

**Agrarian Unrest and State Response
in Telengana — 1977 — 84 :
A Case Study of Karimnagar District**

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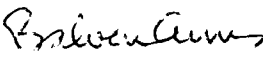
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Certified that the dissertation entitled
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been submitted previously in any university for the
award of this or any other degree. We recommend
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INTRODUCTION

The present study seeks to understand the nature of agrarian unrest and its manifestation through various struggles and protests and the response of the state towards them in Telengana during the period 1977 and 1984. Specifically, this study attempts to unfold and analyse the phenomenon as it developed and spread in the particular case of Karimnagar district. This study focusses primarily on agrarian struggles under the leadership of the naxalites. This is because peasant unrest in this area is almost entirely led by Naxalites, though the CPI was ^{an} influential force in some taluqs, but it was not actively involved in peasant struggles. Moreover the specific theme of the study i.e. agrarian unrest and state response can be most strikingly noticed in the development of agrarian struggles organised by CPI(ML).

The choice of the particular district is guided by the fact that it is in Karimnagar for the first time, after Telengana armed struggle, the agrarian unrest and struggles reemerged in the plains of Telengana. What makes this choice important is that the Telengana armed struggle of the 1940s had little impact in these areas, as a result of which feudal exploitative relations and practices remained largely unchanged. The persistence of

oppressive social, economic relations created the grounds for the reemergence of vigorous peasant movement in the region.

The time span 1977-84 chosen is due to two reasons: one, that the struggles in Karimnagar district happened in the post-emergency period; secondly 1984 witnessed a constriction and contraction of political space for peasant protests under the naxalite leadership, because of large scale increase in police repression. Hence the delimitation of the topic between 1977-84 in terms of time period.

II

The study of agrarian unrest and peasant struggle in specific contexts can hardly be underestimated in the Indian situation. The fact that even after many years of independence and the developmental policies undertaken, the economy remains agricultural. All the more this development failed to solve the problems of exploitation and social justice in the country side in many parts of the country. Feudal economic practices and relations continued to survive in several regions, despite the

attempts at developing a capitalist agricultural system through implementation of land reforms and introduction of modern techniques of production. Alongside such a survival of feudal relations and practices , which shows the failure of implementation of land reform policies properly, the feudal oppression and exploitation continued in many regions like Telengana and Bihar. This provided a fertile ground for the growth of agrarian unrest and once the political initiative of organizing the exploited sections came about , it usually led to the emergence of organised struggles and movements. It is in this light one has to see the emergence of agrarian unrest and peasant struggles in Telengana.

In Telengana,¹ before independence, the communists launched an agitation and forcibly took over ten lakh acres of land from big landowners and distributed among the tillers. But the tillers could not hold on to the land as the state came down heavily on the communists. Constitutional and legal methods to bring about land reforms were first initiated in the state in 1948, With the abolition of zamindars in Andhra

area and Jagirdars in Telengana.² In Telengana, 975 Jagirs covering 4000 villages were done away with.

The next step was to extend recognition to protected tenants through the Hyderabad Tenancy Act of 1956, which among other things provided for regulation of rent and prevention of unjust eviction of tenants. A more comprehensive legislation for the composite state was brought about by the AP Ceiling on Agricultural Holdings Act of 1961.³ The ceiling under this Act ranged from 27 to 324 acres per person, depending on the class of land. This Act was amended in 1971, dispensing with most of the exemptions like sugar cane farms, pasture lands for cattle breeding and private forests.

But these measures remained incomplete or unfulfilled to a large extent in Telengana. Even by 1971, the land distribution figures point to the fact that nearly 37.7 percent of the

holdings cover about 5.2 percent of the total cultivated area, while 1.6 percent of the holdings cover about 15.4 percent of total cultivated area.⁴

In 1972, a new Land Reforms Act (1972)⁵ was formulated . The new legislation is in line with the national policy, making the family as a unit for fixing a ceiling as against an individual in the earlier Acts. While the Act was ratified in 1973, it came into effect only in 1975. Thus giving the landlords much scope to evade the law. However, it was only under this Act some amount of surplus lands were acquired and redistributed in Telengana. In Karimnagar, not more than ten percent of the acquired land was redistributed.⁶

This shows that the old feudal stranglehold over rural power base , both economic and social was hardly affected in Karimnagar. It is in this situation that the growth and spread of agrarian unrest in the district has to be understood.

III

The present research is largely based on secondary source material like party documents and journals of the left groups, news paper reports, and articles from academic journals. There is very little by way of government reports on the topic. Besides whatever exists is classified as secret and therefore not accessible. There is also very little academic work on agrarian unrest in the 1970s and 1980s in Karimnagar.⁷

Given such limitations, the present study is largely expository, with some attempt to draw some patterns that emerge about the nature of unrest and struggles as well as the state response to them.

IV

The dissertation is organised into four chapters.

Chapter I deals with the rise of agrarian unrest and emergence of peasant struggles in the

Jagityala and Siricilla taluqs of Karimnagar district during 1977-78.

In chapter II, the spread and consolidation of this phenomena into other areas of the district is traced between 1979-82. At the same time, the changes in the modes of mobilization, and the reaction of the landlords and the state towards the struggles is brought out.

Chapter III is devoted to show the nature of the already consolidated movement in the face of increased state repression. Besides, the differences and similarities in state response under two different governments in the periods 1977-82 and 1983-84 , i.e. the Congress(I) in the former period , and the TDP during the latter period are traced.

The concluding chapter gives an overview of the entire study in brief, showing the larger patterns emerging from the struggles.

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CHAPTER - I

PEASANT MOVEMENT IN KARIMNAGAR (1977-78) :
THE FORMATIVE PHASE

Agrarian unrest and growth of peasant movements have been a common phenomena in India before and after independence. This is not surprising given the largely agrarian nature of the country's economy and society. The same remains true in the case of Andhra Pradesh. However, agrarian unrest and peasant movement did not always manifest the same nature in different parts of the country and at different times.

Coming to Andhra Pradesh, agrarian unrest manifested in Telengana even in the 1940s and 1950s as a fight against the feudal exploitation and the Nizam Government's political oppression. It is another matter that towards the end of that movement after independence, it changed its attention towards larger goals of change of state power and faced severe suppression from the Indian Government, details which we need not look into here.

While the Indian Government was able to curb the Telengana movement on the political plane, the conditions responsible for the unrest that led to the

rise of the movement remained untackled. The feudal exploitative processes, economic relations and social oppression continued unchanged, with rural power base still controlled by the few landlords deriving their authority from their control over land. The thirty years of development policies after independence failed to have any impact in changing these conditions in Telengana.

It is in this light that we see the radical left groups finding an ideal ground to work in Telengana from the 1960s and early 1970s. The naxalite movement in West Bengal and Srikakulam too influenced these groups originally under the leadership of Tarimella Nagi Reddy and others in Warangal and Khammam districts. It is under this influence that we see the spread of agrarian unrest and mobilization of the pesantry and toiling masses in Karimnagar and Adilabad districts of Andhra Pradesh by late 1970s , while the state repression against the movement in the other districts continued.

The main focus of the present chapter is on the formative phase of the peasant movement in Karimnagar district and places this phase in its immediate political context. The chapter starts with the change of government at the centre and the constitution of Bhargava commission, and in this context the spread of peasant movement initiated by Naxalites in Jagityala and Siricilla taluqs of Karimnagar district is traced. This exercise helps us in locating the broad conditions that are creating fertile ground for the spread of these movements and also the nature of these struggles in the period to follow as well.

The immediate political context in the post emergency period was a change of government at the centre with the Janata party in power. On the instructions of the Central Government the State Government had to institute the Bhargava commission in 1977 to look into the 'encounter' killings committed during the emergency in Andhra Pradesh. Though the commission failed to come out with a conclusive report

the revelations that emerged during the course of the proceedings put the State Government and the law enforcement machinery on the defensive temporarily. This created an atmosphere where the democratic forces could once again reassert themselves and initiate mass struggles. It is at this juncture we see the growth of peasant struggles in Karimnagar district under the Naxalite groups.

Reappraisal Among the Naxalite Groups under Changed Conditions

With the change in the political circumstances a reassessment of their earlier plans and actions on the part of the Naxalites became an imperative. The relatively democratic political atmosphere that came into existence could not be ignored. The Central Organizing Committee - Communist Party of India (Marxist - Leninist), COC - CPI(ML) - which earlier stuck to the path of armed struggle through guerilla tactics, now, after a sincere reappraisal of its functioning before the emergency, admitted that its

excessive emphasis on annihilation and neglecting its responsibility of building a mass movement was politically incorrect. It decided to discontinue armed struggle and build up a revolutionary mass base to propagate the politics of agrarian revolution and thereby creating conditions for the establishment of a new democratic society. It also decided to strengthen mass-organization and organise the exploited sections on the issues concerning their day-to-day existence and in the process politicize and direct them towards their goal. They also decided to widen their sphere of activity and spread to all the regions of Andhra Pradesh gradually. However, it was in favour of a strict boycott of elections. It still saw feudalism as the main enemy of the people and in its fight against it decided to 'mobilize' the poor and the landless peasants alongwith other sections on democratic lines . At the same time, it made it clear that it would resort to arms if the state closes down the democratic options of struggle and resorts to repression.¹

The other important naxalite party, the Provincial Central Committee, PCC-CPI(ML) which already had its base in the forest regions of Godavari valley consisting of Warangal, Khammam, East Godavari districts and some areas in the plains also decided to reactivate its mass-organizations and spread to new areas. There is not much of a change from its earlier theoretical stand-points and saw the contradictions between the nation and imperialism, feudalism and broad masses of the society and the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the basic contradictions in the society. It emphasized on the mass-line and agrarian revolution as the main form of struggle.

One significant change that was effected was its attitude towards elections. The party felt that as long as the people have illusions about the Parliamentary institutions, it can not afford a passive boycott of elections . In Chandra Pulla Reddy's words: "taking the level of the people's movement and their consciousness, our party has decided to participate in the elections with definite aims of propagating

the revolutionary politics of agrarian revolution among the people, consolidating and extending the mass base of the party and prepare the people for further struggles on their immediate issues after the elections.² It is with this understanding that both the Naxalite groups set out to build mass organizations particularly among the peasantry.

At the macro level the picture of the economy as shown by the Government looked impressive. During the tenure of J. Vengala Rao as the Chief Minister, the state made rapid strides in industry, power generation, tax collection and even agriculture.³ But seen from the other side, the micro level, the benefits had not trickled down and the picture was unimpressive. For fairly long, there was a virtual stagnation in the agricultural wages, both in the agriculturally developed as well as underdeveloped areas.⁴ On the land reforms front, the picture looks even more grim. The Land-Ceilings Act, 1973, which was put to effect from January, 1975, did not yield much land for

this act gave much scope for manipulation of records and transfer of ownership rights on fictitious names.

