

ANTI-ZAMINDARI STRUGGLES IN ANDHRA RURAL POLITICS DURING THE 1930s AND 1940s

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BY

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D E C L A R A T I O N

I hereby declare that the work presented in the thesis entitled **ANTI-ZAMINDARI STRUGGLES IN ANDHRA; RURAL POLITICS DURING THE 1930s AND 1940s** has been carried out by me under the supervision of Ms.Jandhyala Kameshwari. To the best of my knowledge no part of this thesis has been submitted for the award of research degree of any other University.

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C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that B.Reddy Prasad Reddy has carried out the research work embodied in the present thesis under my supervision and guidance for the full period prescribed under the Ph.D ordinances of this University. I recommend his **thesis entitled ANTI-ZAMINDARI STRUGGLES IN ANDHRA: RURAL POLITICS DURING THE 1930s AND 1940s** for submission for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in this University.

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TO

MY BELOVED DAUGHTER

SAMHITA

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INTRODUCTION

This work deals with the anti-zamindari struggles in Andhra which finally led to the abolition of the Permanent Settlement by the Madras Government immediately after independence. The purpose of this study is to show that not only massive individual and spontaneous discontent but also organised peasant protest movements have been an important ingredient of the history of rural India.

The peasant in recent times has been the subject of much debate.¹ The peasant's world, culture, society and economy continue to provide rich insights into the complexities of historical development. Peasant involvement in national liberation movements and revolutions has raised fascinating questions for social scientists and historians in particular.² In India, the problematics of peasants and the Indian national movement has generated rich debate on questions of perceptions, initiative, leadership, mobilization and linkages with Indian national movement. Increasingly there is a recognition that to fully grasp the multi-dimensional nature of the Indian national movement it is essential to undertake regional and micro level studies.³

The present study on Anti-Zamindari Struggles in Andhra is an attempt to explore, at the level of the sub-region, the nexus between peasants, Congress and the Communists. Micro regional level studies help in examining with a greater degree of accuracy generalisations and hypothesis posited at the all-India level. It allows us to explore in greater detail the interplay of economical, political, social and cultural factors in the explication of crucial questions such as factors leading to peasant movements,⁴ differentiation in peasantry, peasant revolutionary consciousness,⁵ every day forms of peasant resistance,⁶ peasant perceptions of nationalism and questions of leadership and mobilisation. Not much work has been done on this subject at the sub-regional level. It must be emphasised once again that regional and sub-regional studies are essential to enrich our understanding of the complexities at macro-level.

In geographical terms the area to be examined in this study are the present day coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh viz., East Godavari, West Godavari and Krishna. These were the areas of large Zamindari estates like Munagala, Gangole, Gopulapuram, Challapalli, Pittapuram, Kalipatnam, and Muktyala. Several anti-zamindari movements took place in the first half of the 20th century following the intervention of the Congress and Communists finally leading to the abolition of the Zamindari system. These areas witnessed several peasant movements and were in the forefront of the nationalist agitation in the Andhra region.

Permanent Settlement was introduced in the first decades of 19th century. During the mid-19th century there was the construction of Godavari and Krishna anicuts and also the introduction of railways. In this region one sees the development of fairly large scale commercialisation of agriculture. Following these developments, the peasants in the Zamindari areas were caught in the vicious circle of land alienation and exploitation. They started organizing themselves against the exploiters. Peasant struggles against the Zamindars of Munagala, Kalipatnam, Gopulapuram, Challapalli etc., provide a fertile ground for study.

The questions that this study attempts to address in this context are; what did irrigation, railways and commercialisation imply for the peasants? What was the complex socio-economic transformation that occurred either in terms of land alienation or various other forms of exploitation following the introduction of permanent settlement? What was the nature of peasant differentiation in this region? What was the impact of depression on the peasants? What was the interaction between peasants, Congress and the Communists? What were the methods of mobilization adopted by the peasant leaders to channelise the anger, and resentment of the peasants into action.

Peasant participation in the freedom struggle raises further interesting questions for examination. What hopes and aspirations were raised by the peasantry and how far were they successful in

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achieving them through their struggle? Were there any substantial differences between Congress nationalism and grass roots vision of New India or was the hegemony of Gandhian nationalism as complete as it appeared in Kheda and Bardoli? What was their strength and weakness? Infact, in our framework of reference the significant question is not whether the peasants supported the Congress, but why they did so? Was it on account of their adherence to some abstract conception of Indian nationhood or was it the hope that their choice would have a crucial bearing on their own social and economic situation? How does one understand the inability of the Communists to consolidate their peasant basis?

It has generally been assumed, that the peasantry was attracted to nationalism because it saw in it a panacea for its own problems, a belief in the nation and a sense of well being in relation to it. Here again one should be cautious while studying the nature of peasant movements in India. It has sometimes been argued that all the peasant movements represented a nationalist force aimed at overthrowing the colonial power. In a country where the overwhelming section of people constituted peasantry, any movement which came into conflict with the predominantly colonial structure of government could be seen as a challenge to colonialism. No doubt national slogans and symbols were used in the movements but the question that needs a closer examination is how were these perceived by the peasants.

At the crux of this problem is the extent to which the participants at the grass roots level were fighting for local grievances and the extent to which they were becoming aware of the larger social unit and identifying with a national, anti-imperialist party, or was it simply that as nationalism filtered down it became identified with basic economic and social grievances? Another crucial aspect that is examined in this study is whether there was any difference in the nature of Congress and Communist participation in the anti-zamindari struggles.

This is not a study of any particular movement pertaining to one zamindari, but an examination of a series of interlinked campaigns, agitations and struggles.

This work has been divided into five chapters viz., 1. Genesis of Politicization; 2. Mobilization of Peasantry, 3. Peasant Programme of the Congress Ministry (1937-39), 4. Anti-Zamindari Struggles, and 5. Conclusion.

The first chapter deals with the social, economical and political conditions of the peasantry in the Zamindari areas. It studies the introduction of the permanent settlement and its adverse effects on peasant society and economy. It exposes the exploitative principles that were embedded in the permanent settlement and deals with various issues like rent, debt, arrears and suits, irrigation conditions and other injustices inflicted upon the peasantry. This chapter also studies the impact of the depression on the lives of the Zamindari peasant. The depression in the Andhra region during the years 1929-36 coincided with the general depression in the western economy. Andhra by this time was largely monetised both due to the revenue policies of the government and the changes brought in the cropping pattern. The depression had a disturbing effect on rural society. The steep decline in the prices of agricultural produce left the peasantry with no profits to make. The burden of rural indebtedness multiplied, aggravating the living conditions of the peasant mass. Land alienations became frequent and rampant, and the tenants lost their lands to the Zamindars.

These had serious implications for the village situation. The worsening economic situation manifested itself in the growing consciousness of the peasantry. This economic context informs the discussion of greater clarity the interplay of economical, political, social and cultural factors in the succeeding chapters.

The second chapter deals with the methods and ideas of peasant mobilization. Formation of peasant associations, using of

press and publications, public meetings, conducting peasant schools, organising, peasant days, weeks, marches and performing hero-worship were the important methods used in trying to influence the peasant population. A special focuss on this subject has become necessary because it was these methods which gave a coherent political expression to all the scattered spontaneous expression of peasant dissent, and made them aware of their exploitation with in the Zamindari and colonial system. Politically, the peasant became more mature and conscious than before.

The third chapter deals with the Congress attitude towards peasant problems while it was in power (1937-1939) in the Madras Presidency. A study of its rule shows that the Congress policy towards peasantry was not a revolutionary concept and that it was only interested in bolstering its image among the peasant mass by a few reformative and populist measures.

The fourth chapter, deals with the description of a) peasant movements against Zamindars in the area under study during the first Congress Ministry (1937-39), b) the rivalry and activities of Communists and N.G.Ranga among the peasantry, c) the Provincial elections (1946) and coming of Congress to power in the Madras Presidency and d) the eruption of peasant struggles once again during the Congress regime finally leading to the abolition of the Zamindari system. This description revolves around questions like 1) why were there anti-zamindari struggles only during Congress rule while the peasants remained subdued during the inter-ministry period, 2) how and why did the Communists gained control over peasant associations out-smarting Ranga during the war period following the resignation of the Congress ministry in 1939, which logically leads to another interesting question of 3) the reason behind Congress success in the 1946 Provincial elections despite Communist hold over a vast mass of peasantry and 4) another wave of anti-zamindari struggles, sometimes violent, under the umbrella of the Communist party during the Congress regime.

REFERENCES

1. The first serious and systematic studies of agrarian relations and problems occurred over a century ago when British administrators, bent upon better understanding, or perhaps simply Justifying revenue policies in British India. began to explore the development of land relations, revenues, tenure and related matters of that part. These studies were published as bureaucratic reports and minutes, as personal memoirs or as in Madras, as parts of the first district manuals in the late 19th century. Following the cue, several Indian authors wrote in similar lines, which gave little insight regarding the socio-economic condition of peasantry. However, as soon as peasantry, started getting mobilised organised and began struggling they made economists, politicians, sociologists and historians to wake up. Consequently, in the recent past historical researches have thrown light on the long and consistent struggles of the peasantry. In this regard the hypothesis of Barrington Moore, that "Indian peasant movements were relatively rare and completely ineffective" and related this apparent passivity to the peculiarity of Indian social system, particularly to the caste system can be discarded completely. Barrington Moore Jr. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the making of the Modern World*, Hammondsworth, 1977, p.315.
2. To cite a few a) Frederick Engels, *The Peasant War In Germany*, Moscow, 1977, b) Franz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 1977 c) Kathleen Gough, Hari Sharma (ed), *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia*, Press, 1973. d) Chalmers, A Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Powers: The Emergence of Revolutionary China, 1937-45*, Stanford, 1963, etc.
3. S. Bhattacharya in his article 'The problems and prospects of regional history: Some questions of methodology', gives important suggestions in writing regional history. Paper presented at I.C.H.R Zonal Seminar, University of Hyderabad, February 1988.
4. James C. Scott in his work 'The Moral Economy of the Peasant' and Samuel I Popkin in his work, 'The Rational Peasant' highlights interesting views regarding peasant actions. By moral economy Scott presumes that the peasant, rather than seeking to maximise the well-being of themselves and their families, commit themselves to a moral economy predicated on two principles, that seems firmly embedded in both the social pattern and injunctions of peasant life; the norms of reciprocity and the right to subsistence and avoids taking risk. On the other hand, Popkin argues, that rational action, that is, of the individual who is forever calculating how, in a given situation in which one thinks of oneself to improve ones own well being, or atleast to maintain the standard of living one currently enjoys. Charles F. Keyes, 'Peasant Strategies in Asian Societies; Moral and Economic Approaches', *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. XLII, no.4, August,

