cases, death sentence was given; in others fellows were paraded through the village streets with shoes strung around their necks and with fool's caps on their heads so that they would not dare commit crimes in future. 7) Realising that their struggle against the Jotedars, landlords and money lenders would be subjected to armed repression by the state apparatus, they armed themselves with their traditional weapons like bows and arrows and spears as well as with guns forcibly taken away from the Jotedars and organised their own armed groups. 8) Lest the general administration of the villages should suffer, they arranged for night watch and shouldered the responsibility of running the schools in a smooth way. The peasant committees announced that severe punishments would be awarded in cases of theft and decoity, and took measures to inflict such punishments in some cases. 9) In every area they created regional and central revolutionary committees and established the peasants' political power. 10) They declared the existing bourgeois law and law courts null and void in the villages. The decisions

of the regional and central revolutionary committees were declared to be the law."

From the above account it is evident that Charu Mazumdar's two main points i.e. active resistance movement and establishing political power at the local level, which were stressed throughout the Documents, were put into practice in the Naxalbari area and further developed;

The attitude of the movement towards various rural sections was explained by Charu Mazumdar in a meeting of party cadres of the area on 13 April 1967: "We are always on the side of poor and landless peasants... Our relations with the rich peasant will always be one of struggle. For, unless the rich peasants influence is weeded out from the village, the leadership of the poor and landless peasants cannot be established and middle peasants cannot be drawn over to us." ('Naxalbari Chiksha', Quotation in Banerjee, 1980 : 111).

By May 1967, the rebels could claim as their strong holds Hatighisha (Naxalbari P.S.), Buragang (Kharibari P.S.) and Chowpukhuria (Phansidewa P.S.), where no outsider could enter without their permission (Banerjee, 1980 : 112). Mukherji (1978 : 46) writes: "... the emergence of the CPI-M as a major constituent of the United Front government was interpreted as fortuitous and their enthusiasm to carry on the struggle found an unexpected fillip. Thus between March and May 1967 more than a hundred cases of forcible cultivation and of deboarding and confiscation of paddy stocks from Jotedar's golas took place. It was argued by the peasant leaders and cadres that at a time when there was acute

shortage of food they would not permit the golas of Jotedars to be full so that they could trade with the misery of the people." Mukherji also informs that describing their operations in the Nazalbari region, a peasant leader observed that they issued the following instructions to their cadres: 1) If the cattle-plough of the adhiar is taken away by the Jotedar and sold in the market, go and appropriate their cattle and ploughs. 2) How shall we cultivate if we have no food to eat? Go and ask the landlord for food. If he is reluctant, take away food by force and issue him a receipt if necessary. 3) Then if the Jotedar attacks with his gun, deprive him of his fire arms. 4) When you remove paddy from his granary, leave the amount that he would need for his family consumption. The rest should be distributed amongst landless peasants and adhiars ... (Mukherji, 1978 : 46).

The rate of escalation of activities was clearly indicative of a massive and reasonably well worked out plan of operation (Mukherji, 1978 : 47). Finding the situation out of control, the CPI-M leader Harj Krishan Konar who was the land and land revenue Minister in the United Front Government, and also the secretary of the West Bengal State Kisan Sabha, came to Siliguri in the middle of May 1967 and tried to reach an agreement with the rebels but failed. After Konar's return to Calcutta a police camp was opened in the area. Charu Mazumdar warned the peasants of the impending state attack. In a letter to a comrade he wrote: "The police obey orders; the moment orders come they will launch the attack. They will get scared only when we attack

them... The Jotedars are still in the villages; they will guide the police ... and indiscriminately kill the peasants. So we must drive out these class enemies (jotedars) from the villages..." (Quotation in Banerjee, 1980: 112).

The events that followed thereafter are essentially the outcome of the use of ideological and repressive state apparatuses on the one hand and the movement's course of action to achieve desired ends on the other. The presentation of these events, as explained earlier, would reveal the internal dynamics of the movement and is of great sociological importance to build theory. This presentation has been organised on the basis of information provided by Mukherji (1978); Banerjee (1980); TNPST (1982); Roy (1975).