Even a substantial part of the land declared surplus was legally disputed and therefore not much of the surplus land could be distributed. As a result, the slogan of land reforms was reduced to a mere rhetoric in many parts of the state. The connivance of land-lords, politician, bureaucrat nexus and the legal loopholes inherent in the Act frustrated the attempts of the poor to benefit from the Ceiling Act.* The absence of a strong political movement which could have mounted tremendous pressure from below resulted in letting the landlords retain their large holdings. (*It may be noted that of the 71,793 acres declared surplus in Karimnagar district a meagre 5,301 acres were distributed as on 31.1.1979).⁵

The land concentration in Karimnagar district was extremely high. In 1970-71, 53 percent of holdings were operating just 9 percent of the total area,

14 percent were operating 58 percent of the total area.⁶ The Ceiling Legislation led to some marginal changes. In 1976-77, 54 percent of the holdings operated 12 percent of the total area, while 13 percent of the holdings were operating 54 percent of the total area.⁷ By contrast only 2.8 percent of the holdings operated 21.6 percent of the total area which indicates an extreme concentration of land in a miniscule section of the agrarian society.

The agricultural wages paid to the annual farm servants(Paluru) and daily agricultural labourers were very low. There was a virtual stagnation in agricultural wages inspite of the rise in prices of agricultural produce. While in 1967-68, the agricultural wages for men, women and children were Rs 2.50, Rs 1.50 and one rupee , respectively,⁸ in 1974-75, the corresponding figures were Rs 3.50, Rs 2.00 and Rs 1.⁹ Herdsmen were paid less than half of the normal wage rates. The working hours for Palurus were from 12 to 18 hours a day. While

the underdevelopment of agriculture is one of the reasons for the extremely low wages, the absence of political organisation resulted in a large-scale exploitation of the agricultural labourers, in terms of wages paid and the work-hours extracted.

The poverty levels in different districts of Andhra Pradesh, and particularly of the agriculturally under-developed areas of Warangal, Karimnagar, Adilabad were very high. A study conducted by the Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad, revealed an unusually high level of 70 to 80 percent of the people struggling below the poverty line, which was fixed at Rs 50 per person per month in 1977-78.¹⁰ The poverty levels among the agricultural labourers is even more striking. In Karimnagar more than 90 percent of agricultural labourers were below the poverty line. The general levels of poverty in Nalgonda district surprisingly were the lowest in the whole of Andhra Pradesh. One plausible reason is the radicalization

of peasantry following the Telengana armed struggle of the late 1940s and the continued presence of the left political organizations.

Feudal Exploitation:

The socio-economic milieu in which the landless labourers, poor peasants and their women lived was one of routine exploitation and humiliation meted out daily ^{by} feudal landlords. Unlike in places where the Telengana armed struggle of the 1940s struck a deep chord, in Karimnagar social evils and various forms of economic exploitation continued unabated. Feudal exploitation was widely prevalent in this district. Land concentration in a few hands known as 'Doras' (Lords) coupled with social and economic power formed the basis of feudal authority exercised over the poor in the village.

'Vetti' (Forced labour), the most characteristic feature of feudalism in this region illustrates the

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exploitative nature of the authority that the landlord held over the lives of ordinary people in the village. Peasants and people belonging to different service-castes had to cater to the needs of the landlords first and only then could they attend to their normal chores of earning a livelihood. 'Vetti Mandalu', the practice of forcibly making the live-stock available to sleep in the landlords' fields so that their droppings may fertilize the land, was just another peculiar form of exploitation in this area. Mamullu (extortion) and fines were collected both in cash and kind for settling disputes. Landlords also extorted a specified amount of money from the toddy tappers for allowing them access to the palmyra trees and also for participating in the auction. Through usury, the landlord gains hold over the meagre assets and holdings that the peasants have, and eventually strips the peasants of their assets.

The landlord often takes a loan in the name of an unschooled and ignorant peasant. Such poor victims are then hounded by the bank officials.

The practice of bonded labour was also widespread in this district. This was mentioned as the worst affected district in this region by the Gandhi Peace Foundation.¹¹ In almost all villages north of Karimnagar town, banjar, village common and government lands were occupied by the landlords enabling them to much larger acreage than they are entitled.¹²

Apart from this economic exploitation of the peasants and labourers, the landlords who were generally of high and middle castes also resorted to social oppression of the people. Social norms imposed by the landlords had to be scrupulously followed. Lower castes were not allowed to wear white clothes and chappals in the presence of the landlord. They were not even allowed to send their children to the schools and in some areas young women were summoned by the

landlords to cater to their carnal desires. It is in this backdrop of the prevalence of widespread economic exploitation and social oppression that the peasants have organized themselves into Ryotu Coolie Sanghams , after the emergency, under the leadership of the two naxalite parties, the PCC-CPI(ML) and the COC-CPI(ML) which came to be known as the 'Peoples War Group'(PWG) from 1980. The struggle initially started in Siricilla and Jagityal taluqs and subsequently spread to almost all parts of the district.

Peasant Movement in Siricilla:

Siricilla is one of the few areas in Karimnagar district that was militantly involved in the Telengana peasant struggle of the late 40s.¹³ This explains the presence of CPI which till recently used to send its representative to the state assembly.¹⁴ Despite the presence of the CPI in this taluq, its failure to mobilise peasants resulted in the revival and persistence of obnoxious feudal practices. Landlords

extorted the peasants in various ways of which 'vetti' is the most prominent. 'Vetti mandalu', imposition of fines, mamools usury were some other kinds of extortions practised by the landlords. In addition to this, peasants and the other castes performing different services also suffered due to the perpetration of social oppression by the landlords.

The immense control over the ownership of means of production, particularly the land, wielded by the landlords is what enabled them to exercise control over social life of the village. Authority and ownership of land reinforced each other. The landownership pattern in this taluq is characterized by extreme inequities. According to the 1971 statistics while 30 percent of the households did not have any land, 3 percent of the households owned 13.4 percent of the cultivable land.¹⁵ 24 families owned land ranging from 100 - 1000 acres. The following table illustrates the extent of land concentration in this region.¹⁶

S.No	Landlords	Village	Land in acres
1.	Bontala Bhaskar Rao	Nimmapally	600
2.	K.Venkat Reddy	Nizamabad	300
3.	Raja Venkta Narsinga Rao	Vemulawada	1000
4.	Polsani Govind Rao	-do-	450
5.	Chennadi Bhagwant Rao	Chekkapalli	100
6.	Joginipalli Venkat Rama Rao	Koḍdurupaka	150
7.	Sagi Bhaskar Rao	Nukalamari	400
8.	Tirupathi Rao	Eernapally	500
9.	Raja Rajeshwar Rao	Gajasinghavaram	1600
10.	Papa Rao	Maddikunta	500
11.	Gopal Rao	Therlumaddi	200

Source : PCC-CPI(ML) Party document, State Committee,
April 1979, pp. 4-6.

Almost all the landlords acquired these lands by dubious means. While loans were extended to peasants at exceptionally high rates of interest, there was the spectacle of forcible acquisition of land rights of these peasants by the landlords. Apart from this, they (landlords) also occupied waste lands, village commons and porambokes (government lands). PALERUS and daily wage labourers were paid very low wages. Male agricultural labourers were paid Rs 4.00 and women paid between Rs 1.00 — 2.00.¹⁷ In the forest regions beedi leaf pickers were also paid very low wages by the contractors apart from extracting free labour. All this provided an ideal ground for the PCC-CPI(ML) to work on, mobilise peasants and build a mass base to propagate their politics of agrarian revolution.

The PCC-CPI(ML) first started its activity in Nimnapally of Siricilla taluq in 1970-71 and spread to Konaraopet, Veernapally and a few adjoining villages by 1973 and in the process set up 'Ryotu Coolie Sanghams' (RCS) (Agricultural Labourers Association). In 1973,

RCS called for the occupation of 22 acres of land under dispute which originally belonged to the Harijans but was grabbed by the landlord of Nimmappally. This struggle failed following the police arrests of peasants. To avoid further police arrests, the RCS spread to other villages and mobilised the peasants (landless, poor peasants and middle peasants) on issues of agricultural wages, administrative corruption at the village level, low wages to the beedi leaf pickers and extraction of unpaid labour by the contractors.¹⁸ The government responded by nationalising the beedi-leaf collection trade to protect the contractors. All that the government did in the name of 'nationalisation' of the operations was to assume the responsibility of management of the whole operation thereby saving the contractors from the brunt of the agitation. The government sold the collected beedi leaves again to the contractors instead of directly selling to the beedi companies, ^{or} setting up co-operatives.¹⁹

Meanwhile the Nimmappally land occupation struggle was revived in 1975 inviting further repression. The peasants were however prepared to face the repression this time. The proclamation of emergency rendered the movement inactive as the active cadre went into hiding. Every movement generates its own experiences and lessons to draw from. Knowing well that they can no more function openly under the banner of the RCS they joined in a 'Harijan Sangham' started by two farm servants in Western Siricilla, to fight for the rights of farm workers and against the practice of untouchability. The struggle was built up around the demand for the implementation of 20 point programme and this was done tactically in order to disguise their ideological proclivities. Struggle was also carried against 'Vetti Chakiri' (unpaid labour) especially the practice of gifting sheep and sending 'Vettimandalu' by the shepherds to fertilise the lands of the Doras (landlords). The careful handling of the issues and Orientation of the struggles enabled the movement to spread to some

20-30 villages even before the lifting of emergency.

With the lifting of the emergency these sanghams were automatically transformed into or replaced by RCS.

Peasant Movement after Emergency(Mar 77 - Oct 78)

Following the lifting of emergency and the revocation of the ban on different naxalite groups the CPI(ML) CP group revived its activities. The party launched an extensive campaign in a number of villages in this taluq against the violation of civil liberties, suppression of the mass movement and elimination or 'bumping off' of activists for holding unorthodox views on various issues vis-a-vis the mainstream political ideologies. In the process, the party had popularised its politics and initiated struggles on concrete issues. In villages where the party already set up RCSs struggles were taken up on the issues of abolition of 'Vetti', increase of agricultural wages and retrieving the lands seized by landlords from the poor.²¹

One or two incidents that took place during this period (3rd quarter of 1977) gave a fillip to the movement. The first incident is a struggle launched by the RCS against the landlord of Nimmapally to restore 10 acres of land granted by the government to a political sufferer but seized by the landlord forcibly. A public meeting organised by RCS in Konaraopet demanding the handover of the land was attacked by the landlords' henchmen. The attack was repelled and another public meeting was held followed by a 300 strong procession in Nimmapally.²² This incident inspired the peasants in the surrounding villages to join the RCSs. In another incident there was ^a large scale public protest against police misbehaviour and lathi charge on a crowd that gathered at vemulawada to submit a memorandum to the governor. A number of public meetings were held and thousands of peasants were mobilised. In the process, the party consolidated itself and RCS's were set up in some more villages.