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1983, p.56. A critical analysis of these views have ben given by David Hardiman in his article 'The Bhils and Shahukars of Eastern Gujarat', Ranajit Guha (ed), *Subaltern Studies*, vol.V , Delhi, 1987, pp.44-50,

5. Karl Marx, took for granted the idiocy of rural life and described peasants as sack of potatoes, Esther Kingston Mann, *Lenin and the Problems of Marxist Peasant Revolution*, New York, OUP, 1983, P.3 and 13. Describing the peasant revolt in France in 1848, he said that they were 'clumsily cunning, knavishly naive, doltishly sublime', *Marx Selected Works*, vol.1, Moscow, 1969, p.276. Although Marx was right in postulating isolation as the main factor inhibiting peasant organisation in the past, he did not foresee the possibility that, in the modern world, peasant isolation could be ended under the impact of forces such as population pressure, the revolution of communication education and modern organisation. It was Engels who, more than Marx, understood the revolutionary potential of the peasantry and wrote on the peasant war in Germany. Lenin believed that peasant was 'to serve as surrogate', in a revolution. See John W. Lewis and Kathleen J. Hardford, *Peasant Rebellion and Communist Revolution in Asia*, Stanford, 1974, p.230. Quite contrary to this, Eric Stokes opined that 'while cities go up in revolt, it is the country side that makes or breaks revolution. Eric Stokes, *Peasant and the Raj*, Delhi, p.266. 'The urban elite would remain intellectual without peasant support', declared Sunil Sen, in his *Peasant Movements in India - Mid 19th and 20th Centuries*, , Calcutta, 1982, p.240. Mao's view was that the cities were dominated by the forces of foreign imperialism and infected by alien forces of foreign imperialism and land infected by alien social and ideological influences and were the strongholds of the bourgeoisie who were seen as the agents or potential allies of imperialism. John W. Lewis and Kathleen J. Hardford, *Op.Cit.* p.243.

6. The ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups, according to Jim Scott , are foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, polfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage and so forth. He says that this is what much of the peasantry does between revolts to defend its interest as best as it can. Jim Scott, 'Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance', in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol.10, no.2, January, 1986, p.6.

CHAPTER I

GENESIS OF POLITICIZATION

"As a society matures to more highly organized stages, it becomes more and more difficult to make changes without shaking the whole foundation. Yet if these reforms are not made as they become necessary, they accumulate. Their postponement inhibits social and economic adjustment and generates resentment, political friction, and social dynamics. Eventually such delay of needed reforms leads to the major surgical operations on the body politic which we call revolutions—the most brutal, clumsy, and costly of all forms of adjustment.... In studying the history of the world's bloodiest revolutions up to this day, I find that inhibited, delayed, or otherwise frustrated reforms of land-tenure system were the most powerful factors responsible".

Kral Brandt: 'Towards a More Adequate Approach to the Farm Tenure Programme', Paper read before the American Farm Economic Association in 1941.

The acquisition of the Northern Circars by the East India Company was completed by 1765. From a revenue point of view the Jagir, which now comprises the districts of Madras and Chingleput, was the earliest acquisition. The E.I.C was given permission by Naick Damarla Venkatapathi Naick, who was ruling the coast from Pulicat to the Portuguese settlement of Santhome with headquarters at Wandiwash to build a fort in Madras on 27th July 1639, which later on became popular as Fort St. George. The next in point of time to acquire was the large tract known as the Northern Circars. The next acquisitions were the districts ceded by Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan after the Mysore wars, namely, the Salem district, Dindigul and Palani taluks of the Madura and Malabar and Coimbatore districts. Then came the districts of Bellary, Anantapur, the Palnad taluk, Cuddapah and Kurnool, which were ceded by the Nizam to the E.I.C on 12th October 1800. The Carnatic districts, namely, North Arcot, Trichinopoly, Tinnevely and the feudatory State of Pudukottai all passed into the British control on 31st July 1801. These acquisitions virtually complete the territory of the Presidency of Madras. As the present study concentrates on the Northern Circars a little greater chronological account is given.

The earliest possession of the E.I.C on the East coast was Nizampatnam also then known as Patapally, a seaport in the district of Krishna. A factory was established there in 1621 with the permission of the King of Golconda. In 1753 it was ceded to the French along with the Northern Circars by the Nizam of Golconda, but in 1759 it was conferred on the Company along with the Northern Circars, which was confirmed by the Mughal Emperor in 1765.

Simultaneously with Patapally, the English touched Masulipatnam in 1611 and established a factory in 1621. After a turbulent history, the Masulipatnam Circar, Nizampatnam, the

districts of **Kondaveedu** and **Akulamannanda** (Bandar) were finally granted to the E.I.C by the Nizam in a treaty signed on 14th May 1759. The grant was confirmed by the Mughal Emperor in 1765.

The Circars of **Chicacole**, **Rajamundry**, **Ellore**, **Mustafanagar** and **Moortuzanagar** were ceded in 1765 by the Nizam in a treaty with E.I.C and confirmed by the Mughal Emperor in 1765. These Circars, the **Masulipatnam** Circar which was ceded in 1759 and the **Badhrachalam** and **Rekapally** taluks subsequently ceded in 1760, form what are popularly called as the Northern Circars.¹

After the establishment of the Permanent Settlement in Bengal, the Madras Government was pressed to follow the Bengal example.² A series of measures followed between 1795 and 1802 which decided the establishment of a permanent settlement in the Northern Circars.³ Thus the permanent settlement (popularly known as Zamindari system) was introduced under Regulation 25 of 1802.⁴ It was not difficult to introduce the permanent settlement in Northern Circars as there were a number of large estates in these territories. The Haveli lands or the Crown lands were sold out in estates of convenient size as permanently settled farms to the highest auction-bidder. The tracts already in the hands of native chiefs or Zamindars were confirmed to them in perpetuity according to the principles of permanent settlement.⁵

Prior to 1802 there was no 'Zamindari system' in its present form.⁶ Before the advent of the British rule, for administration purposes and for military assistance, the rulers entrusted certain tracts of their territories to some important persons in those territories and these individuals in their turn used to pay tributes to the rulers and render assistance by supplying men and money in times of war.⁷ The word 'Zamindar' is derived from the Hindustani term '**zameen**' from which the State was deriving a good deal of its revenue.⁸ According to Baden-Powell no Mughal ruler ever created an official collector of rents or invented the word '**zamindar**'.⁹ Any one who had some real estate was spoken of as Zamindar. It was largely during the period of political

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weakness under later Mughals that all the intermediaries- the Rajas or chiefs, the revenue-assignees and the revenue-farmers came to be called as Zamindars and 'even the Court favourites, bankers and other officials came to be called Zamindars'.¹⁰ However the pre-British Zamindars never had power as was given to them later by the British. They never possessed the power to alienate estates, to raise money on them by mortgage and the like. Moreover of all methods of collection of revenue before British rule, the most noteworthy was that of collecting it direct from the cultivators through the heads of villages. Baden-Powell looks upon the Mughal system as essentially a ryotwari system which 'went straight to the cultivator'.¹¹

However the British created the zamindaries in order to serve as a bulwark against the prospective mass defiances of British rule and also to ensure the proper payment of the company's revenues.¹² They declared the Zamindars as proprietors of the soil ignoring the fact that their tenants were really not ordinary tenants but were in most cases 'the original and hereditary possessors of the soil'.¹³

Under the permanent settlement the Zamindars got the authority to hold the Zamindari for ever.¹⁴ In return they had to make a fixed payment to government called peshkush. The zamindaries were made not only heritable but also transferable. The peshkush itself was not arrived at scientifically and no general rules were followed, regarding the area to be surveyed, or fertility, or value of the produce etc. There was no reference to any record of landed rights and in fact too much of local scrutiny into such rights was forbidden on the ground that it would make the Zamindars suspicious and nervous. The rights of the ryots were not defined nor were their rental dues to the new landlords fixed at any particular level to prevent exploitation. The Regulation XXX of 1802 which was intended to fix the share to be paid by the cultivator failed to protect the tenant as it was never implemented.¹⁵

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The permanent settlement was based on the principle that a) between the State and the cultivator there had to be some person who could take the responsibility for collecting the revenue punctually. This person was to be the Zamindar. In return for this responsibility he was to be given the assurance that he would not be removed from the land, i.e., he was to be recognised as the proprietor of the land with the power to raise money on credit, and to sell his land or to pass it on to his children. The proprietary right was to give full security to the Zamindar, but it was subject to the prescriptive or customary rights of his tenants since the tenants were not ordinary tenants but had certain rights to the soil. These rights however were not defined though the State reserved the right to do this later and to pass laws for the benefit of the tenants; b) that the Zamindar was to pay to the State ten-elevenths of the assets (rentals) which meant that he could keep one-tenth of the revenue. The State also gave to the Zamindar the benefit of any future increase in the assets due to extension of cultivation or other justifiable causes; c) the State promised that the amount of land revenue would be fixed for ever and that it would not make any further demand in consequence of any improvement on the estates of the Zamindars; d) in return for all the privileges given the Zamindars were to be made liable to have their estates sold for non-payment of revenue by the last day fixed for each instalment. No argument could be used in defence of non-payment not even that of famine or failure of crops; e) the remissions which were occasionally granted according to the custom of the country on account of drought, inundation or other calamity of the season would be ceased and never be revived and f) that the karnams, the village accountants, would be appointed and controlled by the Zamindars but would not be liable to be removed from their offices, except by the sentence of a court of Judicature.

Thus with the Permanent Settlement loaded heavily against the interests of the peasants they, were virtually put at the

mercy of the Zamindars.