When the rebels openly revolted and put their ideological-political programme into practice challenging the traditional rural authority and state machinery, then the two could no longer remain passive defenders and mounted an offensive. By 23 May 1967, the police camps had already been established. The following morning they started combing the villages in search of peasant leaders and cadres. By the evening a strong police contingent reached Barojharujote to effect the arrest of persons wanted in connection with a series of cases. When the police were confronted by nearly 300 men and women armed with bows and arrows, they waited until the arrival of reinforcements led by Inspector Sonam Wangdi. At this all the male members withdrew. When the police officers advanced a little ahead of their force, they were suddenly attacked by 200 to 300 men with bows and

arrows. It is stated that men kept their women in front and attacked from the rear. Both the Inspectors were injured and Wangdi died in the hospital.

On 25 May, the police retaliated by sending a force to Prasadjote in Naxalbari. The police force confronted a hostile mob atleast 1,000 strong, armed with bows and arrows. When repeated warnings failed to detract them from offensive, the police fired upon the crowd of villagers, killing seven women, two children and one male.

According to the peasants' view of incidents, when the police reached Bara Jharujote by evening, they found a deserted village. The police entered the empty houses and began destroying utensils and other belongings indiscriminately. The women resisted this. They rebuked them for destroying meagre household articles and asked them to withdraw for the wanted persons were not present. The police then withdrew to inform their officers. Meanwhile Inspector Wangdi arrived with reinforcements. When the police once again advanced to the middle of the jote, the peasants sent a shower of arrows that injured both the Inspectors. The police fled leaving the wounded behind. It were the peasants, they claimed, that took the two bleeding Inspectors to the police van.

The same evening nearly 2,000 armed police entered the village and destroyed everything they could lay their hands <sup>on</sup>. They found a deserted village except for Danamali's pregnant wife. When she raised a protest, she was kicked in the belly and fell unconscious. Later both the mother

and child succumbed to their injury in the hospital. In another case, Phulchand's wife, who witnessed the scene, died from shock. The peasants did not take the state's repressive acts lying low. In order to keep the morale high and to counter the repressive state apparatuses, they organised village level meetings and processions to voice their protest. Women took an active interest in organizing meetings as they had sharply reacted to the death of two women on 25 May.

A few days later a poor Santhal peasant was beaten up in Naxalbari market by some Jotedars and Congress Party supporters. This incident further exacerbated the already tense situation. The peasant leaders concentrated in the Buragang area, which was their best stronghold. They organised numerous processions voicing their protest against police repressions. These processions attracted between 5,000 to over 10,000 peasants at times. The Jotedars were asked to hand over their guns voluntarily in preparation for the anticipated police offensive. It is contended that many Jotedars voluntarily offered their guns and those who did not were compelled to do so, which they did without offering any resistance. Thus within a brief period the peasants of Buragang acquired complete control over the area, where only their writ held sway. For nearly three months from June to August 1967, the Buragang area was declared a liberated zone (Muktanchal) and a parallel government was established. It is claimed that during this period all petty thefts and anti-social activities came to an end. The people were warned that no such activity would be tolerated. In such a situation people's courts were also established. Apart from

Buragang (P.S. Kharibari) people's courts also functioned at Chowpukuria (P.S. Phansidewa) and in Gerdullajote (P.S. Naxalbari).

The people's courts consisted of five to six leading comrades of the area. First the cases were examined by them and then presented before an assembly of party members, sympathizers and others. The accused after having heard the charges made against them, would be expected either to own their guilt or to defend themselves. The assembled members would then discuss the cases and declare the verdict. Punishment included severe oral warning, confinements for brief periods, beatings until crime was owned and a promise not to repeat it etc. In some cases the guilty would be threatened with the death penalty if they indulged in anti-social activities again. However even as peasants exercised complete command over the Buragang liberated zone, the police had cordoned off the entire area. Nagen Roychoudhry, a big Jotedar of Nazirjote was an exception who flouted the command of the 'peasant government'. He openly colluded with the police. Peasants took out a massive procession and surrounded his house. An altercation with Roychoudhry followed by his threat to use guns led to the killing of Roychoudhry and capturing of his property. Despite the presence of police in massive numbers, Roy Choudhry was beheaded by infuriated and violent peasants on 10 June 1967. Meanwhile clashes between the peasants and landlords continued in other areas. According to an official report between 8 and 10 June only, there were as many as 80 cases of "lawlessness", 13 dacoities,