Demonstrations, public meetings, processions were the major forms of protests adopted by the R C Ss, during this time. The number of villages where RCSs were set up gradually increased. By the end of 1977 RCSs were set up in 30-35 villages. Particularly, the youth responded enthusiastically to the appeals of the party and took up the initiative of organizing the poor under the banner of RCSs. Though the older generation initially remained skeptical due to the slow receptivity of new ideas and the fear of persecution by the landlords, they too actively involved as these struggles gained strength. By February 1978, RCSs had come to stay in a number of villages. It emerged as an important institution representing the collective strength of the poor peasantry. While it was the agricultural labourers and the poor peasants who formed the backbone of the movement, the poorer sections among the artisan classes also associated themselves with the RCSs.

In accordance with the new thinking on participation in elections to use it as an effective strategy to propogate its politics and consolidate its mass base

the CPI(ML), C.P. group fielded its candidates for the assembly elections held in February 1978.²³ During the election campaign it conducted in about 100 villages the party successfully projected the struggles it led, while at the same time it articulated the specific problems the poor were faced with. Landlord excesses - social oppression, payment of low wages, garnering of funds meant for the poor etc, were particularly highlighted during the election campaign. In a number of villages the campaigners were assaulted by the landlords' men. Despite its shortcomings, the party polled more than 7,000 votes. What's more important than the number of votes polled is the fact that in the process the number of villages where RCSs were established went up to 50 and contacts were established in another 50 villages.²⁴

From the completion of the assembly elections in February 1978 to June 1978 a number of struggles were carried on under the leadership of the Siricilla taluq RCS - Beedi Leaf Struggle, struggle against forest

officials, struggle against the practice of "Vetti" and land struggles.²⁵ Issues concerning the middle and even rich peasantry who suffered losses due to the failure of monsoons were taken up. They were mobilised against the forcible collections of short term cooperative bank loans in about 100 villages. Three big processions were taken out in Siricilla and Vemulawada demanding the postponement of the collection of loans. Corruption of electricity department, malpractices in public distribution system and irregularities in the provision of loans by cooperatives were fought against by the RCS.²⁶ The RCS could secure house sites by mobilising the poor in the villages of Nimmapalli, Baosaipet, Shabashpalli, Garjanapalli, Marimadla, Suddala and a few other villages.

Beedi Leaves Struggles

In the villages located in the forest regions of the taluq Beedi-leaf picking provides a major source of employment to the poor in the agriculturally lean seasons. The Beedi-Leaf business requires no investment,

but yields a considerable amount of profits to the contractors. Despite these huge profit margins , the Beedi-leaf pickers were paid extremely low wages.

For the first time in this taluq , the RCS organised the Beedi-leaf pickers demanding a hike in the wages. They demanded eight paise per a bundle of hundred leaves instead of the five paise fixed by the government. The government refused their demand, as it feared that it might set a precedent prompting the pickers to resort to similar kind of actions in future also. Since their demands were not met the pickers struck work in protest. Consequently they were threatened by forest officials denying access to forest produce such as firewood, gum, and Mahua flowers. Selective RCS members were even assaulted by the officials. When people rose collectively against these threats in protest - which went on for twenty five days - the government and contractors finally agreed to a modest raise of one paise per bundle.

During the same time the taluq RCSs also conducted struggles against Vetti, particularly the custom of gifting of sheep to the landlord by the shep^{he}ards in return for letting their sheep graze on the lands of landlords. The shep^{he}ards discontinued this practice on the call given by the taluq RCS. The landlords' retaliation to this came in the form of imposition of fines on shep^{he}ards for tre^spassing their lands. The shep^{he}ards persisted in their fight as they got the support of rich peasants as well as the poor, resulting in the abandonment of this exploitative practice.²⁷

Land Struggle

In mobilizing people on various issues the question of land came to the fore in each and every village. In the month of June, 78, the RCS carried out land struggle in fifteen villages. Five hundred forty five acres of public lands, forest banjars and lands seized by the landlords from the poor were taken over by the people led by RCS.²⁸ In the course of these struggles, the

RCS members were attacked by landlords in a number of villages. Peasants fought back successfully and some of the landlords were even socially boycotted. One significant thing to be noted here was the large participation of the poor even from villages which were not directly involved in these struggles. This expression of solidarity reflected a growing awareness of identical interests of the poor.

The Chekkapally Struggle and its Aftermath

One can see a number of instances where the increasing political organisations of the peasants was sought to be put down by the landlords. The incident at Chekkapally in March 1978 serves as a good example in this direction. The exploitation that the poor of Chekkapally were subjected to by the landlord was opposed through this struggle under the RCS. The landlord reacted by expelling these people who took the initiative to organise the poor. By using his feudal authority, he took out a

procession and made people to chant that he was a God. (Bhagwanta Rao is Bhagwan)²⁹ In addition to that, he repeatedly assaulted the taluq RCS leaders. Thousands of people rose in protest against this demanding his arrest. Alarmed at the wave of protests the government moved swiftly by imposing Section 144.³⁰ Despite the prohibitory orders people in forty villages participated in demonstrations against the government's repressive measures. The peasants of Chekkapalli imposed a social boycott on the landlord demanding the payment of the entire amount that he had extorted from them. They also put an end to vetti, payment of bribes and restored lands illegally held by the landlords to its real owners. Unable to reconcile to the changed circumstances, the landlord fled the village. Encouraged by the success of this struggle people from twenty villages came out in demonstrations against landlordism and demanded "Land to the tiller". This particular episode inspired many a people to organize themselves.

under RCSs even in villages which hitherto remained relatively aloof from the happenings around.³¹

This incident was properly made use of by CPI(ML) in exposing the true nature of the state - when and in whose favour it intervened in a situation of conflict.

Spread of the Struggle

By mid 78 more than 80 percent of the villages came under the influence of RCS. The RCS enlarged its base in a phased manner. It mobilised people on every single issue that came across and in the process developed the movement to a state from where it could take the question of land that's central to its politics of agrarian revolution and also challenge the socio-political domination of the landlords over the village life. With the growing strength of the movement the forms of struggle it adopted - submitting memorandums, gherao and finally resistance had also undergone a change.³²

This was necessitated by the shifts in responses of the landlords and the police and the compulsion of sustaining the spirit and momentum of the struggle. It became clear by this time that no amount of force by the landlords would coerce the people into submission and it is at this juncture that the state came down with a heavy hand on the movement to suppress it and restore (attempted to) the lost confidence and thereby the authority of the landed gentry.

A couple of events that took place during this time - particularly the humiliating treatment meted out to a landlord of Boinapalli village, who was notorious for his sexual exploitation of women, in the last week of June 1978 - provided an ideal excuse for the justification of the government's action in the name of suppressing violence.³³

Outraged at the landlords' action of beating one of their fellow members almost to the point of death, the RCS mobilised people, caught hold of the landlord

and on the insistence of women was garlanded with chappals and paraded in five villages.

Taking a serious note of the growing militancy of the people, the government moved with swift reprisals by arresting the Taluq leaders of the party. The government took this measure in close consultation with the police and in collusion with the landlords. When there was a spontaneous wave of protests by the people against the arrests, the government was rather taken aback and released the leaders. Nevertheless, to prevent the further consolidation of the movement and to break it up, Section 144 was imposed throughout the Taluq. Simultaneously the police made all possible attempts to see that the landlords regain their earlier hold over the village life. Added to this, the government, after serious deliberations, in mid July, with the feudal sections, civil, police officials encouraged the landlords to maintain their own armed gangs. To facilitate this, it even liberally granted

arms licence to them. Thus began a new phase of repression on the movement which continued for the next four months.

The RCS gave a call to resist the combined attacks of the police and the landlords. As a reaction to this, the police set up camps in six villages and intensified patrolling.³⁴ More than 700 RCS activists were arrested and implicated in false cases. The RCS approached the High Court following the rejection of the bail petitions by the Sessions Court. While it released a number of activists, the High Court had granted only a conditional bail to some 60 core activists, the condition being that they register their attendance everyday in one of the police stations of the three towns, viz., Siricilla, Vemulawada and Karimnagar. This was done with the intention of preventing these activists from going back to their villages and reorganizing the movement.

What is so striking was the brave resistance put up by the people in the face of arrests and assaults by the police and landlords respectively. Torture, persecution, harassment and frequent raids on the houses of activists and sympathisers became common . On 14th and 15th Aug, 78, the RCS conducted public meetings in Siricilla and Vemulawada to condemn these attacks. When the repression mounted further another public meeting was organised on Sept 9th. The police tried all means to disrupt this meeting and warned the people not to attend this meeting. It even cancelled the bus services on the day the meeting was held. In spite of the organised police attempts to foil it , the meeting turned out to be a success. This made it clear to the government that the earlier measures it took would not suffice to suppress the movement. Hence on 20th October, the government issued a notification declaring Siricilla, alongwith Jagityala where an equally strong peasant movement was going on under the leadership of the COC-CPI-ML, as disturbed areas.

Peasant Movement in Jagityal

Unlike in Siricilla, where the Ryotu Coolie Sangams(RCS) were established much before the emergency, in Jagityal the organization of the peasants started only after the lifting of emergency. While it is the PCC-CPI(ML) which was later re-named as CPI(ML) Peoples War Group (PWG) that has activated the peasants. COC-CPI(ML) started its open activities in July 1977. It extensively campaigned against the excesses committed against the naxalites - killings, illegal confinements and torture. They demanded judicial enquiry into these killings and the lifting of police camps. On 27th of August, 1977, peasants from ten to fifteen villages were mobilized and a public meeting was held under the leadership of RCS in Gollapalli village.³⁶ Peasants were exhorted to struggle for their rights. The message of agrarian revolution - land to the tiller, end to feudal subjugation was driven home forcefully.