The total Zamindari area in 1938 was about one crore and eighty lakhs in the Andhra province comprising of 20,361 villages. The total income to the Zamindars in Madras Presidency was over two and a half crore rupees while peshkash due to government on them was about fourty nine lakhs of rupees only. Of this the Andhra Zamindars paid about twenty four lakhs of rupees, as peshkash.¹⁶ However, all was not well with the Haveli estates and the zamindaries. Many of the estates were sold out owing to the failures of payments of revenue and purchasers were readily found for them.¹⁷ In some cases where there were no purchasers these estates were transfered into ryotwari settlement. Several- of the ancient zamindaries were partitioned between the heirs of the Zamindars.¹⁸

With the acquisition of permanency over the lands, the Zamindars started fleecing the peasants with heavy taxes and unauthorised extortions. The position of the tenants was not bettered by the fixing in perpetuity of the peshkash from the proprietors. The zamindari administration became well-known for gross inefficiency, corruption and sometimes for economic bankruptcy.¹⁹

Despite the government's efforts to safeguard the cultivators through legislative measures, they proved ellusive. These half-hearted measures and vagueness, and the inadequacy of safeguards in the land legislation resulted in the continuance of Zamindari tyranny, thus worsening the condition of the cultivators. Regulation XXVIII maintains that the Zamindars could not restrain or sell lands, houses or other real property of their under-farmers, tenants and ryots without any default. On the other hand, if it was found on trial that such a procedure was resorted to by the Zamindar without any default of the ryot in respect of payment of rents, etc., the Zamindar might be liable to pay damages for his unjust use of some of the provisions of the Regulation XXVIII. The Regulation XXX

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authorised the Zamindar to **issue** pattas to his tenants, but this Patta Regulation XXX of 1802 was not at all implemented.²⁰

Discounting the rights of the tenants, the Zamindars began a campaign of distraint and enhancement of rents. **Mr. Fullerton**, a member of the Council, in his minute, stated that the pattas were not regularly issued by Zamindars, the right of occupancy was not distinctly understood and that the Patta Regulation XXX of 1802 'had almost become a dead **letter**'.²¹

Citing that the permanent settlement of 1802 failed to protect the peasants from the oppression of the Zamindars, the government introduced the Regulation IV and V of 1802 giving more powers to the Collectors regarding arrears of rents, rates of assessment, occupancy and cultivation of land. It also restricted the power of the Zamindar to grant the lands of ryots without previous consent of the Collectors.²² But this measure did not prove successful, as the law enforcing authorities aligned with the Zamindars.

The next piece of legislation undertaken was the Act VIII of 1865, known as the Rent Recovery Act.²³ It actually laid down rules for collection of rents by the landholders from the cultivators while it failed to define the rights of the tenants. In essence, the Act was supposed to embody the essence of all the previous regulations and to rectify their defects. The main feature of the Act was that for filing a suit for recovery of rents, exchange of pattas and '**muchilikas**' (i.e. the receipts of rent payment) between the Zamindar and the tenant was made essential, unless both the parties mutually agreed to dispense with them. The Zamindar was armed with many powers. If the acceptance of a patta was declined by a tenant when it **was** granted by the Zamindar, the acceptance of the patta could be enforced by a **sumaary** suit before the collector. The Zamindar could only eject a tenant by a decree of civil court or by a summary suit before the collector for non-payment of arrears or non-acceptance of a patta. The provision for landholders for

distrain of crops and **moveable** property and even for the arrest and imprisonment of the defaulter for non-payment of arrears of **rents** was made. Infact, a tenant could file a summary suit before the collector for recovery of damages for excessive or improper distraint, loss of property during attachment, or irregularities in sale of property, but very few followed this **course**.

This Act became a source of rack-renting. Moreover, the introduction of certain clauses created confusion in the minds of the Judges. In their ignorance of the prevailing local tenures, the status and relations between Zamindar and tenant, they believed that the features of English land tenures could be similar to those of the land tenures of the Madras Province. The High Court's decision in **Chokalingam Pillai's** case in 1877 resulted in depriving the tenant of the right of occupancy **intended** to be confirmed by the Act VII of 1865 by throwing on the poor ryot in every case the burden of proving the custom of **giving** the tenant the occupancy right.²⁴ This Judgement **induced** the ryots in several estates to sign **muchilikas** acknowledging that they were mere tenants at will.²⁵

The Government of Madras was compelled to admit that **the** Madras Act VIII of 1865 failed to assure peasants permanency of **tenure** as well as to provide security against exactions and oppressions.²⁶

In 1908, the Madras Estates Land Act was passed with two objects in view, one to rectify the evil effects of the Madras Act VIII of 1865 and two, to define the rights of landholders and **their** tenants in clear terms, since a definition was not attempted in the previous enactments, and to confer occupancy rights on the ryot and to protect him against eviction.²⁷ Though **Mr.F.G.Forbes** while introducing the Estates Land Act Bill of 1908 declared that, '**Zamindar** is in law no more than an assignee of **public revenue**'²⁸, the Act of 1908 strengthened the hands of the

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landlords for recovery of rents by making the rent as the first charge on land and by declaring that a substantial accurate patta was sufficient to proceed for the realisation of the Just dues of the Zamindar. However, the Act gave a right to acquire tenants land for buildings and for other purposes. The obligation of the Zamindar to maintain public irrigation works was specifically declared as recognised.²⁹

These legislative measures, instead of helping the peasants, strengthened the exploitative nature of the Zamindars. Moreover, with the rise in the value of agricultural produce following the advent of British rule and expansion of foreign trade, value of the land also increased. Consequently the interest in land by both the Zamindars and peasants also increased, which was absent in pre-British days,³⁰ when cultivable waste was available abundantly.³¹ This resulted in cut-throat competition for land between the two parties and the Zamindars had always the upper-hand.

Though the British objective while introducing permanent settlement was to appropriate a large share of the agricultural produce, the Zamindar paid only a small portion as revenue from his rental collection. Land revenue from Zamindari areas remained inelastic from the time of its inception. It is stated that in the year 1939 the total rent received by the Zamindars was about Rs.232.6 lakhs, the amount of peshkush paid to the Government was only about Rs.41.2 lakhs.³² This is in addition to the unearned increment due to the growth of towns and improvement of trade and industries, income from mineral resources, fisheries, navigable rivers, etc, benefit of cultivation, cultivation of more improved and valuable money crops; benefit when prices of agricultural produce rose all of which accrued to the Zamindar while peasants share was completely excluded from these sources.

Apart from the estates, the Zamindars also owned private lands known as 'seri' lands. The seri lands were continuously

extended from time to time by the **zamindar** by occupying relinquished and evicted lands and lands brought from the peasants by questionable methods. Even communal lands were forcibly annexed by the Zamindar. To cite an example, a public lavatory ground in Gollaprolu estate was added to the Zamindar's

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property. The peasants of **Viravaram** and **Kolanka** estates in Pittapur division, complained to the **Prakasam** Committee that the Zamindar 'through his influence had unfairly occupied vacant house-sites, raised coconut gardens therein and leased them out and that he monopolised another elevated site which would be useful as a public grazing ground for cattle, to develop orange

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and mango garden. In the Tuni Zamindari, burial grounds were assessed and granted on pattas and other communal lands were encroached by the Zamindar and the peasants reported that taxes were imposed for obtaining fuel, wood, earth and stone from these lands.

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In Challapalli estate alone the acreage of seri land consisted not less than 75,000 acres and in the Gangole estate of East Godavari income from **seri** land was larger than that from the ryoti land.

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Seri lands, according to the legislation, were lands either cultivated by the Zamindar and his men or with the hired labour or such land as was really set apart with the intention of future self-cultivation of the Zamindar.

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But this, law was abused in many estates and thousands of acres were brought under this head with the intention of continuing the old practice of rack-renting and evicting the peasants.

In fact the **main** object of creating **seri** land was to enhance rents freely, and were never cultivated by the Zamindar. In every estate where the **seri** head exists the Zamindar took special interest. Much care was taken to upkeep tanks commanding **seri** lands. Water was denied to ryoti lands **unless** the **seri** lands were first cultivated. This **seri** head remained a great

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impediment to the maintenance of the ayakut tanks.

The Zamindars were basically parasitic rent-receiving

landlords, without undertaking direct supervision and cultivation lands. They leased or farmed out some villages to **muttadars** or **izaradars** i.e., middlemen. This is peculiar to the Ganjam and Vizagapatnam areas.³⁹ These **middlemen** in turn leased out to direct cultivators. Being influential persons in the rural power structure they used to add more to the village demand as their profit.

The village rent role increased whenever the estate villages changed heads (generally once in five years). In the **Salur** estate for instance 'within 15 years, by which time four **muttadar** changed hands, the village rent-roll was raised by hundred **percent**'.⁴⁰

The occupancy **ryot-cum-tenants** came third place in the tenurial hierarchy in the Zamindari system. These tenants leased in lands in auction from the Zamindars, particularly the **lank** a lands of the delta region by paying a fixed amount of cash as rent and sometimes as per acre. The **period** of contract varied from five to thirty years in various estates. The renewals of contracts obviously led to increase in the rental, apart from renewal fee.⁴¹

The non-occupancy tenants, but not **tenants-at-will**, were those who held the 'old waste' or the non-ryotwari lands in the Zamindars. They mainly belong to the near relatives of Diwans of the Zamindars and other relatives of the Zamindars.⁴²

The sub-tenants takes the last place in the tenurial hierarchy. Sub-tenancy was simple lease, usually of one year duration, in some cases for three to five years and in very **few** cases it was for ten years.⁴³

Majority of the sub-tenants were mere **tenants-at-will** and they were the actual producers, forming the bulk of the peasantry. These sub-tenants were of three types, namely: a) the unauthorised or authorised claim of the Zamindar a right on the soil, whereby, he sought to treat cultivators as mere tenants-at-will, b) the Zamindars leasing the

seri lands to others and c) the occupant in the Zamindari areas sub-letting their lands.

The **tenurial** position in Zamindari system was as follows:

	Government	
	Zamindar (responsible to pay peshkush)	
	Muttadar (intermediary temporary tenure-holder)	
Occupancy ryot		Non-occupancy ryot
Sub-tenant or under-tenant		Sub-tenant or under-tenant
(tenants-at-will)		(tenants-at-will)

The actual relationship between these classes will be taken later as mere descriptive analysis is insufficient for a thorough probe of the nature of the anti-zamindari struggles.

RENT

Collection of rent either in cash or kind was the dominant mode of surplus extraction in the Zamindari tracts. Though the permanent regulations of 1802 fixed the peshkush of the Zamindars in perpetuity, it was not so clear about the question of demand collection of rents from the ryots by the Zamindars, thus leading to many evils connected with the Zamindari rents and levies on the ryots. Infact, even the Sanads granted to the Zamindars under the permanent settlement did not specify the exact amount of rents payable to the Zamindars.⁴⁴

Even the Madras Land Estate Act of 1908 which was intended to protect the peasant gave Zamindars the power to have a share in the increased money returns consequent upon the rise in prices (though the government did not demand any increase in peshkush). In this regard, the government declared, 'he (the Zamindar) has a position in the country. No government would desire that the status of the Zamindar be lessened in any political or social manner and to deprive the Zamindar of a share in rise in prices was politically unsound'.⁴⁵ It is significant that whilst what the Zamindar paid to the government came to be called '**revenue**', the payment of the cultivator to the Zamindar was called mere 'rent'. This was purely intentional to make the Zamindar more of a proprietor than he really was and to injure and destroy the

rights of the cultivators.