two murders and one abduction, and armed bands were reported to have been dispensing justice and collecting taxes.

The Parliament and the State Assembly took serious note of these events. Finally the United Front Government sent a cabinet mission to enquire into the affairs. The Cabinet mission's appeal to the peasants to give up violence did not yield any result. It issued three appeals to the peasants. The third appeal was issued on 27 June 1967 asking the peasants to surrender by 4 July 1967.

As the rebels continued their activities, radio Peking, in a comment on 28 June 1967, described the Naxalbari incidents as the "front-paw of the revolutionary armed struggle launched by the Indian people under the guidance of Mao Tse-tung" and dubbed the United Front government as a "tool of the Indian reactionaries to deceive the people". By the end of June, dissidents within and outside the CPI(M) in Calcutta got together and formed "Naxalbari Peasants' Struggle Aid Committee". They staged a demonstration in front of the West Bengal Assembly on 27 June 1969. Meanwhile, the CPI(M) Polit Bureau in a resolution on 20 June 1967 termed the rebels as an anti-party group advocating an adventurist line and actions challenging the party programme, resolutions and directives and directed the State Party Committee to expel them from the party.

The Cabinet Mission was openly opposed by the peasants. Even before they left, a series of incidents took place in open defiance. These incidents included the killing of policemen and removal of paddy. Increased police efforts to arrest peasant leaders only resulted in



confrontations. Thana Land Reforms Committees were boycotted by the rebels. Many meetings could not even take place because of such boycotts.

When by 5 July 1967 there was no response from the peasants to the appeal to surrender, a cabinet meeting authorised strong action to restore law and order in the area. On 12 July 1967, a major police action was launched to round up peasant leaders. Within four weeks of the cabinet decision many arrests were made including those of Mujiburrahman, Oli Mohammad, and Jangal Santhal. According to official reports recovery of fire arms was swift and satisfactory. On 7 September 1967 the Governor visited Naxalbari and Kharibari and this perhaps indicated the end of the law and order problem in the area. With that an apparent lull set in in Naxalbari (Banerjee, 1980). However, when the police action was in full swing, workers of thirty out of thirty eight tea estates in Siliguri sub-division observed a day's token strike on 17 August 1967, in solidarity with peasants and in protest against police excesses in the Naxalbari area (Mukherji, 1978 : 57).

It is interesting to note that despite massive police action the Naxalbari movement did not die and the peasants and their leaders continued to be unswerving in their commitment to an agrarian revolution (Dasgupta, 1974: 199-200). Soon the students of North Bengal University jumped into the fray and organized meetings and processions in support of Naxalbari and demanded the release of all those who were arrested. In rural areas, NKSSS<sup>\*</sup> hold a meeting in March 1968 demanding the immediate release of peasant leaders and raised the slogan

\* "Naxalbari-o-Krishak Sangram  
Sahayak Samiti"

of 'land to the tiller' and 'armed struggle to achieve it'. The NKSSS started organizing branches in the various tea estates and villages and observed Naxalbari Martyrs' Day on 25 May 1968 in memory of those who died on that day exactly a year ago.

By August-September 1968, the renewed activities were started in the area. On 7/8 September 1968, the police were combing the houses for wanted persons and firearms in Hochai Malikjote (Naxalbari) when they confronted with armed resistance from one Babulal Vishwakarmakar who chose to die fighting rather than be taken captive. In the prisons, Naxalites organised hunger strikes for various demands. The Naxalites did not at any stage succumb to or surrender themselves before the superior power of the state. In prison or out of prison, their attitude was one of total defiance of the establishment (Kukherji, 1978 : 65).