The landlords, seeing the growing consciousness among the peasantry, wanted to suppress the movement in its infancy by eliminating the people leading the movement. As a part of this strategy, Posetty of Kannapur village in Jagityal taluq and Laxmirajam of Turjmdpur village in Siricilla Taluq were killed in the first week of November, 1977. This has only accelerated the pace of the movement instead of it being suppressed. Meetings were organized in memory of these two departed activists in a number of villages in Karimnagar and a few villages in Adilabad district.³⁷

The COC-CPI(ML) gave a call for the boycott of the assembly elections held in January, 1978. Meetings were organized in a number of villages falling under Siricilla and Jagityal Taluqs explaining the limitations of parliamentary politics in solving the question of land, wages and democratic rights of the people. At the same time, they requested the people to organize themselves to fight

against the feudal oppression and for the realization of their just demands.³⁸ In the process, RCSs were established in a few villages. However, it is only after the 'Go-to-villages' campaign organized by the Radical Students' Union (RSL) in April 1978, that the establishment of RCS gained momentum.³⁹

A group of hundred students divided into fifteen batches toured a number of villages in Jagityal and Manthini Taluqs of Karimnagar and Luxettipet and Asifabad taluqs in Adilabad district. They propagated the politics of agrarian revolution as enunciated in the pamphlet 'Make the Agrarian Revolution a Success' (Vyavasaya Viplavam Vijaya Vantam Cheyandi). 50,000 signatures were collected during this campaign demanding the repeal of the disturbed areas Act,⁴⁰ unconditional release of political prisoners and continuation of the open enquiry by the Bhargava Commission into the encounter killings.⁴¹

Besides, strikes were organized by the campaign committees demanding an increase in agricultural wages in Jagityal taluq. In the process, youth were organized under the banner of Radical Youth League (RYL) in several villages.

The RYL held its first state-level convention in Guntur in June, 1978, to which the attendance from Adilabad and Karimnagar districts alone accounted for over three thousand in numbers. Thus, this campaign became the forerunner to the historic peasant movement in Karimnagar and Adilabad districts.

It is the all pervasive feudal oppression that led to the rapid growth of the peasant movement in Jagityal taluq. Land-ownership pattern has been extremely unequal with the top three percent of the total households accounting for over thirty five percent of the total land ownership, while the bottom twenty five percent of the total households owned no land at all.⁴² In Jagityal, there were sixty land-lords each owning 150-400 acres of land.⁴³

Lothunuru, a typical village in this region provides an illustration of the extent of land concentration.

	<u>ACRES HELD</u>	<u>BY NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS</u>
(1)	200-300	1
(2)	25-50	4
(3)	10-25	20
(4)	3-10	35
(5)	Landless	30

Source: Jan Myrdal , India Waits, p.351, Sangam Books, 1984, Madras.

Apart from the legal ownership of land, the landlords also occupied wastelands, porambokes and village commons illegally. Feudal practices like Vetti, Extortions and social discrimination were widely practiced.⁴⁴

The RCS and RYL initially started organizing the peasants on the demands like the abolition of

Vetti, return of bribes taken by landlords during emergency on the threat of getting the peasants arrested, increase in the wages of Palerus and agricultural labourers, return of the public land illegally held by the landlord, abolition of illegal exactions and grazing tax by forest officials.⁴⁵

In Maddunur village, RCS organized peasants and struck work in June, 1978, demanding an increase in the wages of Palerus and agricultural labourers. People of various castes came in support of the struggling peasants by refusing to do Vetti to the landlord. All agricultural operations of the landlord came to a standstill as a result of this. On 20th June, 1978, some thousand peasants were mobilized, went in a procession and cut wood extensively on a two hundred-acre plantation under the illegal occupation of the landlord.⁴⁶ Immediately, a police camp was set up to suppress the peasants. However, peasants refused to resume work for the

landlord. This set the trend and struggles were initiated in thirty more villages. People's courts were set up and many landlords were prosecuted for their excesses.⁴⁷ Thousands of rupees forcibly collected by the landlords were taken back during this period. About eight hundred acres of land illegally held by these landlords in about thirty villages was also distributed to the peasants.⁴⁸

One significant fall out of the movement during this time is the elimination of the role of landlords as 'arbitrators' in settling the feuds amongst the poor. The earlier function of the landlords in settling the disputes were now taken over by the village committees, saving the peasants from the fleecing^{of} the landlords and the police. This dealt a major blow to the feudal authority of the landlords and put them on the defensive. The landlords of this taluq came together and devised ways to face the new situation through spreading

rumours regarding the movement to divide and disrupt it. They also raised private armies. However, the threats of police arrests and the scheming of the landlords failed to demoralize the peasants.

An incident that took place in Shakalla village during this time gave a further boost to the movement. The peasants occupied land held illegally by the landlord of this village on a call given by the RCS. The landlord in retaliation got the leaders of RCS arrested. When this failed to have an effect on the agitating peasants, the police came to arrest a few more members of the RCS and restored the land to the landlord. On hearing this, eight hundred people of the village, particularly the women-folk surrounded the police and did not allow them to take away the arrested members of RCS. As a result, the DSP had to apologise before getting the police released from the 18-hour gherao.⁴⁹

Between mid 1977 and Aug 1978, we see the establishment and consolidation of RCS in about thirty

five to forty villages. However, it is after the public rally held in Jagityal on 7 September, 1978, and the subsequent firing by a landlord on the peasants of China-Metpalli village, that the movement became more intensified.

JAGITYAL RALLY - A Historic Landmark :

The COC-CPI(ML) organized a rally of peasants of this taluq on 7 September at Jagityal. About 40,000 peasants from one hundred and fifty villages attended this rally making it the first of its kind in this region.⁵⁰ Encouraged by the response of the peasants RCS gave a call to intensify the land occupation programme and for social-boycott of seventy selected landlords. Subsequently, RCSs were formed even in villages that were hitherto uninfluenced by the movement.

This Jagityal rally is historic in more than one sense. It inspired the peasants belonging even

to the neighbouring districts. It was this rally that was the inspiration behind the organization of public meetings by RCS in Paidipath^hi village of Warangal district and Lux~~g~~tipet of Adilabad district in the month of October, 1978.

With the growing strength and unity of the peasants and imposition of social boycott, many landlords fled to Karimnagar and Hyderabad. While a few stayed back and attempted to retain their hold with the help of the police, others accepted the terms and conditions of the RCS and stayed back in the villages.

Two incidents of firing at Chinometpally on the peasants, closely following the Jagityal Rally, and the growing militancy of the movement attracted state-wide attention and a swift response from the government.

The Government hastily ~~sent~~ hundreds of special armed police and district reserve ~~police~~ police and

unleashed a wave of attacks in the villages~~of~~ Jagityal and Korutla taluqs. Police camps were set up in 15 villages. About two thousand peasants from seventyfive villages in Jagityal Taluq were implicated in twenty false cases. About eight hundred peasants were arrested^{and} sent to far off jails in Warangal, Hyderabad, Nizammabad, etc., apart from illegally confining hundreds of others in police camps set up in the villages.⁵¹

A week after the incident, a similar incident took place in Lothunur village of Jagityal taluq. Palerus of this village struck work demanding an increase in wages and enforced a social boycott on the land-lord. This continued for a few days before they were called for negotiations. However, the landlord deceived the peasants and brought in the police. The police without any provocation, opened fire on the peasants which resulted in the killing of

one peasant and seriously injuring six others. Police followed this up by large-scale arrests. Some four hundred RCS members from five villages were implicated in false cases. Hundreds of young people fled the villages apprehending arrest. While this was the case, the version of this case which was floated by the government was that the police had resolved to firing only after they had failed to control the extremists from forcibly extracting money from the poor people.⁵²

The growing awareness of the peasantry and the organised challenges it posed to the feudal landordism in Siricilla and Jagityal taluqs, forced the government to think in terms of drastic action to suppress the movement. The government held serious deliberations with the landlords and police officials after the Chinamampally and Lotthunur incidents and as a sequel to this on 20th October 1978, came out with the notificiation of these taluqs as 'Disturbed' under the "Andhra Pradesh Suppression of

of Disturbances Act, 1948". This was put into effect retrospectively from October 4, 1978.⁵³

Thus, the liberal political atmosphere that came into existence in the wake of Janata party coming into power created favourable conditions for the advancement of the democratic movement for the time being. However as the democratic movement progressed threatening the dominance of the landed interests in these two taluqs, the state once again resorted to coercive measures. It is in this background that the imposition of 'Disturbed Areas Act' has to be viewed.

NOTES

1. Kranthi, Oct 1, 1977.
2. C.P. Reddy, "Agrarian Revolutionary Struggle and Elections", in C.P. Reddy's Selected Writings-Vol I (Hyderabad: Central Committee, CPI(ML), 1987), p.71.
3. Deccan Herald, 23 March, 1977.
4. G. Partha Sarathy and G. DasharathRama Rao, "Minimum wages legislation for agricultural labourers; A Review", Economic and Political Weekly, Sep 27, 1975.
5. See, Appendix II, Land Reforms in Andhra Pradesh (Andhra Pradesh: The Director, Information and Public Relations Dept , 1979).
6. T. Papi Reddy, "Agrarian Unrest in Telengana" in Rural Studies(Abstracts -Series-XII) (Kakatiya School of Public Administration, 1986) , p.4
7. See, A.P. Statistical Abstracts(Hyderabad: Bureau of Economics and Statistics, 1981), pp. 104-105.
8. See, "Agricultural Wages in India, 1967-68, in Directory of Economics and Statistics (Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, 1976), pp. 1-21.
9. See "Agricultural Wages in India, 1973-74 and 74-75", in Directorate of Economics and Statistics (Ministry of Agriculture), pp. 1-43.

10. Cited in G. Hargopal's introduction to K. Balagopal, Probing in the Political Economy of Agrarian Classes and Conflicts (Hyderabad: Perspectives, 1988).
11. See, "Police Terror in Telengana", Report of a fact-finding committee Appointed by the Committee for protection of Democratic Rights (Bombay:1980), p.3.
12. C.V. Subba Rao, "Resurgence of Peasant Movement in Telengana", EPW, Nov 18, 1978.
13. P. Sundaraiiah, Veera Telengana Viplava poratam - Gunapatalu (Vijayawada: Navashakti, 1987), p.332.
14. In the assembly elections held in November, 1989, CPI(ML) CP Reddy group, won this seat reducing the CPI to third position, Andhra Jyothi, Dec 12, 1989.
15. Cited in Siricilla Raitanga poratam - poorvapayalu, (Communist party of India(marxist-leninist) AP State Committee, 1979), p.4.
16. PCC- CPI(ML) Party Document, (State Committee, April, 1979), pp. 4-6.
17. Siricilla Raitanga Poratam poorvapayalu, op.cit., p.8.