The Zamindars collected rents according to their whims and fancies and the collections were not uniform in all the estates. While the maximum land revenue collected by the Madras Government from an acre of wet land, resettled in 1918-19 and afterwards was never more than Rs. 15, the peasants of a Zamindar had to pay

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Rs. 100 and more on their garden lands. It will be interesting to note the rates of rent charged in some of the estates. According to N.G.Ranga's investigation, the Raja of Bobbili charged Rs. 35 on an acre of wetland, the Zamindar of Venkatagiri Rs. 78 on garden land, the Zamindar of Pitapuram Rs. 22 on wetland, the Zamindar of Vizianagaram Rs. 20 on wetland, the Zamindar of Munagala Rs. 16-19, the Zamindar of Tuni Rs. 16-18. Even according to official estimates, the rent charged by the Zamindars was abnormal.

Rate of Rents in some Estates according to Prakasam Committee Report (per acre in rupees):⁴⁸

Name of the Estate:	Wet:	Dry:	Garden:
Vizianagaram	8-20	1-3	-----
Bobbili	15-30	2-5	-----
Tuni	10-15	2-5	15-28
Nuzvidu	1-5	7-15	15-28
Venkatagiri	8-20	1-6	16-70
Kasimkota	8-20	2-6	-----
Telaprolu	5-11	1-4	-----
Muktyala	10-18	1-5	<u>10-27</u>
Gampalagudem	4-3	5-12	-----
Tiruvuru	8-20	1-3	12-30

The table below gives the difference in the amount paid by the peasants in ryotwari and Zamindari areas (per acre in rupees):

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Name of the estate	Rates of rents prevailing in the estates;		Rates of assessment prevailing in the nearest ryotwari areas;	
	Dry	Wet	Dry	Wet
Pitapuram	3-0-0 to 4-11-0	35-15-0 to 50-0-0	2-13-0 to 3-10-0	9-3-0 to 13-8-0
Ducharti-Yeravaram	0-4-0 to 1	1-8-0 to 3-8-0 (in addition water rate at Rs.2 per acre)	0-5-0 to 0-9-0	0-9-0 to 3
Gopalapuram	2 to 22		4-12-0 to 5-15-0	
Gangole	0-8-0 to 4	9 to 10	0-12-0 to 2	4-7-0 to 5-4-0

The above table shows that the rates prevailing in the estates were very high when compared to the ryotwari assessment. This difference of rates between the two tenurial systems illustrates the reason behind the peasants demand for the conversion of Zamindari rates to ryotwari taxes.

Prior to the permanent settlement, there were no money rents. The system of paying rent was in kind. The rents were collected in different forms like *Asra*, *Garsi*, *Vantuvardi* and so on, the *asara* system being more popular and widely practiced. In *asara* system the produce was divided equally between the proprietor and the peasant and when dry lands were converted into wet cultivation the peasants were allowed to take two shares against one in the first year and one and a half shares against one in the second year. It was only from the third year that the regular system of sharing by half and half was resorted.⁵⁰

The same system was adopted during the time of the permanent settlement and prevailed in most of the estates. Under the *vantuvardi* system the assessment of land was revised every year, the revision being made by a process of challenging. Any ryot could demand that the holding of another ryot be made over to

him at an **increased** rate of rental which he named. If the ryot who was **in** possession of the holding consented to **pay** the enhanced demand he was compelled to hand over the land to the ryot who challenged the rate and agreed to pay the higher rent. This practice was mostly prevalent in the estates of East Godavari district. The original basis of rent **in** the estates of Ganjam and Vizagapatnam was generally the *gars*i which was equal to 16 bags **i.e.**, of 160 lbs of grain each. Irrespective of any measurement of land a plot of land yielding one *gars*i was taken as the basis of rent. In the central zamindari from East Godavari upto Krishna the putties, **pandums** etc, were the basis. Here, land capable of being sown with a **putti** of grain was the basis. In some other Krishna zamindari what was called **kathies** was the basis.⁵¹ These systems of assessment even after the introduction of the permanent settlement continued, the only difference being the rack-renting of the producers by the Zamindars who claimed themselves as the owners of the soil.⁵²

Extortion of rent was at its worst in the case of garden and wet lands. Sometimes water-rates were charged for lands cultivated with dry garden crops under wells dug and maintained by the peasants themselves at their own cost. These were called '**mulum**' in the Nellore and Chittoor districts and '**jarib**' in Krishna, West Godavari and East Godavari districts.⁵³ Thus the Zamindars consistently increased the rents in season and out of season. For example in Chintalapati Vontu estate of Krishna district, the income from Chintalapadu village in 1887 was **Rs. 4,979**. It was increased to **Rs. 9,392-2-4** in 1935 by the Zamindar.⁵⁴ As early as 1898, **Raghavaiyengar** observed that the 'traditional share (**i.e.**, half the share) of the ryots was reduced to one fourth to one fifth by the additional imposts levied on various **pretexts**.'⁵⁵ Every pretext known to the civilized world to enhance rents was fully employed by the Zamindars till the passing of the Estate Land Act I of 1908.

Before 1908, there were no legal obligations on the part of the Zamindars to commute the rents in kind into cash, if and when

demande by the ryots, though money rents were collected on several occasions in several estates.⁵⁶ The Madras Estate Land Act I of 1908 was the first enactment in the Presidency that brought under a statute the relationship between the landholder and his ryots.⁵⁷ However, though it removed enhancements by contract in future, it confirmed the existing high rents and allowed further enhancements by suit and other operations if not by contract.⁵⁸ Thus the old reign of enhancements continued though under cover of law. In the name of rise of prices under section 30 of the Act, the Zamindar could obtain a decree for enhancement up to two annas in the rupee from the court of the suits of the Deputy Collector by merely filing a price list from the taluk office.⁵⁹

If at the time of the permanent settlement the question of peasants' burden was ignored by the then authorities, the framers of the 1908 Act simply gave a blessing to the same, by a presumption that the rent burdens at the time of permanent settlement with all their later additions and exactions were equitable and fair without caring to examine the question in its entirety.⁶⁰ Many oppressive measures were provided in the Act so as to favour and enable the Zamindar to make his collections easily.

However, one significant aspect of this Act which acted as a catalyst in stimulating the peasants resistance was the inclusion of the provision for monetisation of rents. As mentioned earlier, this Act permitted for the first time, the commutation, where and when the peasant wanted and instructed the local officers to comply with the demand of the peasants, thus giving the peasants a new legal right.

A new chapter started hence-forth, where the peasants struggled persistently to commute their rents from kind to cash which the Zamindars opposed equally vehemently. In this trial of strength, which continued till the depression period, obviously the winner was the Zamindar as the ryot with limited resources.

could hardly withstand the pressure of the Zamindar.

Added to **this**, the stabilisation of the occupancy status of the peasantry in the estates through the 1908 Act, gave **enough** confidence to the peasantry on the one hand and on the other resulted in the ruthless collection of rents with multiplied vengeance by the Zamindar every year, twice the current **demand** whatever the yield of the crops in the holding might be.⁶² They were determined to scuttle the ryots attempts to change over to money rent which would obviously strengthen the peasants position in the existing scenario of unprecedented rise in the prices of agricultural produce. This explains the peasants vigorous demand for commutation of rent from kind to cash.

The Statistical Atlas of the Madras Presidency and the **Prakasam** Committee Report provides irrefutable evidence of spectacular rise in the farm produce in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁶³ In the background of steep rise in prices the Zamindars preferred to collect rents in kind while the peasants sought to benefit by paying the rents in cash. Owners of some estates, for e.g.. the Raja of **Bobbili** found it more **profitable** to use his revenue from grain rents as basis for grain dealing business.⁶⁴ In the cases where commutation was **carried**, the price lists given by the Zamindars could not be **questioned** by the ryots. As was the **case** in Bobbili and other estates the ryots side was not at all represented in the commutation affair, and the officers generally accepted the rates furnished by the Zamindars which were very high.⁶⁵

Various factors contributed to the rise in grain prices. The development of **communication**, roads and railways in the late 19th century were important factors behind the price rise. The coastal region was blessed with canal transport. The Godavari **delta** was about 2,000 sq. miles, which was traversed by 500 miles of navigable canals. In other words, **'there** is one mile of canal for every 4 **sq.miles**. There were 255 miles of metalled road in the delta or 1 mile of road for every 8 sq. miles'⁶⁶ by the **end**

of 19th century. In the first two decades of the 20th century many new rail roads were constructed. The main line completed in this period was from Samarlakota to Malleswaram.⁶⁷ The Andhra districts were linked to Madras, Bengal, and Bombay and the neighbouring princely state of Hyderabad by Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway, Madras Railway etc,. A meter-gauge line which connected Bezwada with Masulipatnam tapped the rich section of the Krishna delta.-- The Nizam's state railway facilitated the export of delta produce to Hyderabad.-- The remainder of the delta, it was pointed out in 1899, was 'so well supplied with navigable canals that no railroad probably could compete with.
... 70
them .

The transport revolution intensified exports of foodgrains to the national and international markets. The existence of famines in other parts led to the rise in prices in the coastal districts. Thus at the turn of the century the increase in exports sometimes exhausted the local markets and the price rise
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was always chiefly due to exportation to other places.

The Madras government observed in 1921, 'from a purely economic standpoint the main feature of the decade has been the high range of prices for all foodgrains. Prices are indeed governed not only by the local market but by the rates prevailing in other parts of India'.⁷² During the first two decades of the 20th century, Masulipatnam-Bezwada region, 'a great rice producing tract' exported the largest quantity of foodgrains, owing to its railway and canal facilities 'its stocks were usually the first to come into the market'.⁷³ The merchants purchased large quantities of food grains for export to Bombay resulting in price rise during 1918-19.⁷⁴

The coastal ryot looked around and watch the imports of grains from Burma and sold his produce at an appropriate time. As the Royal Commission on Agriculture observed in 1929, 'once he (the peasant) has paid his land revenue he keeps a steady eye on the prices primarily for rice imports and is in no haste to come

to towns with the agent or buyer if the towns do not suit him. The better market for his produce (Madras and Tamil districts) is close at hand...'.⁷⁵

Chronic famine situation in other parts of the region and in northern India resulted in a great demand for food-grains of coastal Andhra which were in surplus.⁷⁶ For instance, the distress in North India during 1899-1900 led to large exports of grains from Nellore district.⁷⁷ Similarly, Krishna district^{V8} exported paddy to Kurnool in 1900 to meet scarcity conditions. Higher prices and dearer markets outside the Presidency also caused increased exports of paddy and rice from the Northern Circars.

It is interesting to note that during 1915-20, the prices of cholam increased (106%) more than the prices of paddy (79%) thus affecting the lower sections of the agricultural population. These poor peasant land-less labourers cultivated the lands of the Zamindars, rich pasants and other sections of peasantry as share-croppers and under-tenants and paid exorbitant rents, often in kind. The factors which contributed for the growth in prices of food-grains, however, did not benefit these sections, as the regional and national markets were controlled by the rich peasants, merchants and ofcourse the Zamindars. The heavily indebted cultivator was forced to sell his produce soon after the⁸¹ harvest to his creditor, who paid him a miserably low price.