We would now not go into what happened thereafter, for the above discussion gives us enough opportunity to analyse the movement. However, before concluding this section, it is rather imperative to look into lessons drawn by the peasant leaders and revolutionary groups themselves from the Naxalbari movement.

What were the reasons for the setback that the Naxalbari peasant movement received? Terai Report itself had summed up the reasons as: "Lack of a strong party organization; failure to rely wholeheartedly on the masses and to build a powerful mass base; ignorance of military affairs; thinking on old lines and a formal attitude

towards the establishment of political power and the work of revolutionary land reform."

Charu Mazumdar in his article "One Year After Naxalbari" states "If the Naxalbari peasant struggle has any lesson for us, it is this: militant struggles must be carried on not for land, crops, etc. but for seizure of state power" (Quotation in TNPST, 1982 ). In another article he wrote: "Lessons that we have got from Naxalbari struggle are these: 1) Peasants did not fight for land or crops but for capturing the "State power". 2) Peasants are waging struggle against the counter-revolutionary armed attack. 3) For waging this armed attack peasants relied on arms made by themselves and with the help of these arms they have been successful in capturing guns, grenades and gun-powder. 4) In this struggle peasants did not rely on others but stood on their own legs and fought with their own might. That struggle was started only with the struggle against revisionism. Revisionism can be fought out only by accepting Mao's thoughts and by accepting and putting this thought into practice by peasant class" (1969: 6).

In an evaluation of the experience of the CPI(ML), Central Reorganisation Committee (CPI-ML) summed up the role of Charu Mazumdar during the Naxalbari days as: "... instead of presenting the relationship between the struggle for political power and for economic gains dialectically, Com. CM(Charu Mazumdar) counterpose one to the other and gave one sided emphasis to the struggle for political power. The mistake persisted and took on even greater

proportions in later years and became a basis for the dogmatic understanding of the question of political power and for one sided rejection of other forms of struggle and organizations" (IMPST, ( 1982 : 49).

### III

A follow up of the discussion in Chapter I and the analysis of the ideology and the resultant peasants' collective action discussed in Sections I and II of this chapter reveals certain striking conclusions which are sociologically of great theoretical importance. These could be summed up as:

1. (exploitative) structural conditions generate and shape a certain ideology which aims at challenging and overthrowing that structure.
2. In the emergence and crystallization of this ideology the latent desire/interest/expectations of exploited people to change the situation in their own favour play a very crucial role. Ideology in turn plays the role of a catalyst in turning the interest/desires into concrete manifests.
3. Ideological perception of the existing structural conditions shapes the dominant form and subsidiary forms of mobilization. The organization becomes the chief vehicle for translating the dominant form and subsidiary forms of mobilization into practice.
4. In the process of surfacing the interest/expectations and becoming manifest behaviour in certain concrete forms, people display unexpected social actions. These unexpected social actions throw challenge to the existing base and

superstructural institutions. As the unexpected social actions get further crystallized and make advances, the existing institutions are perceived as old and are to be replaced by new alternative structures. It is processual and simultaneous. 5. When the unexpected social actions throw challenge to the base and superstructural institutions, the state, the most effective representative of these institutions and responsible for keeping them intact, becomes threatened for its existence and acts expectedly. Ideological and repressive state apparatuses are pressed into service to stop the people from displaying unexpected social actions and make them practice expected social actions. 6. In such a situation people are either forced to display the expected social action through the expected use of the might of the state or the existing institutions get replaced by the reconstructed alternative structure or their character is changed substantially to suit the ideology. In some cases, the state apparently emerges victorious but the change ideology does not die; rather it reactivates soon with more vigour and strength and spreads to newer areas. 7. Social actions are all those actions which are the product of interaction among people, society and classes. Material-historical-social actions are followed by material-ideological social actions. 8. Unexpected collective social actions are of varying degree and nature. But if certain unexpected collective actions which are regarded as threats to the basic existing structures having wider ramifications for the similar situations in the macro framework are manifest even at the

local level, then the state with its supporting institutions would act in the same expected way. 9. Necessary social violence is self procreating, self elevating for the oppressed and instills a sense of confidence in them. 10. Only actual tillers are the most revolutionary force for agrarian revolution.