18. Extraction of unpaid labour ~~is~~ carried in the form of taking one or two of every ten bundles of beedi leaves freely in the name of various duties.
19. K. Balagopal and M. Kodanda Ram Reddy, "Forever Disturbed - peasant struggle of Siricilla-Vemulawada", EPW, Nov 27, 1982, pp. 1897-1901.
20. Vimochana, Oct 15, 1985, p.7.
21. Siricilla Raithanga poratam - po^orvaparalu, op.cit., p.22.
22. "Konnetthutti Dharullo.....", Karimnagar Zilla Amaraverula Sankshiptha Jeevitha Charitra, (Karimnagar: District Committee CPI(ML), 1986), p.11.
23. Indian Express, Feb 10, 1978.
24. Siricilla Raithanga Poratam - Poorvaparalu, op.cit., p.23.
25. Vimochana, op.cit.
26. "Siricilla Raithanga poratam - poorvaparalu" , op.cit., pp. 27-29.
27. Ibid., p.29.
28. Details of land taken over by the peasants is as follows; Nulkalamarri - 62 acres; Dharmavaram - 60 acres; Avunoor - 43 acres; Gudem-100 acres; ~~M~~izamabad-75 acres; Shivangulapalli-75 acres; Cheekodu-120 acres; Chekkapalli-18 acres; Nimmappalli-17 acres , Vemulawada-43 acres etc. Ibid., pp . 30-34.

29. K. Balagopal, op.cit., p.31.
30. Vimochana, April 15, 1978.
31. Konnetthutti Dharulo op. cit., p.12.
32. Siricilla Raithanga..... op.cit., p.35.
33. "Prajalaku Vignapti - Andhra Pradesh Lo Paura
Hakkula Punaruddharanakai Poradandi " ,
(Vimochana, 1983), p.18.
34. Reserved police camps were set up in the villages
of Cheekodu, Padhira, Vemulawada, Kodumunja,
Konaraopet and Kistam Pet. See 'Siricilla
Raitanga....' op.cit., p.37.
35. The Hindu 21.10.78.
36. 'Nageti Challalo Ragilina Raitanga Poratam' ,
(Kranti, Secunderabad, 1981), p.22.
37. Kranti , Jan 1, 1978, p.11.
38. Ibid. , p.11.
39. Radical March, Feb 1985, p.8.

40. Seven taluqs in Srikakulam, five in Khammam, three in Warangal district and parts of Manthini Taluq in Karimnagar district were declared disturbed in 1969 and two taluqs in East Godavari district in 1976 to suppress the activities of Naxalites who were mainly organizing the tribals on a number of issues. See, "Disturbed Areas' - the roots of repression in Nagaland, Mizoram and Andhra Pradesh - Peoples union for democratic rights", in A.R. Desai(ed.), Violation of Democratic Rights in India, Vol I, (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1986), pp. 584-85.
41. The commission's proceedings thoroughly exposed the police of its involvement in the unlawful killings of the Naxalites and others. Keeping in view of the 'demoralizing effect' the commission's enquiry ^{on the police, the govt} asked the commission to conduct its proceedings 'in camera'. The Hindu, June 7, 1978.
42. Cited in "Repression in Andhra: Report of the fact finding committee appointed by PUCL & DR, Delhi State on 'Disturbed Areas', Mainstream, Jan 6, 1978, pp. 15-16.
43. Indian Express, Feb 1, 1979.
44. CPDR Report, op.cit.
45. Kranti, Jan 15, 1978, pp. 8-11.

46. 'Nageti Challslo Rytanga Poratam', op.cit., p.28.
47. Ibid., p.28.
48. Ibid., p.29.
49. Krantki, Sept9,1978, p.30.
50. Andhra Bhumi, Sep 9,1978.
51. Op.cit., "Nageti Challslo ".... op.cit., p.40.
52. Andhra Jyoti, Sep 29,1978.
53. The Hindu, Oct 10,1978.

CHAPTER - II

PEASANT MOVEMENT IN KARIMNAGAR (1978-82) :
EXPANSION AND CONSOLIDATION

In the preceding chapter we have traced the formative phase of the peasant movement in Karimnagar district as it grew in Jagityala and Siricilla taluqs. One sees the growth of peasant struggles in these regions in the mid 1977 period. The initial push to these struggles was given by the two naxalite parties, PCC-CPI(ML) and COC-CPI(ML) which started moving into this region, organising the peasantry around issues like abolition of 'Vetti' system, and other forms of feudal extortions and social oppression. Issues surrounding illegal occupations of land of different types have also been focussed through these struggles. As a result, by late 1978 there developed a strong force opposing the exploiting sections in the region. Side by side there were also increased cases of landlord violence and state repression of the struggling peasants and their political leadership. In the process of intensification of the struggles in these two taluqs, the state government came up with the 'Disturbed Areas Act' to put down the movement.

Inspite of the police repression that was let loose upon the peasantry and the naxalite activists in the wake of this Act, the movement continued to spread to other taluqs like Peddapally, Huzurabad, Metpally and Manthini as well.

The present chapter is devoted to trace the spread of the movement in the post 1978 period. The second section of this chapter traces the socio-economic conditions in the areas where the movement spread, while section III looks at the nature of the struggles and the state response to them.

II

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE AREAS OF THE STRUGGLE

While in the preceding period the movement emerged in the taluqs of Jagityala and Siricilla in this period it spread to four more taluqs namely, Peddapally, Metpally, Manthini, Huzurabad,

thus covering almost the whole of Karimnagar district.¹

Peddapalli which is in the northern part of Karimnagar district, produces coal, power, fertiliser and cement. Major crops are paddy and millets which are produced by traditional production techniques.² Metapally and Manthini fall under forest areas.³ The production relations in these areas are largely feudal where the surplus is appropriated by the landlords. Most of the working people are not tenant peasants but feudal farm servants who are at the beck and call of the landlord any time. A significant feature of the feudal exploitation is the Vetti system where the peasants and other sections have to do forced free labour to the landlord.⁴ Some studies on Peddapalli showed the loopholes in land legislation enabling landlords to control hundreds of acres of land. Around 24 top landlords in the taluq owned land from 75-400 acres.⁵ This shows, for

example, the concentration of land in the hands of a few and the power they wield over all sections of the peasantry. Apart from Vetti or forced labour, there are other forms of social oppression, the most significant example being sexual abuse of women of the toiling sections by the landlords. This was more in the case of women belonging to the lowest castes.⁶ The landlord subjected the toiling masses to a variety of extortions such as annual payment of taxes by caste groups to the landlord, giving gifts to him on occasions when a family has a marriage ceremony, lending cattle, ploughs etc to till the landlord's lands and for his transport, and restrictions on landless labour to move away from the village for working elsewhere.⁷ The other problems were forcible occupation of lands belonging to the peasants by the landlords, imposition of fines on people on grounds of breaking the customs and conventions at their discretion.⁸

It is in such an exploitative situation, the peasants and other toiling sections became receptive towards the moves for mobilizing them by the naxalite groups by 1978.

III

In the post 1978 phase , the agrarian struggle first started in Peddapally. The most important reason may be the diffusion of the struggles taking place in Jagityal and Siricilla taluqs which we traced in the preceding chapter.⁹ While Peddapally was canal irrigated, agriculture remained by and large underdeveloped with little change in cropping pattern.¹⁰ With heavy concentration of land in the hands of a few landlords, around 30 percent of people remained landless. The agricultural labourers were paid low wages. Various forms of feudal exploitations like Vetti and sexual abuse prevailed here too.

Initially, the struggle started in the villages of Kannala and Ranapuram under the direction of the Rytu-coolie Sangham.¹¹ The struggle at this point was organised around the issues of recovery of the wastelands grabbed by the landlords and the demand for return of money appropriated by the landlords in the form of fees, fines and donations. The people forcibly occupied around 300 acres of waste land held by the landlords.¹² The success of this struggle resulted in the spread ^{of} the struggle to other villages like Palitem, Racchopalle, Dondagaturti in the same taluq.¹³ Similar struggles could be seen in the villages of Kachorlapalle, Kukkala-Guduru in this period.¹⁴ The most important means the leadership of these struggles followed at this stage were social boycott of landlords and resorting to strikes.¹⁵

Around the same time, struggles were led in some villages of Gopalpur, Joopaka, Madipalli etc in Huzurabad taluq. Here the leadership was taken by COC-CPI(ML) group which led public demonstrations, made the peasants ^cstrike work, and subjected the landlords to a social boycott. Public meetings were held demanding increase in wages of farm servants and issuing pattas to peasants tilling lands. The landlords tried to retaliate by attacking demonstrators and activists. However, agricultural wages had to be increased from Rs 60 to Rs 150 per month, around 200 acres were forcefully occupied and redistributed.¹⁶

In Peddapalli by November 1978, around 600 acres of public land were forcefully occupied and redistributed, and also secured a wage hike in about forty villages under the direction of RCS and RYL.¹⁷

As the movement thus started spreading, the retaliation by the landlords too increased.

One could see a rise in landlord atrocities in villages like Roginedu, Putnur in Paddapally and Gopalpur and Modipally in Huzurabad whenever the peasants took out rallies and demanded hike in wages.¹⁸ Protest rallies against such landlord attacks were organised. The landlords now began to take the police help in tackling such struggles. By early 1979, police camps began to be set up in areas where the struggles were witnessed.¹⁹ Large scale arrests of activists and peasants from about 35 villages were undertaken by the police, the houses of some of them were set ablaze and property destroyed.²⁰ Such police brutality forced many of the peasants to flee from the villages in Peddapally and Siricilla Taluqs.²¹

1979-1980: Around this time the Government came out with "Andhra Pradesh Suppression of Disturbances Act", on the 20th of October 1978; the two taluqs of

Siricilla and Jagityala were notified as "disturbed" by the State Government under the new Act. Under this Act, offences against person and property, which in the normal course entail a maximum punishment of life imprisonment, in the disturbed area attract capital punishment. Even the abetment of these offences is punishable with death sentence.²²

Officials are fully protected against any kind of prosecution or legal proceedings. Any body in the rank of Magistrate or any police officer not below the rank of SI can open fire or order opening of fire.²³ This Act provided legal justification for suppression of peasant movement. In practice, the Act has been enforced in the state every time the big landlord interests have feared an erosion of their power and despotic authority in the country side. Landlords, who earlier fled to the cities, returned back to the villages and began to be aided by the police, who set up 150 police camps in the district.²⁴

Peasants who were earlier confident of resisting the onslaught or assault of landlords on their own now had to face combined attack from the police and the landlords. When many men folk fled the villages, women organised under the 'Raitu Mahila Sanghams' undertook the burden of resisting the attacks of the landlords. In the process women were physically abused and their property destroyed.²⁵ In the forest regions of Siricilla taluq people who occupied public lands previously were forcibly evicted once again. Wages, previously increased, were brought down to the earlier levels.