The rise in prices also resulted in the shifting of the payment of agricultural wages from kind to cash especially in the first decade of the 20th century. This, however did not help the poor sections of the agricultural population, since wages did⁸² not keep pace with rising prices.

On the other hand, this price trend strengthened the rich peasants who possessed substantial landholdings and had security of tenure, stability of revenue and rent demand etc. They were also free from the exploitation of the moneylender as the debt⁸³ burden on them was relatively less, while small peasants and

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under-tenants came into the clutches of the merchant-moneylenders. According to the Collector of Krishna, 'the landowning classes benefited greatly by the price rise' and the Collector of East Godavari observed that the 'condition of the delta ryots is generally better off than that of the upland ryots'.⁸⁴

Thus, as the rise in prices benefitted only the rich peasants, even the commutation was advantageous to them. Moreover they were the people who could and did contest legally with the Zamindar for commutation, while the rural poor were crushed under the burden of expensive litigation involved in it. The observation of Biswanath Das before the Royal Commission of Agriculture was that 'the application for commutation means severance of all relations with the Zamindar and by the time he gets the commutation he would have gone from court to court--so veryfew ryots apply for commutation.'⁸⁵ In a few cases rents were changed into kind by force by the Zamindars in the wake of price <⁸⁶ rise.

In several estates assessment of rents in kind was prevalent⁸⁷ despite the Act. Even in the commuted cases the level of rent was very high. By 1930, the total rent-roll in most of the⁸⁸ estates had increased by 4 to 25 times of that of peshkush. This was mainly due to the commutation of rents, along with customary taxes and levies into cash during the period of relatively high prices; arbitrary enforcement of higher rents of inferior soils; due to cropwari assessment (i.e. rent according to the nature of produce or crop known as cropwari) and unjust⁸⁹

levy of water-rates. According to a witness before Prakasam Committee, 'high estimates were made as a result of the high prices during the war time and rates were fixed at Rs. 25 per acre for wet and Rs4.50 per acre for dry lands which were Rs. 5.50⁹⁰ and Rs. 1.50 per acre respectively prior to 1906.

Moreover, the kistbandi system (the payment of rent in instalments) also proved detrimental to the tenants. Rents were

collected in several estates in instalments in September, October, November and December; that is, at a period when the crops were hardly underway and when the peasants had no chance of storing them to wait for reasonable prices that may be expected

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to prevail. Thus, even when prices were high, a number of peasants did not benefit from this price rise. It is not surprising that the peasants urged the Prakasam Committee to change the instalments period from the existing one to March,

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April, May and June.

As the 1908 Act provided provisions for enhancement of rent the Zamindars resorted to this provision in the wake of rise in prices, wherever commutations occurred.⁹³ Giving oral witness

before the Prakasam Committee, a peasant disclosed that in Mallam village in Pitapuram estate, the rent of Rs. 8,317-9-0 in 1853 shot

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upto Rs.20,127-4-0 in 1937. Exhibiting documents regarding the village Koyyur in Gollapalli estate, a witness stated that the assessment of the village was Rs.2,448-8-4 in the year 1894 and in the year 1938 it was found standing at Rs.5,537-8-9. An examination of the incomes of the estates at the time of the Prakasam Committee enquiry throws light on the extent to which the

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rents and incomes of the Zamindars had been pushed up.

Estate;	Total rent roll of the estate;	Peshkush
Vuyyur	3,64,319-10-1	24,565-13-3
Elamarru	1,91,878-0-11	15,330-12-8
Mirzapuram	1,79,283-0-00	11,446-12-2
Indupally	12,754-12-8	1,759-4-7
Gangole	2,61,572-00-0	5,050-0-0
Munagala	1,66,287-00-0	8,080-0-0
Gampalagudem	1,25,680-00-0	4,511-0-0

There is abundant evidence recorded by Prakasam and Ranga

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committees on rack-renting, which reminds one of pindarism. Apart from the commutation of rents from kind to cash, other factors also led to the problems of rents. In the early period

an effective way of raising rents was the practice of the Zamindars to lease out their estates to rentiers at the highest sums who used to plunder the villagers. In the estates where the Zamindar dealt with the ryots directly every renewal of the lease led to enhancement of rents. The claim of survey excess under private survey operations was another way of enhancement. In many estates the classification of lands under irrigation, into the major and minor irrigation works resulted in increase in rents under the so-called major works, though there was no security of supply of irrigation water under both. More importantly, under the 1908 Act enhancements were provided for by petition and other operations, if not by contract (however, if prices fell, the tenants were not considered eligible for remissions). Under this Act, several Zamindars filed enhancement suits and many estates were said to have collected the decreed⁹⁷ enhancements with retrospective effects and costs.

However, it would be noted that the effects of enhancement were not universal. It had different impact upon different sections of the peasantry. The rich peasantry, who possessed substantially holding and occupancy rights challenged the⁹⁸ zaindari claims in the courts and outside. The Prakasam Committee Report observed that several of peasants accumulated⁹⁹ surplus from their production. It is reported that the net profits for richer peasants from both the garden and¹⁰⁰ commercial crops were between Rs. 40 and Rs. 50 per acre.

In the estates where rents in kind prevailed despite the introduction of commutation, this remained a constant source of irritation and litigation between the rich peasant and the Zamindar whose primary motive in maintaining the rent in kind in place of cash rents or in converting money rents into produce rent was to get a share of the benefits of rising grain prices.

Despite several defects, the 1908 Act especially the provision of commutation, in the wake of general rise in

agricultural prices had tremendous impact on the rural structure in the Zamindari areas. The money-rents almost became universal and products of these lands had wider markets, both national and international and the rates of grains depended much on the price fluctuations on a wider network.

However, the measures which were introduced in 1908 Act, which intended to protect the tenant, infact acted as a catalyst in the emergence of a rich peasant section. The occupancy tenants were protected from the arbitrary ejectment and enhancement was limited upto 12.25%.¹⁰¹ They paid primarily cash and fixed rents, and lower rents when compared to under-tenants.¹⁰² They were allowed to improve land and if they were evicted, compensation could be demanded. They had the right to sell their land. The increase in Zamindari rents was always slower than the rate of price rise as is evident from the report of Prakasam Committee. On the other hand, though the rise in prices also resulted in the shifting of the payment of agricultural wages from kind to cash, and a general rise in wages, the rise in wages did not match the rate of rise in prices.¹⁰³

Thus in both ways, i.e., relative stability of rent and comparatively low wages at a time of rising prices helped the substantially occupancy ryots to accumulate wealth, at the cost of agricultural labourers and under-tenants and reducing the landlords share in the agricultural surplus. The Zamindars envious at this developments always strove to maximise the rent while the tenants struggled to retain a larger portion of the surplus product, while both forced the sub-tenants to pay rents in kind. As the confidence of the substantial peasants grew, many of them started evading payments of rents even as the Zamindars tried to raise rents.¹⁰⁴ In some cases even the Zamindars fell into debt...to the richer tenants.¹⁰⁵ The over-all impact of price-rise and commutation along with some of the provisions of 1908 Act which favoured the tenants, resulted in the emergence of a rich peasant section within the category of tenants, which led

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a **powerfull anti-zamindari** movement in 1930s following the depression. The not-so-substantial ryots in the tenants class unable to bear the burden of rent fell prey to the greed of the Zamindars and were evicted and turned into mere **tenants-at-will**. This section followed the rich-peasant led **anti-zamindari** struggle hoping to better their economic and social position.

At the out-set, though it seems that there were conflicting parties in the anti-zamindari struggles, viz., Zamindars and their tenants, it would be too simplistic to accept this categorisation. Leaving the Zamindars, who ofcourse formed a single group, there was vast divergence within the tenant category and also between the tenants and under-tenants. As is seen in the above discussion, it was the rich peasant section who profited from the price rise and commutation and accumulated and appropriated more income and fought against the Zamindars. Added to this the **confirmation** of occupancy rights through the 1908 Act made them enjoy the permanency of tenure, free of transfer, and protection from arbitrary enhancements of rent. Moreover, the Act also divided the ryots into two categories, those with and without occupancy rights. This Act, infact **recognised** a privileged class of tenants.

D.A.Washbrook observed that the full advantages of the Act 'went only to the wealthier section of the tenants who had money to pay legal dice and who were likely to control village records to prove occupancy.¹⁰⁷ It strengthened their position in relation to the Zamindars, stimulated social stratification and increased the distance between them and the smaller Zamindari tenants.

The position of the occupancy tenants also depended upon the number of acres they possessed. a number of tenants owned **more**

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than fifty acres of land. These tenants, in several cases leased their lands to sub-tenants and behaved like absentee landlords. The rents they collected from their sub-tenants were abnormal and were mostly in kind. P.N.Driver observed that, 'the **conditions in Madras show** that under landlordism the cultivator

is not only exploited by the landlord but also by those who are natural allies in the system and who are protected at the cost of the cultivator'.¹⁰⁹ The Act of 1908 conveniently forgot the case of under-tenants, who numerically formed the bulk of the cultivating population.

Thus in this background, where the rich peasant emerged in the wake of price-rise and 1908 Act and who appropriated and large share in the actual production depriving both the Zamindar and the sub-tenant, the anti-zamindari struggle was invariably led by this newly emerged rich-peasant section. Infact, it was a struggle between the two sections of rent receivers, viz., the Zamindar and the big occupancy peasant for the surplus.

Apart from the issue of rent, other factors such as evictions, alienation of land, usury, and other coercive practices also contributed for the growth of peasant discontentment. However it should be noted once again that these had a differential impact on different sections of the peasants.

DEBT

Although the list of serious, even tragic rural problems has not been exhausted, it is perhaps worth mentioning again a plague that was almost as serious as rent, namely vicious usury. There were atleast four important official enquiries made by the Madras Government since the beginning of this century which bear testimony to the rapid rise and total volume of rural debt of the people in the Presidency. They were the enquiry of Sir Frederick Nicholson; the Madras Provincial Banking Enquiry; the enquiry of W.R.S.Sathyanathan and the enquiry of Dr. B.V.Narayanaswamy.¹¹⁰

The peasant often had to take out a loan to meet his requirements in a society where the problem of credit was a constant, unremitting torment. To pay land rent and clear arrears, and to buy the necessary minimum of equipment and essential items that the family could not produce itself. The peasant's main and sometimes only source of income was his small

marketable surplus. Marketing conditions were highly unfavourable to him, thus leading them to the position of indebtedness. The trade cycle and fluctuation in prices had their serious repercussions on the volume of debt. During the first half of the 20th century, there was a gradual shift in cultivation from food-production to non-food crops.¹¹¹ This shift was brought about by the **profitability** of non-food crops owing to the pull of external markets in the decade prior to 1935. But during the depression years, in periods of shrinking international trade, the prices and **profitability** of the commercial crops began to drop and the obvious result was falling prey to the money-lender.