When we examine and analyse the Naxalbari peasant movement the validity of these theoretical formulations become evident. At the time of Naxalbari movement the agrarian structure and relations in the country and in the movement region was extremely exploitative, based on the ideology of inequality - a natural product of traditional rural power structure and caste hierarchy. The relationship of dependency and exploitation was based on Jotedari-Adhiari and Begar systems in the movement region. The majority of the population lived in extreme poverty and in inhuman existential conditions. The Jotedari-Adhiari system had perfected the exploitation of the labour of the adhiar by every conceivable means, keeping him utterly dependent on the jotedar and landlord (Mukherjee, 1983: 36). From such a situation there emerged an ideology which challenged the very institutions of exploitation that perpetuated the system of superordination and subordination relationships. Thus the landlords and state machinery were the target of attack by the peasants. This ideology which threw an open challenge to the traditional power structure was founded in the idea that the system of exploitation perpetuated by the traditional power structure is wrong and against history. Since the people lived in extreme

exploitative conditions, a sense of relative deprivation emerged. This ideology became an expression of the peoples' desire. The peasants' response was immediate. To put the ideology into practice, an organization emerged. Thus we have seen that within two months the Kisan Sabha's membership rose from 5,000 to 40,000. Almost all the villages got organized. The supposedly passive peasants became veteran political cadres. Thus the peasants displayed unexpected social actions in an organized fashion. They burnt all the records pertaining to unequal agreements, debt etc. They attacked landlord's houses. They seized crops of the landlords. They captured the hoarded food grains and snatched guns. They attacked the state machinery which came to landlord's rescue and destroyed the old order and built alternative structures. They formed village committees, peoples court, armed force and distributed land through village committees. Existing courts and law were declared null and void. As a result the state acted expectedly. It deployed heavy police force to suppress the movement and make the peasants display expected behaviour and not to challenge the system of exploitation. Landlord were given protection and the peasants were beaten, arrested and murdered. In the case of Naxalbari, the peasants received a setback. Though they were apparently put down, their ideology of agrarian revolution spread nation-wide and Naxalbari type peasant movements "multiplied". Though the ideology of Naxalbari peasant movement initially operated

in a small region, it had wider ramifications for similar situations elsewhere - as became evident soon after its advent. Thus state felt threatened and acted expectedly so that the movement could be stopped from spreading. But it failed as the exploitative structural conditions and the manifest desire/expectations in the form of unexpected collective actions were not eliminated. However the state's inherent incapacity to do so and the necessity of the overall exploitative system for the state's survival compels it to make certain concessions in the face of growing discontent and open revolts which at times may dull the ideology of movements for revolutionary change.

The Naxalbari movement sprang up in independent India from a 'withdrawn' and ruthlessly suppressed tradition of peasant mobilization. It was an innovative departure within the confrontationist tradition having been organized by an independent political force and not having the ideological dualism that marked the Telengana peasant movement.



## CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters we have demonstrated how ideology affects and determines the collective actions of agrarian classes either to change the existing system by a desired arrangement or to maintain the status quo as far as the exploitation of vast masses is concerned. We have argued that ideology expresses itself and affects/moulds collective actions in terms of classes. Ideology affects collective actions to achieve the set goals in certain defined ways through certain defined forms of mobilization. These forms of mobilization acquire the status of living symbols of social actions reflecting the forms of social consciousness through which people acquire specific identity, interest, forge solidarity, display antagonism and are mobilized to achieve the set goal. These forms of mobilization or collective action are the product of the ideological perception of the macro situations within which various classes operate.

We have also demonstrated that to deal with the macro situation with a view to achieve the set goal ideology evolves a grand design of macro mobilization and envisages a dominant form of mobilization in order to put this grand design into practice. We also demonstrated that since perception of the macro situation differs ideologically, the dominant form of mobilization also differs radically.