Under the conditions, the PCC-CPI(ML), active in this area, took up various issues from March 1979. To avoid unnecessary police repression and to consolidate itself among different sections of the villages, issues like irregularities in providing bank loans, supply of power to the farmers

lowering ^{interest} rates or landless, exploitative practices of revenue officials, irregularities in civil supplies were taken up to mobilize middle and rich peasants along with the poor peasants. In the process the party has weakened the hold of the landlords on these sections.²⁶

Struggles were also organised on issues like eviction of landlords from the illegally held public lands, provision of house sites to the poor and the corruption of police in the villages.

One notable feature of the struggles of this period was that, ^{though} the struggles were started on one or two issues concerning an individual or a specific group, ^{within no time the whole village was involved.}²⁷ The landlords, from their side, attempted to divide the people on the lines of caste and community.

The naxalite activists, however, were selectively eliminated first in Nalgonda, Warangal,

and then in Karimnagar by 1982. Now PCC-CPI(ML) took up the task of exposing the acts of police repression through public meetings and demonstrations in villages.²⁸

In the 1980 general elections the CPI(ML) started fielding candidates. But the police continued to threaten the voters from voting for these candidates.²⁹

Starting from this point a new phase of repression has been unleashed. Side by side the government stepped up its propaganda through the official media and the press against the Naxalites. In spite^{of} all such odds, the struggle in Siricilla against feudal domination, exploitative practices, used every instance of police repression for mobilizing and further consolidating the peasant movement. In the process it succeeded in securing a fair deal to the peasants as regards wages and acquisition of banjar lands, regulating civil supplies

and minimising corruption. Vetti and other feudal exactions came to end in a number of villages.

1980-82 : While the struggles in Jagityal and Siricilla Taluqs attracted enough attention after these areas were notified as disturbed and police repression was used to suppress the movement, the struggles in Pedapally, Metpally and Huzurabad did not attract much attention, though started later in 1978.

In Peddapally struggles were started in the villages of Konnala, Ramapuram which later on spread to a number of villages resulting in the formation of RCS and RYL in the region.³⁰ The sudden spurt in the peasant struggle in 1979 took the police by surprise, and they reacted strongly by arresting and implicating hundreds of peasants in false cases. The police repression centred around the villages of Palilem, Dongaturti, and Ramayyapalem. As already noted earlier, struggles were carried out

out in Kukkaluguda, Raganedu and Putnur villages of Peddapally Taluq against the landlords and arrack contractors but achieved limited success.

In these circumstances, the landlords followed suit of others in other taluqs and called for police help. Police camps were set up in villages ^{and the poor} came to be increasingly threatened and implicated in false cases.³¹ Administratively, the Government took measures to reorganise the Apkari system so as to reduce the interference of RYL and RCS.³²

While the police repression became a part of the life of the people³³, the struggle too qualitatively developed from highly specific issues concerning a few individuals to the general issues. Panchayats were set up to settle the disputes in the villages without any manipulation from the landlords.³⁴

By 1981-82, struggles were organised against the Apkari(~~excise~~) contracts as existing then.

This opposition stemmed from the fact that a lot of money was flowing out of the villages into the pockets of the Government and contractors. The RCS and RYL forced the contractors to contribute significantly to the village common fund^{to be} used for the development of the villages.³⁵

In the mean time, the police camps set up in villages in the name of preserving law and order became centres of torture and corruption.³⁶ For the people in these areas torture in police stations became common.³⁷ Fake "encounter killings" started in Karimnagar in 1982, as in the case of Devender Reddy, a local organiser.³⁸

While such killings demoralised the movement temporarily, the spirit of resistance that developed over the years through struggle once again survived. The peasants now not only fought against the landlords but also fought against police["]excesses.

In some villages like Gudem the people enforced a total boycott, stopping water, firewood and services forcing them to lift the camp.³⁹ But, this did not end the problem, it was retaliated with the opening of more camps in many other villages. The party in its turn, by the end of 1982, formed Dalams or armed bands to protect against police and landlord violence.

IV

The expansion of the peasant struggles in several taluqs of Karimnagar district during 1978-82, as traced in this chapter, reveals a broad pattern.

While the basic problem surrounds the land question, the problem is not merely economic. One sees that landlord's control over vast areas of land only enabled them to more easily control other spheres of life in the predominantly agrarian

society. Thus the phenomena studied also surrounds aspects of social life of almost all sections of the rural society, even those of the village professions not directly dependent on land.

On the economic plane, exploitation can be seen in the appropriation^{of} surplus labour of the land^{by} the landlords, as also the alienation of the peasantry from their lands. Similarly the peasantry and other sections are subjected to various forms of social oppression like Vetti and other feudal extortions.

Under these conditions the peasants and other toiling masses in Karimnagar district came to be increasingly organised to fight against landlord exploitation. Thus, in the initial stages, struggles were surrounding issues like increase in wages of farm servants, recovery of illegally occupied lands from the landlords, recovery of wealth accumulated

through feudal extortions etc. The means followed in the early period between 1978-80 was those of demonstrations, strikes etc and still were able to achieve some demands.

But soon, the spreading of the struggle to other areas had made the landlords nervous and they began to attack the struggling masses and their leadership by the 1980s. In addition, the government began to lend support to the landlords by providing police forces with extra powers to tackle the activists and those following them through invoking the Disturbed Areas Act. As a result, one sees during 1981-82 the increasing number of police camps throughout Karimnagar district, terrorizing the common man .

However, the struggle continued, and began to acquire new forms according to the changed conditions. The naxalite groups now started increasing their

demands towards wider issues like lowering arrack prices proper remuneration for beedi-leaf pickers etc and in many cases came to use their force to achieve their demands from the landlords and arrack contractors.

By 1982, the state repression of the struggles went a step further in Karimnagar with the ushering in of extermination of naxalite activists through 'encounter killings'.

A point that emerges strongly is that inspite of all the attempts to suppress the struggles through repression, the state failed in its attempts. This is because the source of these struggles lie in the feudal exploitation, which they wanted to eliminate. The state by failing to implement the necessary reforms only allowed these conditions to persist. The support extended by the law enforcement machinery to the landlords reinforced the status quo . As a result the same conditions which provided fertile ground for these struggles to grow, allowed the movement to persist beyond 1982 too. The question

as to how the movement took shape during
1982-84, and how the state responded will
be dealt with in the next chapter.

NOTES

1. In 1978, Karimnagar district consisted of seven taluqs, namely, Metpally, Jagityala, Siricilla, Peddapally, Manthini, Huzurabad and Karimnagar. It was only after 1980 that some more taluqs were added. See Nageti Challalo Ragilina Raitanga Poratam (Secunderabad, Kranti, 1981), p.85.
2. K. Bala Gopal, Probing in the political economy of agrarian classes and conflicts(Hyderabad, Perspectives, 1988), p.36.
3. Nageti Challalo Ragilina Raitanga Poratam, op.cit., p.85.
4. Ibid., p.36.
5. "Police terror in Telengana", Report of a fact-finding committee appointed by the Committee for the protection of Democratic Rights(Bombay, 1980), p.7.
6. K. Bala Gopal, op.cit., p.37.
7. Nageti Challalo.... op.cit., pp. 96-101 .
8. Ibid., pp. 102-103.
9. K. Bala Gopal, op.cit., p.37.
10. See Agriculture Support Programme: Pochampad project, Command Area Development Department, AP (Hyderabad, 1974), p.60

11. Kranti, (1 -15^{oct} 1978), p.5.
12. Ibid., p.5
13. Radical March (March, 1982), p.1.
14. K. Bala Gopal, op.cit., p.38.
15. Nagetichallalo..., op.cit., p.46.
16. KonnethhUtthi Darullo.. District Committee, CPI(ML), Karimnagar, 1986, p.15.
17. Nageti challalo... op.cit., p.46
18. K. BalaGopal, op.cit., p.38
19. Kranti, March 1-15 , 1979, p.12.
20. "Police Terror in Telengana", op.cit., p.16.
21. "Repression in Andhra", A Report of Fact Finding Committee Appointed by ~~PHCL~~ & DR on "Disturbed Areas" in Jagityala and Siricilla taluqs (Karimnagar, AP), Mainstream, January 6, 1979, p.17.
22. Ibid., p.17.
23. Ibid., p.18.
24. A.R. Desai, ed., Violation of Democratic Rights in India , (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1986), p.606.

25. Sudesh Vaid, "Breaking Fear's Silence,
Manushi, April 1979.
26. Konnetthutti Darullo... op.cit., p.12.
27. Ibid., p.13.
28. Prajalaku Vignapthi, Andhra Pradesh Lo
Powra Hakkula Punaruddharanakai Poradandi,
(Vimochana Publications, 1983), p.23.
29. 17 Samvatsarala Godavari Loya. Godavari
Loya Prathigatanodhyama Vijayalu,
Vimochana, 15-10-1985, p.7.
30. Radical March, op.cit., p.2.
31. Kranti (1.Feb80), p.46.
32. Swechha, December, 1984, p.3.
33. Karimnagar - Adilabad Raithanga Poratalu
Vardhillali (Kranti Publications, Secunderabad,
1963), p.18.
34. Police Terror in Telengana , op.cit. p.19 .
35. K.G. Kannabiran, "The police and the
people: who are the Real Extremists?"
Indian Express, Dec 11, 1983.
36. Emergency Tharuvatha 'encounter' Hatyalu ,
(Hyderabad, APCLC), P.15.

37. Kranti, July 15, 1982, p.3.
38. Radical March, op.cit., p.2.
39. Kranti, Op.cit., , p.3.

CHAPTER - III

PEASANT MOVEMENT IN KARIMNAGAR - 1982-84 :

SHIFTS IN STATE'S RESPONSE

The preceding chapter shows the growth of the peasant struggles between 1978 and 1982 in Karimnagar district and the way the landed interests and the state responded to them. This chapter is devoted to show the intensification of the struggles even in the face of repression during 1982-84. This helps us in two ways. One, it offers us an opportunity to see the shifts in state's response under a different government, that of the TDP in the state. And second, some of the changes in the levels of mobilization and protest and also the perception of the state's response by the naxalite groups spearheading the struggles in the district can be seen. Besides , some broad patterns emerging from the various incidents surrounding certain issues can be traced. Before doing this in the last section of this chapter, it is essential to look in the next section the general developments during 1982-84 in the various parts of Karimnagar district.