Moreover, lack of capital and access to transport, not to mention numerous tolls and local taxes, generally kept the peasant from selling his produce in distant markets. Thus having sold his produce at local markets to the grain merchant right after the harvest, when prices were at their lowest, the peasant was left **with** his needs unsatisfied. If he had no other way to subsist, he begged a loan from the **village-money-lender, who** was the main source of rural credit. Infact the recognition of individual rights of transfer of land increased the credit power of the proprietors. On the other hand, the assimilation of the non-agriculturist money-lenders as agriculturists, and the surplus cash available with the big agriculturists as a result of a rise in prices resulted in the emergence of easy access to credit-machinery in the villages.

In the early thirties, **unremunerative** prices operated as a potent source of **increasing** indebtedness and for several decades usurious rates of interest directly contributed to swell the volume of indebtedness. With the introduction of money rent and the growing rates of enhancements the money-lender became a

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powerful force in the rural society. The rates of interest were **exorbitant**, generally varying from 24% to **36%** depending on the season, on whether the loan was in money or **113** grain, on whether the harvest had been poor or abundant etc.

GENESIS OF POLITICIZATION

Borrowing was the classic road to dispossession, to the point where many peasants were resigned to sell their lands. There was a general trend of conversion of unsecured debts into secured or mortgage debts and forced sales of land. As the merchant was not only interested in profit alone but also the produce, he purchased all that the peasants sold, in the most cases at the rates previously settled at the time of advancing loans.

Moreover, as the 1908 Act clarified that the 'Zamindars rent was first charge on the holdings and he had the power to distrain the standing crops for his arrears',¹¹⁴ the merchants did not accept the crop as security, but started charging high rates of interest which varied from 18% to 24%,¹¹⁵ and demanded a greater extent of land as security.¹¹⁶ Sale of cattle, ornaments, household articles or handing over crops and lands were found to be widely prevalent methods of repayment of debts.¹¹⁷ Fall in prices and loss in cultivation led to arrears of rents which only enhanced the indebtedness of small tenants and agricultural labourers.

Apart from the traditional money-lender, even certain agricultural sections especially rich peasants who came to acquire liquid capital, advanced loans to the poor peasants, generally at higher rates of interests, which infact, accelerated the disintegration of the peasantry and consolidation of lands in fewer hands, as the 'small ryots who were indebted to big ryots surrendered their lands in discharge of their debts'.¹¹⁸

These type of landlords and peasants constituted 47% of the total lenders in 1928 while moneylenders contributed 31%, cooperatives 17%, Government 3% and other 2% only in the Madras Presidency.¹¹⁹

The other source for the peasants to acquire loans was cooperative societies which advanced only 17% of the total credit in the Madras Presidency. Their growth was not significant either in expansion or in operation.¹²⁰ Their development was

much restricted in the estates. On account of this slow progress of the cooperative movement, the grip of the **indigenous** money-lenders over the peasant could not be relaxed. Several witnesses before the Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee, had very clearly pointed out this difficulty both in oral and written **evidence.** The Cooperative Land Mortgage Banks limited their operations as they could not advance loans on lands in the zamindaries owing to the peculiar conditions in the estates, due to the insecure rights of tenants, difficulties of obtaining patta transfers and correct certificates of encumbrances etc. So was the case with the takkavi loans under the Agricultural Improvement Act or the Agricultural Loans Act.

Even this limited operations were grabbed only by a microscopic minority of the peasantry. The Chairman of the Cooperative Commission Report in 1929 observed that the 'loans made under these Acts have been of help to the more substantial class of cultivators who can produce the necessary security but they have left practically untouched the lowest strata of the agricultural community'.¹²¹

As the procedure to get loans from the Co-operatives was **restrictive**, the poor peasants lacked access to the same and inevitably depended upon the rich peasants or their agents to acquire such loans. The attitude of the money-lender towards his debtor was so unscrupulous that it has been said that 'the money-lender. . . works deliberately to get the ryot in his power to tempt him to borrow, to avoid him when he is ready to pay, to press him when he is in need and to exploit him in every way'.¹²² Hence, the debt burden was borne more by the bulk of the poor peasants,¹²³ which gradually resulted in transfer of lands from these sections to the rich peasants or money-lenders.¹²⁴

According to an enquiry conducted into 24 villages of Krishna and East and West Godavari districts in 1929-30, it is said that due to economic pressures, like rent, cost of cultivation, debt, etc, majority of the poor and middle peasants

had lost their pattas or holdings.¹²⁵ The enquiry also reveals that those ryots whose assets were worth not more than Rs. 500 each were most heavily indebted. V.V.Sayana, who made a personal investigation in 1945-46 in Andhra remarks that 'the total number of persons indebted are greater in the lower income groups than in the higher ones'.¹²⁷

Most of the poor ryots were obliged to borrow money at more than 15% interest rate per annum, mostly for cultivation

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expenses, liquidation of old debts, family expenses and other. The government agencies were inadequate to meet this purposes of the peasants. Legislative measures to protect the indebted agriculturists like Land Improvement and the Agriculturists Loans Acts, the Co-operative Societies Acts, the Land Mortgage Banks Acts, the Insolvency Act, Debtors Protection Act and the Usurious Loans Act failed to release the peasant from the clutches of the money-lenders. For example, the purposes for which loans were made under the Land Improvement Loans Act of 1883 were a) construction of wells, tanks and other works connected with agriculture, b) preparation of land for irrigation c) provision of drainage facilities and protective measures against floods, erosion or other damage to land d) reclamation and other permanent land improvements for agricultural purposes e) **reconstruction** or renewal of any of the foregoing or additions or alterations thereto and f) other purposes relating to land development. The purposes for which loans were made under the Agriculturist Loans Act of 1884 were a) purchase of seed, cattle and breeding bulls and other purposes not covered by the 1883 Act b) rebuilding of houses destroyed by flood, fire or storm, c) raising of plantations and orchards d) purchase of fodder for cattle, manure, carts, implements etc., and e) relief of **distress**.¹²⁹ But the tenants, in general and non-occupancy tenants in particular were not normally given loans under any of these Acts unless sufficient security to cover the full amount of the loan was produced.

The Debt Conciliation Act of 1936 which was brought with a

bang ended with a mere **wimper**. It had a very unfortunate career. The main feature of **this** Act was the provision for conciliation between debtors and creditors. In actual working it was found inadequate and defective in many ways. It was based on the principle of '**persuasion**' as opposed to '**compulsion**' at all stages, viz., in the matter of approaching the Conciliation Boards, approval of the award of the Board by the creditors and the enforcement of such an award in absence of coercive powers vested with the Board, or regarding credit facilities for payment of the scaled down debts **immediately** by debtors under the ¹³⁰

Act. ¹³⁰ Moreover, the Boards could deal with cases only when a creditor or a debtor approached them. Its machinery also was found complicated, cumbersome and inadequate to deal with a large number of applicants at a time. The creditors were offered no incentive to accept the award since the Act contained no provision for enabling the debtor to pay immediately the scaled down debts. Further, the agency set up by the Act was not vested with any coercive powers. ¹³¹ Thus being proved impractical, the Debt Conciliatory Boards were abolished in 1944. Their contribution to the reduction of rural indebtedness was negligible. ¹³²

Another legislation, the Madras Agricultural Loans Act, helped only substantial peasants as it applied to those peasants whose holdings comprised 5 to 7 acres of wet or garden lands, or ¹³³ 50 to 100 acres of **rainfed** dry land. Even the Madras Agriculturists Debt Relief Act of 1938 proved inadequate to help reduce indebtedness. ¹³⁴ After all, the logic was that low income was the cause of indebtedness of the peasant, while **indebtedness** made credit dear and again dear credit led to low income which perpetuated indebtedness. The situation was aggravated during depression years when rural credit contracted owing to the insecurity and insolvent position of the peasant. ¹³⁵ Thus it was but natural, that it was in this period the peasants, both rich and poor, and more vociferously the rich peasants started demanding liberalisation and expansion of the cooperative credit system and organised moratorium weeks. ¹³⁶

ARREARS AND SUITS

Another critical problem which the Zamindari tenants faced was the piling up of vast sums of arrears of rent. Exorbitant rates of rents, absence of remissions, costly expenses of litigation, the practice of crediting payments made for current rents against old arrears, improper maintenance of accounts by Zamindari officials lack of a proper system of issuing individual pattas out of Joint pattas after land transfers, absence of scaling down arrears effectively, when they were found irrecoverable, were some of the factors which resulted in the accumulation of arrears.

Giving witness before the Prakasam Committee, a tenant of Thotapalli estate complained that the rents were doubled in 1915 and the Zamindar collected the exact amount due and for the rest of the enhanced rate they were accounted as arrears.¹³⁷ Lack of remission facility was another culprit in destroying the cultivators fortunes. Legally speaking the Zamindari tenant cannot claim remissions as a right even in the face of a worst calamity.¹³⁸

Baden-Powell remarked that in Zamindari estates remissions were not granted even for the loss of crops, 'if at¹³⁹

all remission was granted it was only an act of mercy'. However, the memorandum submitted by the Andhra. Provincial Congress Committee to the Prakasam Committee observed that even in estates where remissions were granted as an act of mercy, 'they were granted on no principle or policy, on the other hand, they (the Zamindars) used it as a weapon for demoralising the ryots'. The Congress Committee also noted that in a few estates, for the purpose of remissions the ryots were classified as 'obedients' and 'disobedients' and the latter were deprived the facility of remission. In several of estates, only the heads of the villages were given remissions. The Committee concluded that especially after passing of the Madras Estates Land Act of 1908, the granting of remission was refused in the zamindaries and 'wherever it¹⁴⁰ granted, it is more based on personal favour than on Justice'.

CENESIS OF POLITICIZATION

The arrears **increased** manifold during the depression years (1929-32) following steep fall in prices.¹⁴¹ It was also during this period that the peasants failed to pay even rents.¹⁴² The peasant resistance was also widespread during this period and many refused to pay both the rents and arrears. 'We are preaching people to withhold payment of enhanced rates' was the response of a peasant association activist of Challapalli estate to the **Prakasam** Committee.¹⁴³ But this was not a common occurrence. The Zamindar always had the upper hand. Not only was the legal arm of the government always at the landlord's disposal, but the landlord could also take back his land and rent¹⁴⁴

it to a **more** docile tenant. In many¹⁴⁵ cases recalcitrant tenants were promptly clapped into prison. Omnipresent land hunger and the resulting competition among the peasants reinforced the landlord's position. But when such foreclosed lands were leased out to ryots, they were not leased out at the former rates but on higher rates.¹⁴⁷

It is interesting to note that considerable portion of the arrears constitute amounts involved in litigation of the ryots with the Zamindars. Though the 1908 Act puts the Zamindar and the tenant on an equal footing either to contract or to assert the rights or to contest claims in a court of law, in actual practice, it was the Zamindar who enjoyed and enforced his rights. In some estates there were instances where the estates¹⁴⁹

itself took the law into their own hands were abundant. Either in forest cases, rent enhancement and commutation suits, attachment of movables and immovables, it was the Zamindar who could go upto the High Court, taking undue advantage of the cumbersome procedure by which the ryot was disabled to pursue his rights. Naturally, it was common to foreclose lands on account of arrears and appropriate them to the seri lands of the Zamindars.¹⁵⁰

Thus the threat of evictions and the execution of numerous decrees resulted in loss of lands by the peasants. It also worked as a bargaining stick for the Zamindar to increase rents.