What took place in the name of peasant mobilization in the period of our study was nothing but the mobilization of various agrarian classes to achieve certain defined goals based on contending ideologies. We have demonstrated that the peasant mobilization during this period reflected opposing ideologies and operated under two paradigms - namely the paradigm of confrontation and paradigm of collaboration and legal path. These two paradigms differed radically in their ideological perception of the macro situation and envisaged their specific dominant forms of mobilization.

In case of Champaran struggle large number of people were mobilized into collective action. But an analysis of the Champaran struggle reveals that the people who were mobilized during the struggle were landed gentry who had economic contradiction with the European indigo planters. Gandhi and Congress who were the chief mobilizational force, wanted the support of these landed people or rural oligarchy who wielded economic and political power in their areas, in order to fight British colonialism. The mobilization was done according to Gandhi's perception of the Indian macro situation at that time and as a part of his grand design of macro mobilization which sought the elimination of British colonialism through non-violence as the dominant form of mobilization without affecting the existing Indian social fabric based on exploitation and the system of subordination and superordination relationships. The result was that the exploited and oppressed remained outside

the domain of Gandhi's activities and the contradictions between the local landed gentry and the British planters were utilized to widen the area of influence for anti-British campaign. The reliance on the economically and socially powerful agrarian classes for anti-British movement became the dominant characteristic of Gandhi's ideology which was to influence and shape the future peasant mobilization led not only by Congress and socialists but also by Communists. The ideology of the Telengana peasant movement was in direct opposition to the Champaran tradition. However, Telengana movement was marked by a great ideological dilemma. A communist party which had been following the all classes collaboration theory in the name of political expediency suddenly decided to launch a movement aimed at changing the total Indian social fabric at a time when transfer of power from the British to Indians had become imminent. However soon the Party's central leadership's perception of the changing Indian macro situation came into direct clash with the local leadership's perception of the situation and an all-powerful armed peasant movement was launched in the Telengana region in order to establish peoples authority. An open confrontation and armed struggle became the dominant form of mobilization as ideology requirement which viewed the Indian macro situation in terms of ruling and ruled classes. Thousands of exploited masses were mobilized into militant collective actions against the local exploiters and the state. Central

leadership of the party had to succumb to the growing pressures of the revolutionary ideology. But soon the dilemma ridden party found it ideologically necessary to cooperate with the Congress government and the Telengana struggle was unilaterally withdrawn. The struggle was suppressed by the repressive state machinery.

But the seeds of revolutionary peasants movement sown during the Telengana continued to grow. Intense ideological debate with respect to nature of society and character of state took place within the communist party leading to the formation of a new party, CPI(M) in 1964. But the new party soon followed the same class collaborationist policies of its parent organization. Socio economic structural conditions continued to be exploitative and oppressive. Leading members and activists of the Darjeeling District Committee of CPI(M) revolted against the central leadership. Thus Naxalbari peasant uprising took place in 1967. Like Telengana, ideology of the Naxalbari aimed at changing the system as a whole. However, this time the difference was that unlike Telengana, the people in Naxalbari had gained ideological and organizational maturity so much so that within two years of the Naxalbari uprising an independent political party CPI(ML) was to be formed with a clear cut programme of Indian revolution in total opposition to the class collaborationist ideologies of the two communist parties. In the wake of Naxalbari and CPI(ML) a large number of

Naxalbari type peasant movements took place in many parts of the country challenging the state authority. The Naxalbari peasant uprising is the representative of the confrontationalist tradition of peasant mobilization in contemporary India.

The above discussed two distinct traditions of peasant mobilization covered the very crucial period of anti-British campaign and equally crucial period of "national reconstruction" after the elimination of the direct physical presence of British colonialism in 1947. However, it is important to note that the division of Indian history (of this period) into pre and post '47 India has not brought any change in the two traditions of peasant mobilization. Rather there is a continuity of the two traditions.

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