II

CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT AND ITS IMMEDIATE ATTITUDE
TOWARDS THE NAXALITES

The coming into power of TDP under the leadership of N.T. Rama Rao in 1982 effected certain changes in the political scenario of Andhra Pradesh. Having come to power within a year of its inception, the organizational structure of the party was not very strong which made NTR to rely on different sections of society for support in the initial stages. As a part of this attempt, NTR appealed to different naxalite parties to extend their support. Perhaps, with the idea of appeasing them, NTR called the naxalites 'patriots' and 'selfless' persons working for the upliftment of the downtrodden.¹ This, however, did not alter the perception of the naxalites regarding their understanding of TDP as just another landlord - bourgeois party, and campaigned for boycott of 1983 Assembly elections.²

The consistent work done by the naxalites of the two groups - COG-CPI(ML), now called peoples war group, and the PCC-CPI(ML) for the last five years widened their mass base in almost all Taluqs of Karimnagar. It is this position of strength which was recognised by the NTR, and wanted to neutralise them if not win them over during the Assembly elections of January, 1983.

After coming to power, NTR changed his stance criticising the naxalites for disturbing law and order and threatened them with severe action. In the first three months NTR, however, seemed to have taken a soft stand releasing some naxalite prisoners and hinting that government would denotify the areas declared "disturbed" by the previous government.³ This was only short-lived and soon repression and encounter killings were resumed.

Issues Focussed For Struggle During 1983-84

The issues common to all areas around which struggles were organised came to centre round

exploitation by the arrack contractors and for rise in agricultural wages.

Arrack Struggles : The government draws a major source of its revenue every year from the proceedings of the excise contracts. A majority of the poor in Telengana consume arrack. The gradual hike effected in the arrack prices led to massive exploitation of the poor, as they are neither allowed to prepare their own variety of arrack nor the prices kept in control. The contract system that was prevalent ensured the contractors a huge margin of profits. In Peddapalli taluq for instance, the contractors got a profit of Rs 1,53,19,911 after all the expenses and this amounted to Rs 75,043 per every village. While the government sold the arrack at Rs 6.50 per litre to the contractors in Peddapally in 1983, they in turn sold it for Rs 25 in the villages leaving them a huge margin of profits.⁴ It is against this background that the RCS and RYL took struggles demanding the reduction of arrack prices.

Various struggles were organised in 56 villages of Jagityal, 19 villages of Malgala and 166 villages in Siricilla, Huzurabad, Metpalli and Manthini. Various sections of the people in the villages including middle and rich peasants were mobilised to collectively pressurise the contractors. In a number of villages people stopped taking arrack, refused to rent homes to arrack contractors and as the struggle progressed people observed Bandhs. Women responded very strongly as they were the most affected in financial and psychological terms due to the habit of arrack consumption by their men and majority supported the idea of a complete ban on liquor sales. In a number of villages contractors attacked the villagers with their goons. The people protested by spilling over the arrack and causing losses to the contractors. In a number of villages police came in aid of the contractors forcing the people to buy and consume the arrack. Police camps were set up and those actively involved in the struggles were arrested. In spite of the repression the peasants successfully fought and

forced the contractors to bring down the arrack prices by Rs 5-8 in a number of villages. The police who also benefitted from these contracts in terms of the large amount of money that they received in the form of bribes, mamools etc reacted rather strongly and in a number of villages foisted false cases against those who took the lead in this struggle.⁵

Struggle against illegal exactions: The RCS took up struggles against forcible exactions of forest officials from poor peasants in a number of villages in Jagityal taluq.⁶ The forest officials reacted by refusing the peasants to pick firewood, allow their cattle for grazing and confiscation of timber from the peasants. However peasants persisted and put an end to the illegal exactions. RCS also mobilized the poor in the villages of Sultanpur taluq and forced the landlords to pay back the money extorted on various counts as well as the money swindled from the common fund was collected back.⁷

Wage Struggles: In the month of May (during which the annual contracts for agricultural farm servants are fixed and renewed) the RCS took up the issue of agricultural wages and mobilised thousands of PALERU's (Annual farmsservants) and agricultural labourers demanding an increase of wages. This struggle was carried out through out the district and in a number of villages peasants led by RCS struck work demanding a hike in wages, and reduction of work hours etc. The peasants secured an increase of Rs 400-1000.⁸

In tandem with its earlier approach police has reacted generally by stepping up its activities of arresting and implicating active participants in these struggles. Combing and surveillance activities apart, the frequency of raids and also attacks by 'anti-Naxalite' squads increased. In Sultanabad taluq an activist Bhupathi Reddi was murdered. The police extended their help by providing armed bodyguard and setting up a camp in

the village. While two activists were shot dead in Warangal and Adilabad during this period no such case was reported in Karimnagar and general repression continued. There is no evidence of a drastic increase of repression of the movement.

The 2nd RCS State Conference and Subsequent Repression

Following the 2nd RCS state conference in Karimnagar in the last week of May 83 and the growing strength of the movement in Northern Telengana, the state government intensified its repression by inducting 2 CRPF battalions and APSP police and systematically violated civil liberties. From Jagityal rally held in Sept 78 to the 2nd RCS state conference held in Karimnagar in May 83, we see rapid growth of the movement inspite of calculated repression unleashed by the government. However it is only after~~the~~ the 2nd RCS conference that the state government could control the growth of movement in

Karimnagar, though it rapidly spread in Adilabad and Nizamabad districts.

The RCS in Karimnagar extensively campaigned to mobilise peasants for the 2nd state RCS conference amidst landlord-police attacks. In a number of places campaign members were attacked for mobilising peasants. A few days before the conference police toured villages and warned people not to attend the conference. On the day the conference started, poor people coming from villages were not allowed to enter Karimnagar and most of those who somehow arrived were not easily allowed to go to the venue. More than 30,000 people participated in a rally taken out in the town followed by a public meeting.⁹ The success of the conference inspite of efforts by the police to disrupt it was viewed seriously and ^{it} is after this conference that we see an increase in police camps in the villages of Karimnagar. This was followed by the state government's appeal for an additional 22 crore rupees and 2 battalions of CRPF to control the

growing 'extremist' activity in the state.

By Aug 83 more than 37 camps were set up in the villages of Jagityal , Metpalli, Manthini, Peddapalli Huzurabad and Vemulawada. Police camps were set up in 11 villages of Jagityala alone.¹⁰ In the months of July-Aug raids were carried out for more than ^{to} 2,5 times in 110 villages including 32 in Jagityal and 15 in Peddapalli.¹¹ Large scale destruction of property belonging to members of RCS, tortures, landlords attacks and combing operations of 'anti-naxalite' squads became common, creating an atmosphere of terror among the people. Police also mobilised lumpens, landlords and established a net work of 'informers' who would keep the police informed of the movements, whereabouts of the leading activists. Particularly landlords were once again asked as previously , to raise their own gangs and suppress the peasants if they organise themselves.

The government alleged that some Naxalite groups have created serious law and order problems in their pursuit of creating 'liberated zones' and 'Red terror' in chosen pockets of Telengana districts including Karimnagar.¹² Apart from conducting determined and well organised attacks on the so called 'extremists' 'to ensure safety of common man' the government in September , announced its intention to request 2 battalions of CRPF to "root out the extremists".¹³ The government even contemplated a ban on all organisations connected with the naxalite groups.¹⁴

The state government's alarm is understandable considering the strength of the peasant movement and the effective challenge posed to the landlords. In a number of villages in Bheemdevarapally . . . Huzurabad, Jagityal, Peddapalli, ^{taluqs,} RCS mobilised peasants against landlords and occupied illegally held lands and public funds. Landlords of six villages were organised under "Ryotu Sanghams" (peasant association) by the MLA of Huzurabad and a block ex-president

met the CM demanding police protection from Naxalites. They alleged that Naxalites are creating chaos and lawlessness in the villages, resorting to violence and committing atrocities against common people.¹⁵ The police reacted against this by arresting peasants from 12 villages and foisted false cases and destruction of crops and property of a number of villagers. The police felt that the crime of the peasants organising and struggling for increase in wages deserved this punishment. What caused more anger to the police was the punishment meted out to the informers by the peasants for furnishing information and working in connivance with the landlords.

BJP and Landlord Collusion: Apart from the attacks of landlords and the police were the attacks by the BJP and its sister organisations on peasants in ^{all} most all the taluqs of Karimnagar and particularly in Metpalli and Jagityal. Members belonging to these

organizations unleashed a systematic propaganda and slander against the movement through their party organ. 'Jagruti', projecting the peasant movement in a negative light. Apart from helping the police in attacking peasants they also acted as informers. Lawyers who take up the cases of peasants and naxalite activists are particularly attacked and threatened by these sections. In all they killed 8 RYL, RCS activists and also shot an APCLC activist from Jagityal for taking up the cases of RCS activists. In Dec 83 ABVP mobilised students from Karimnagar (mostly from upper caste and class background) and took out a rally demanding deployment of CRPF and liberal grant of arms licences.¹⁶ It is interesting that in Telengana and particularly in Karimnagar district BJP and ABVP emerged very strong after the peasant movement started in 1978. One convincing explanation that has been given to the rapid rise of RSS, BJP and ABVP in this district is the coherent and strong

organisational structures that these had (which is must to fight particularly in conflict situation), Their ability to fight ideologically and mobilise the rich against the naxalites, attacked many landlords and their children to it.¹⁷ Many a times these groups worked as a supplementary to the police force. The BJP , police landlord collusion is not specific to Karimnagar. Even in Warangal where the radicals emerged strong, the same combination of forces operated against them.

It is against these attacks that the killing of two BJP activists took place in early 84 in Jagityal raising a furore in the assembly. The opposition demanded arms to counter naxalites and deployment of more police forces. The demands of these sections had further legitimised the police excesses on the peasants. NTR assured that arms would be given to persons of 'character' . The government said that there was a steady increase in

the terrorist and violent activities of extremists and also considerable increase in the open and underground activities of various extremist groups and their front organisations.¹⁸ The measures taken to tackle them were (1) Deployment of armed police (2) patrolling of the effected villages (3) Hunt for underground cadres etc and an arrest of 1397 extremists.