The 1908 Act gave the Zamindar the power to attach **immovable** property even for a arrear of one anna. Another detestable process to collect the arrears was to confiscate the standing crop. Under section 151 of the Act, the Zamindar had the right to evict a ryot for materially impairing the value of an agricultural holding for agricultural purposes and rendering it substantially unfit for such **purposes**.¹⁵¹ This clause was negatively used for the benefit of the estate.

Enumerating the absurd use of the rights by the Zamindars, the Pithapuram Taluk Zamindari Ryots' Association complained, 'if they (Zamindars) are annoyed against a ryot, be the amount of arrears however small and negligible, they resort to the court and bring the **tenants's** holding for sale. They get it knocked down without proper publicity and for nominal value and in most cases without the knowledge of the owner of the land. The costs of execution and sale are unnecessarily swelled and magnified. The right of bringing a land for sale every year for each **arrears** of rent is a source of needless harassment to the ryot. In almost all cases, the value of the land will be at least twenty times the value of the **rent**'.

This **is** abundantly clear from the memorandum submitted to the **Prakasam** Committee by the Telaprolu Estate tenants:¹⁵³

Year;	No. of Sales;	Area (in acres);	Cost of Sale (in Rs.)	Cost of land (in Rs.)
1932	21	44.29	1,041-8-0	6,650-0-0
1933	39	95.41	2,145-0-0	15,700-0-0
1934	31	98.03	2,170-8-0	12,700-0-0
1935	71	231.61	3,577-11-0	35,525-0-0

Especially during the depression, the rent arrears increased when compared to the earlier decade.¹⁵⁴ The total number of defaulters in the estates **increased** from 3,510 (1928) to **6,018** (1931) and 8,309 (1933),¹⁵⁵ while rent arrears **increased** by 137% between 1916 and 1936¹⁵⁶ as rent collections witnessed a sharp **decline**.¹⁵⁷ This ultimately resulted in the forced sales of lands when the tenants were faced with an unprecedented **fall in the**

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agricultural commodity prices. This distress sale of land in the Zamindari area reduced the land prices. The institutional barriers of the Zamindari system might have added to the low sale values.

Apart from the Zamindars exploitation of the peasantry,

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demographic conditions during 1901-1940 led to the distress of the vast majority. The rapid growth in population led to overcrowding, fragmentation and subdivision of holdings, which had repercussions on the land market. The growing competition for land too resulted in high lease values. However, the lease values increased disproportionately to the returns from land and interest rates. These evictions and forced sales sharpened the contradiction between Zamindars and the tenants which perhaps explains the emergence of a strong anti-zamindari struggles in 1930s.

IRRIGATION AND OTHER PROBLEMS

The bad condition of irrigation works, absence of construction of new irrigation works and the upkeep of old ones in good condition had been 'the matter of universal complaint in all the estates'.¹⁶¹ Several of the big tanks constructed centuries back commanding 1000 to 5000 acres of land were in a neglected condition. The Collectors' reports submitted to the Prakasam Committee reveals this fact.¹⁶² The Congress Committee's enquiry highlighted that about fifty percent of the old construction were rendered out of use and only about twenty percent of them were said to be hardly in good order.¹⁶³ Many of the tanks had no feeder channels or the existing feeder channels were very narrow or closed up. Due to lack of proper arrangements to allow the surplus water to pass away, the bunds of tanks were in a breached condition and the tanks silted up. The tenants were not allowed to dig earth and clear off the silt without the Zamindar's permission. In several cases, portions of these tank-beds were given for cultivation by the zamindars.¹⁶⁴

The tenants were often afraid to move the government as they

would incur displeasure of estate officials.¹⁶⁵ However, there was a tendency on behalf of the Zamindars to repair such tanks where they may be benefited by their seri lands. They generally gave water to look after their necessities for seri lands were carefully looked after.¹⁶⁶ Considerations of political or other differences influence the Zamindar in carrying out the improvements. Even in the distribution of available water to the fields, the whim or caprice of the Zamindar's employee or official was allowed to govern; and the right of distribution was 'used as a weapon to put down opponents.'¹⁶⁷

Many tanks for which water supply was scarce had no sluices and field channels, and in some cases where they existed, they were in disorder. A few cases in which repairs were taken up by the Zamindars were those taken up on the compulsion of the government, for instance when they considered to effect the railway lines. In some estates contracts for repairs were given
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to the estate's favourites whose cosmetic repairs proved bad.

In few estates it was stipulated in the leases that the peasants themselves would have to execute repairs to the tanks, if any. Towards the repair of these tanks, the peasants were obliged to labour hard freely with their workers and cattle. For example, in Munagala estate the tenant, even if he wanted to relinquish the land, could do so only after doing his quota of work towards tank repair.¹⁷⁰

Even in cases where the ryots had dug wells and ponds at their own cost and maintained, rates were levied by the Zamindar. On the wells constructed by the Zamindar, the rates were
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abnormally high.

In some other estates, rents were enhanced on the promise that the irrigation works would be repaired or improved which was forgotten conveniently, though the enhanced rents were collected. In the Munagala estate the tanks had two kinds of sluices, one with ground level (musali bhavi) and another above ground level (manika bhavi). The ground level sluice supplied water to ryoti lands while the seri lands required high level

sluice. In the name of repairs to the sluices, all ground level sluices were raised by the estate, consequently water-supply to the seri lands was much improved which meant shortage to ryoti
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land. Where irrigation works were jointly owned by the government and the estate, the part of looking to the maintenance of the works appears to be nobody's concern. The Zamindars; rarely agreed to set apart some amount out of the total revenue they accrued from the tenants.

The fact that the Zamindars did not pay much attention to
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agricultural improvement is evident from the table below:

Investment on Irrigation
(As % of gross rental income)

Estate	1928; 1929; 1930; 1931; 1933; 1934; 1935; 1936							
Bommidi	14.0	18.3						
Kurpam	18.7	6.1	7.8	5.1	7.7	2.8	12.4	8.2
S.Valur	1.9	3.7	9.2	2.3	3.4	2.3	5.3	4.1

Infact, the sad condition of irrigation works was the result of inadequate resources of the Zamindars, a good number of them being not so big as to be capable of constructing new works with a long range view of things according to a sound agricultural policy. The grievances regarding irrigation facilities remained one of the central factors for the growth of anti-zamindari movements in Andhra.

Zamin Ryot, a drama written in Telugu by V.V.S.Sarma describes very aptly the exploitative activities of the zamindars and the problems of the tenants. Infact, the drama was banned by the Madras government through G.O.No.576 dated 19.10.1938 on the grounds that the staging of the play might create unnecessary hitch and disaffection between the Zamindars and their tenants.¹⁷⁵

Apart from the rents, the Zamindars collected other levies all illegal taxes from their tenants. N.G.Ranga reports that 'for the karnam, local temple, watching of the forest, raja's carriage and lighting expense, raja's amusements such as fire

works, raja's festivals and Dasabandams are to be paid by the ryots'. ¹⁷⁶

P.N.Driver observes that, 'the official figures of rent collections show only a part of the truth about the degree of extortion and the legal and illegal gains of the Zamindars. The real burden of rent and of Zamindari on the cultivator is considerably more than what official rent statistics can indicate since the Zamindar everywhere demands all kinds of extra illegal payments. They are the price the cultivator must pay to avoid molestation from the Zamindar'. ¹⁷⁷

Infact, customary or other additional levies were not allowed under Regulation XXVI, XXIX of 1802, but the Zamindari ¹⁷⁸

exploitation in this regard continued unabatedly. In Munjular estate 'meralu' was collected at the rate of three pies per rupee towards payments to the village servants such as vettis, dhobies, ¹⁷⁹

etc. This meras or meralu collection was levied almost all the estates to pay for village servants and artisans such as washerman, potter, carpenter etc., and were intended to encourage these people to settle in the village. But the complaint of the tenants was that the payments were to be made by those persons who use these services. ¹⁸⁰ Gangole estate in the name of 'talari' and 'massooldar', watchman and horse mamool not less than twenty kunchams of paddy (Madras measures) were collected from the tenants's share on each holding, on each threshing floor and on every paddy heap considered to yield eight bags and over. ¹⁸¹

During the times of collections the grain rent of the estate due from the ryot was valued at the market rates without deducting for carriage or merchants profits despite protest from the tenants. This type of calculations were called 'niruku'. ¹⁸²

Wet rents were collected for lands without guaranteeing water supply. Wet rents were collected even on rain-fed lands, on land cultivated with the help of drainage surplus water coming from higher tenements to the ryots low-lying lands. Another

common **unjust** levy was the charging of water-rates for lands cultivated with dry garden crops under wells dug and maintained by **the** tenants themselves at their own cost. They were called 'mulum' in the Nellore and Chittoor districts and 'Jarib' in Krishna and West Godavari districts and the garden lands in the eastern districts and this complaint was universal.¹⁸⁴ In Venkatagiri estate, cropwari rates were collected even if the ryot did not raise such said crop on his land.¹⁸⁵ It is said that these garden and cropwari rates were greatly responsible for the crushing rent burden of the zamin ryot.