The growing expenditure on police force each successive year worried the democate sections. For 1984-85, the budgetary demand for police administration almost touched 100 crores.¹⁹

To legitimise the repression and growing public expenditure on the police the government resorted to lies and propaganda. While the CM said the extremists committed 11 murders, the DIG gave the number as 20 and an other official quoting press reports gave the number as 26.²⁰ The government set up a propaganda unit to campaign against naxalites. Mimicry artists were employed to counter anti-establishment preachings of

naxalites in the villages.²¹ Dramas were also composed by the DIG and staged under heavy police security projecting naxalites as 'murderers' and 'robbers'. The services of cultural and information department were pressed into operation and more than Rs 90,000 was spent in 1984 alone on these activities.²²

Growing State Repression - Mass Mobilisation Against the Police

With the increasing state repression the open activities have been reduced and with this the underground activity increased. Though, not a single encounter took place in 1984, other forms of repression like custodial deaths, police firings, raids, implication of activists in false cases increased manifold.²³ Public opinion was mobilised through 'Bandhs' against repression, setting up of para military forces in villages. Seminars, public meetings, demonstrations and rallies were other forms of protest adopted by different naxalite parties and other democratic sections. The Andhra Pradesh civil liberties committee, played a crucial role in exposing the police excesses through its fact finding reports and public meetings. The APCLC filed a writ petition in Supreme Court for an enquiry

into the excesses committed in police stations. A list of 530 cases of police excesses were submitted by the APCLC. It also challenged the constitutional validity of the government's act in setting up the police camps in about 100 villages and deployment of paramilitary forces. APCLC filed cases against the police for illegal detention of number of RCS activists.²⁴ With the increasing repression and opposition's failure to check the government excesses the responsibility of exposing the institutionalised repression of the state and mobilisation of public opinion fell on organisations like APCLC and at the national level PUDR and PUCL.

It is the expose of the state's unconstitutional acts and landlord-police-government nexus by the APCLC that has become an eye sore to the government and particularly to the police. It is APCLC alongwith other democratic sections, even CPI(ML), that actively mobilised public opinion against the arbitrary removal of NTR's government in Sept 1984.²⁵ However, the same

APCLC is consistently branded as a front organisation of Naxalites by the BJP and the government and its activists attacked. Since NTR came to power public meetings by APCLC were virtually banned in the four districts of Telengana and particularly in Karimnagar.

Developmental programmes and Ameliorative Measures :
Only a Facade

While the government initiated some positive measures in response to the unrest in tribal areas the response to the movement in the plains came in the form of coercion. The nature of the problems in tribal areas - land alienation, denial of access to forest produce and underdevelopment of agriculture coupled with the indifference on the one side and exploitation on the other by the bureaucracy made it easy for naxalites to penetrate ^{into} the tribal areas.

The relative absence of hegemony of the state over the tribals was also an important reason for the

naxalites to gain ground easily among the tribals. With its initial response of full scale repression proving counter productive and realising the difficulty in either weaning over tribals or suppressing them, The state introduced some ameliorative programmes. These however did not touch the heart of the problem - the problem of land.

Contrary to its response in tribal areas, in the plains, starting from '78 we see a systematic campaign and attacks on peasants agitating for their basic democratic rights. Here, very few developmental programmes were initiated as a specific response to this movement. Even the measures introduced as a part of package of development programmes sponsored by the Central Government were not implemented properly. A study conducted by Dr. Bal Ramulu regarding the implementation of IRDP programme shows that the target levels achieved was as low as 0.5% for Karimnagar district.²⁶ Another study conducted

by him regarding the implementation of SFDA shows that in four years of its functioning it could identify only 2.38% of agricultural labourers of which just 0.39% were covered.²⁷ In the adjacent Warangal district while the district administration selected three villages to implement developmental programmes as a specific response to unrest no such thing was attempted in Karimnagar district.²⁸

III

From what has been presented in Section II one can see that the struggles have spread to almost all the taluqs of Karimnagar district. In fact the spread in each taluq is also quite considerable. This can be seen from the fact that struggles occurred during this period in 56 villages in Jagityal, 19 villages of Molyala, 166 villages in Siricilla, Huzurabad, Metapally and Manthini together.

As far as the issues mainly focussed are concerned, struggles are seen to be directed against

illegal extortions, " arrack struggles" and wage struggles, and struggles against occupation of lands by landlords. On all these fronts limited successes were achieved, inspite of the heavy repression they had to face. One sees that around the beginning of 1983, the state government called for induction of para military forces and ~~the~~ setting up additional police camps to tackle the naxalite problem. In such a situation, the struggles also protested against such induction^{of} armed forces. A point that can be seen is that while separate struggles were launched surrounding each of the issues raised above, there were occasions where all the issues were collectively dealt with.

The proclamations and performance of the NTR government during 1983-84 show that in practice very little difference in attitude towards naxalites can be perceived from the previous period. While initially NTR tried to appease the naxalites by

calling them 'patriots' and 'selfless people' working for the upliftment of the downtrodden in big election meetings, after coming to power he acted quite squarely in dealing with them. All the more, the repression increased quantitatively and qualitatively. While on the one hand, the number of police camps came to be heavily increased, for the first time para military forces were brought in to deal with unrest in Karimnagar . Even in dealing with issues like arrack struggles, the new government failed to bring about any changes in the arrack policy and reacted promptly in sending in police forces in cases where peasants were forcibly recovering the illegally occupied lands from the landlords.

Another interesting phenomenon that emerges during the period in terms of state response is the setting up of propaganda units by the government to campaign against naxalites, and also the usage of 'culture sphere' to spread anti-naxalite sentiments.

Coming to the aspect of state repression, it is evident that repression increased given the increase in police camps and the induction of para military forces. Other than stating the fact that such an increase in forces occurred during this period, there is something more interesting one can derive logically from this fact. One can see that the increase in camps and induction of para military forces was necessitated by the large scale spread of unrest as well as its intensification in the district. Besides, inspite of the continuous increase in repression, the struggles showed no signs of decline, If anything they seem to increase. This, in a way, will have a negative impact in the long run for the government itself, as the increasing police repression in their day to day lives can make the people see the state as a mere repressive agency failing to look after their welfare.

NOTES

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3. Indian Express, Sept 3, 1983.
4. KRANTI, May 1, 1983, pp5.
5. Ibid., pp. 15-17.
6. KRANTI, April 15, 1983.
7. Munumunduku Saguthunna Raitanga Poratalu - Chuttu Muduthunna Prabhuthva Nirbhanda Khanda (Krant Publication, Secunderabad, 1983), p.64.
8. While in some areas like Huzurabad the contract value was increased from Rs 1200 to 2000 , in some other areas like Sultanabad, it was increased from Rs 1600 to 1800.
9. Munumunduku Saguthunna Raitanga Poratalu, op.cit., p.23.
10. Ibid., p.97.
11. Ibid., pp. 100-101.
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13. K.G. Kannabiran, "Who are the real extremists?"
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14. Eenadu (Daily) , (Sep 11, 1983).
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p.41.

CONCLUSION

Agrarian unrest and struggles have become the hallmark of Telengana since the 1940s. Movements emerged giving a direction to such unrest and struggles and subsided, and reemerged in the last four decades. The resilience apparent in such a continuation of unrest and struggles over the years has to be traced to the largely unrelenting survival of feudal relations, practices and oppression, and the failure of developmental policies undertaken by the Indian state to make the necessary impact on those conditions. Such a state of affairs, in addition to the fact of the strength of communist and radical left leadership in Telengana, logically resulted in unrest and struggles on the political plane fighting against those socio-economic conditions of exploitation and oppression. It is in this light one can understand the large scale agrarian unrest and struggle under the naxalite leadership in the districts of Karimnagar, Adilabad, Warangal and Khammam in the 1970s and 1980s.

The preceding chapters have been an attempt to trace the growth , expansion and consolidation of the struggle in Karimnagar district between 1977-84, and see the manner in which the leadership coped with the shifts in the responses of the landlords and the state towards the struggles in the course of the movement. We might briefly show the nature of the movement, its composition, the extent of achievements, the nature of landlords reactions, and the manner in which the state responded to the entire phenomena as an overview.

Nature of the Movement

Basically, the movement in Karimnagar, and other parts of Telengana, is centred round the question of land, and the exploitation and oppression stemming from the largely feudal relations and practices prevalent there. The struggle included wide sections ranging from the small and medium peasants, a point that can be seen from demands

such as remunerative prices to the agricultural produce and adequate payment to the farm servants and landless labour and the emphasis on issues like recovery of forced occupation of land for redistribution, rise in wages and fixed work-hours in the case of work on land and Beedi-leaf picking. Besides, the fight for ending social oppression continuing through Vetti and other feudal exactions, as also fight against rising arrack prices, shows the attempts at carrying the entire toiling and exploited rural sections alongwith the movement.

Coming to political leadership, it is the naxalite groups of PCC-CPI(ML) and COG-CPI(ML) which have been active in mobilizing and organizing these sections against the landlords. They tried to politically unite the various exploited sections and give them an identity through such institutional means as the Rytu Coolie Sanghams(RCS), Mahila Sanghams and organisations like the

Radical Youth League(RYL) . In the initial stages when the movement started in Jagityala and Siricilla around 1977-78 the methods of struggle followed were strikes, demonstrations, social boycott of landlords and public meetings, when the focus was on issues like ending Vetti and increasing wages. Gradually, as the landlords stepped up their attacks on the leadership and the followers, they also resorted to killing the landlords and forcible occupation of lands for redistribution. Soon they felt the necessity to widen their base and hence started focussing on issues like beedi leaf picking and arrack prices by 1979-80, by which time the movement began spreading to other toluqs of Peddapally, Manthini and Huzurabad. By 1982 one sees the state repression of the activists on a large scale , and aiding the landlords. What is surprising is the continuous spread of unrest and struggles to almost all areas of Karimnagar by 1983 even in the face of increasing police repression, which perhaps

necessitated the induction of para military forces by the state government.

Nature of Landlord Violence and State Repression

In the face of a threat to their very survival, and given the erosion of the basis of the traditional stranglehold over the various rural sections, as the struggles against exploitation spread, the landlords tried to suppress them through attacks on the activists and the followers.

This took the form of physical attacks on the activists and their families and also the destruction of property. One sees a tendency where inspite of yielding to certain demands like wagherise in the face of pressure, they invariably took the help of police and soon retracted on the demands they yielded. Besides, when the state government promulgated the Supression of Disturbances Act in 1978-79 and implemented it, it only helped the landlords in suppressing the struggles. But by

1983, they could no longer force the Vetti system or other feudal exactions in many areas, and in some cases had to flee the villages to the cities.

The state from its side, had right from the beginning aided the interests of the landlords through police repression of the struggles. It had continuously increased the number of police camps in the district, and conducted attacks and raids on the activists and their families. The spread of police camps only brought with it a reign of terror.

Achievements and Limitations

Looking at the way the movement developed in this particular district, one finds that within the limitations, the struggles did achieve something for the exploited sections. They helped in politicizing those sections. They touched also upon concrete issues like rising agricultural wages, reoccupation of lands, repayment of forced exactions, controlling

Vetti and other feudal exactions, the struggles achieved a modicum of success in many areas. But then, these struggles seem to be limited beyond a point, given the strategy of confrontation with the state machinery, and also the interests the state was indirectly supporting. The spread of the struggles inspite of the repression was to be noted as an achievement, which when looked from another angle may be attributed to the continuance of conditions of unrest even today.



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