In many estates rents were collected on 'meraca' or 'gograsam' lands which were set apart for grazing.¹⁸⁶ In Pitapuram estate, money was collected on occasions such as Maharajah's Pattabhishekam (crowning ceremony), Diwan's sixtieth birthday celebration and for Zamindar's election propaganda, whenever they paid their rent. The estate officials credited those amounts towards the above purposes, leaving the rents as arrears.¹⁸⁷

Cocks and sheep were sent to the estate palaces at regular intervals and if they were not supplied, severe action was amounted against the tenants who refused to supply.¹⁸⁸

Absence of government survey and presence of private survey was another common grievance in all the estates.¹⁸⁹ Only a few estates predominantly those which were under the Courts of Wards were surveyed. Even in some of those estates which were surveyed, record of rights and settlement of rent were not effected. In the estates, where the Zamindar himself surveyed, the survey was conducted without the knowledge of the ryots in order to show a paper increase in the area and thus demanded higher rent on this plea. All the leases contained a stipulation that rents would be enhanced with the increase in area. Thus enhancements were forced upon the peasants on the plea of survey excess.¹⁹⁰ In the unsurveyed estates, the problems of the tenants were further aggravated. Disputes between adjacent

ryots, between Zamindars and ryots were common. The extent of land recorded in the pattas and registers of the estate and in local cess accounts was not even nearest to the approximate tally with the actual state on ground, thus resulting in frequent disputes as to water and other rights. In such cases, the peasants were generally at the mercy of the estate officials whose oral statements were supposed to be the best evidence available in such disputes.¹⁹¹

The system of Joint pattas was the source of greatest possible mischief and injustice to the zamīn ryots. On account of this Joint patta system there was no certainty to the ryot as to the actual amount he was liable to pay; nor security for his property. In each joint patta the number of holders were generally from five to twenty.¹⁹² Rent paid by one person was credited to the arrears of deceased holder. Sometimes rent paid by a transferee was credited to the dues of the transferor even after lapse of seven or eight years. Rent paid by a 'soft' ryot was credited to the arrears of a 'stubborn' ryot with reckless
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indiscrimination. In some cases when any one tenant of a joint patta falls into arrears, rent suits were filed against all the joint pattadars, although most of them paid their arrears, and these tenants were drawn towards law-courts, thus causing undue hardships.¹⁹⁴ There was universal demand to put an end to the Joint patta system.

Arbitrary methods were employed in collection of rents. Peasants were stopped from harvesting the crop or from carrying the harvested produce until the estate dues were realised and estate watchers were employed at the cost of peasants who paid four to six annas per day.¹⁹⁵ Another method adopted was that of **locking** up the cattle of the ryots if the dues were not paid and
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in several cases such cattle was sold. The distraint provisions under 1908 Act was used as a powerful weapon by the Zamindar for coercing the ryots into submission. Lands worth thousands were sold away even for Rs. 15 and sale of land was resorted to even for nominal arrears, say for example, of

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Rs. 1-1-0. The Munagala ryots constantly complain of barbarous methods adopted in rent collection, such as making a defaulter bend forward and placing weights on his back.¹⁹⁸

The encroachment and occupation of communal lands by Zamindars was wide-spread. The communal lands served as grazing grounds, burial ground, thrashing floor, cattle-stands, public gardens, house-sites, footpaths, tanks and ponds etc., for the common benefit of the villagers. But the Zamindars greed for more lands made them to grab as many lands as they could, thus depriving the villagers of these common benefits.¹⁹⁹

Prior to the 1908 Act, the tenant used to have facilities as regards utilization of pasture lands, leaves for manure, wood for agricultural implements and cattle grazing. But since the advent of the Act, the Zamindars usurped the old said rights of the tenants and made them their own property and started levying rates for these services.²⁰⁰ In several estates grazing of cattle was prohibited and the pastures were leased out where the lessees charged Rs. 7 or 8 per tail of cattle.²⁰¹ Heavy penalties were imposed if anything was used from the communal lands. The punitive tax was in the nature of a penalty to the ryots who do not apply for the pastures in time and who do not pay the amount due forthwith on demand.²⁰² Even if farm houses were constructed in the agricultural lands the Zamindar filed suits for ejectment under section 151 of the 1908 Act.²⁰³ In order to build houses in the villages, the tenants were at the mercy of the Zamindar for grant of house-sites paying heavy amounts as nazarana to the Zamindar.²⁰⁴ Infact, in several estates, as the villages were immediately surrounded by seri lands of the Zamindar, there was no possibility for expansion of villages even in the wake of increasing population.

Adding insult to injury, compulsory labour existed in almost all the estates. The tenants were ordered to freely pen their cattle in the seri fields of the Zamindar and later to plough them free of cost.²⁰⁵ In many estates the ryots were required to

cart the produce of the estate freely and the artisans to serve freely. Every shepherd or a ryot who reared goats had to present a few goats per year to the estate. In many estates villagers had no other choice but submit their disputes, even their family quarrels for the adjudication by the landlord. The Zamindar in such cases decided and enforce punishments, imposed and collected fines.²⁰⁶

Upto the date of the Estate Land Act, the peasants were enjoying rights of free grazing, free manure, free gathering and cutting of fuel, bamboos for housing or fencing, housing timber and wood for agricultural implements, which was the universal custom in all the zamindaries. But, taking advantage of the failure of the 1908 Act to incorporate these rights, every Zamindar possessing forests had invariably laid an embargo on forest produce. Some Zamindars leased the forests to individuals, some others opened forests only to the cultivating tenants at high rates and generally rates were fixed for all the forest produce, which was used freely prior to 1908 Act.²⁰⁷

Several forest tracts were reserved by the Zamindars for their personal use, on the pretext that they had to preserve hill slopes from erosion and floods and to conserve water supply and to avoid famines.²⁰⁸ This is evident from the fact that the Telaprolu Zamindar laid a mango grove of hundred acres by deforesting the reserved forest.²⁰⁹ Moreover, many Jungles near villages were set apart for 'shikari' (hunting) for the Zamindars, where wild animals caused damage to the standing crops.²¹⁰ The tenants could not shoot the animals nor did the estates provide any safeguards against beasts.

The 1908 Act provided that trees planted prior to the passing of the Act belong to the Zamindar and the trees which were planted subsequently belong to the tenant.²¹¹ Taking advantage of this provision the Zamindars claimed all the past act and pre-act trees to themselves. In several cases the zamindar denied the right to fell down trees to the tenants on the

plots on which the tenants were in full possession and
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occupation. There were some instances where the land
pattadar was different from the tree-pattadar and the tenants
could not use even a dead tree in his own field for purposes of
agriculture in some estates.²¹³

The Zamindars were 'thoroughly incompetent' to discharge
their duties as tax-collecting and land-revenue authorities.
Several of the Zamindars never cared to visit the villages and
left the administration to their subordinates, who were appointed
on **favour** and not on account of administrative knowledge or
training and as N.G.Ranga Committee remarks, 'most of the
troubles of the ryots are due directly or indirectly to the
incompetence and morbidity of the Zamindars and their crude and
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out-of-date officer'. In certain cases, Zamindars entrusted
their powers of rent collection' to influential villagers thus
creating parties in villages and threatening the harmony of the
village.²¹⁵ A witness before Prakasam Committee states that 'the
Zamindar is responsible for the worst crimes that are being done
by his subordinates for they interfere in village politics and
create village parties and thus to perpetuate the zulum'.

Much of the incomes of the estates went towards personal
expenditure of the Zamindars especially on city life, foreign
travel, building palaces, and all sorts of comforts and luxuries
and economic waste. On account of the election mania some of the
Zamindars like Bobbili, Pittapuram and a few others spent
enormous amounts. In few cases they gave encouragement to art,
literature and other cultural activities. In the name of art,
the Zamindars of Mirzapuram and Challapalli had expended large
sums on cinema studios and all that went with them. Litigation
was another source of expenditure.²¹⁷ Pitapuram tenants complain
that 'the landlord does not visit some of the villages even once
in his lifetime. He do not attend to the improvement of the
economic or social or political or educational conditions of his
villages. The Zamindar does not raise even his little finger for
the improvement of his villages'.

Another witness reported before the Prakasam Committee that 'the Zamindar (of Pitapuram) spends most of the year in cities and far off Ooty heights. Consequently, the oppression and tyranny of estate officials are proving beyond toleration. Except during the recent Assembly election (1937) the Zamindar of Pitapuram has not visited out village'.²¹⁹

The memorandum by the Andhra Swarajya Party submitted to Prakasam Committee says that 'we believe that these Zamindars are spending on their personal needs and luxuries quite a disproportionate part of their total incomes, with result that, in many cases, the peasantry and labourers are starved; the village tanks have got silted up for want of repair; the temples have gone into ruin; the village roads have been uncared for; and there is practically no love lost between the Zamindar and his people; and in certain payment of taxes and even resorting to violence in a few extreme cases against Zamindars here and there'.²²⁰

Thus, in the background where the institutional impediments like bad irrigation facilities, absence of surveys, illegal exactions, compulsory labour, disappearance of communal lands over a period of time, the cursed joint patta system, arbitrary and coercive methods adopted in collection of rents, erosion of forest rights and when government measures like the Act of 1908 intended to protect peasants actually benefitted the Zamindars, the peasants already groaning under rack-renting, arrears, debts and land alienations were shaken in the wake of world-wide depression. The depression accentuated the grievances and precipitated anti-zamindari agitation.

During the pre-depression, i.e. prior to 1928, in the wake of steep rise in prices due to world war (1914-18) the substantial tenants accumulated wealth while the steep fall in prices during the depression drained their wealth which led to increased social tension between them and the Zamindars. The unprecedented fall in the prices stalled the growth of rich peasants and ruined those who had direct links with the export trade. Taking agricultural production, it is a matter of general

knowledge that whenever demand schedule falls, i.e. prices are down, supply schedule cannot so easily adjust itself to changed circumstances. Because the elasticity of agricultural supplies is very little and the staying capacity of peasantry much less while the elasticity of demand for its products is much greater. Thus economic depression affected peasants more adversely. The brochure of Food and Agricultural Organisation observes that 'the **individual** farmers are less able to control their output than those in business concern. When demand falls suddenly, farmers usually go on producing about the same total volume and feel the reduction mostly in the form of lower prices'.²²¹

Infact, the commodities fetched only about half the price in the mid-thirties as compared to a few years earlier in twenties.²²² The fall in prices, also increased the burden of rent²²³ and indebtedness.²²⁴ The rich peasants, who earlier were increasingly sinking their capital in commodity production, were the worst hit.²²⁵ Due to storage of grain, by the rich peasant anticipating higher prices, an artificial grain shortage developed and smaller cultivators found it difficult to get grain either for food or for seed for future cultivation.²²⁶

Traditional money-lenders and peasant-creditors cum traders were also hit severely by the depression. During the pre-depression years moneylending had been the safest and most profitable outlet for surplus capital in the countryside and consequently, there was a massive investment in moneylending resulting in the emergence of rich rural elites by 1920s. But when the commodity prices crashed most of these sections became bankrupt, as they gave loans with the year's crop as security speculating higher prices for the grain. Thus during the depression, 'hundreds of thousands of small traders and

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speculators have come to grief. On the other hand, after 1929 the rich cultivator-traders found it much more difficult to secure urban finance to complement their own resources. A number of them became bankrupt then local depositors lost confidence in them and tried to withdraw their funds, while at the same time

their urban creditors were pressing for repayments and their own
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 debtors could not find any cash. The Imperial Bank also
 restricted credit by stopping advances to the
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 merchant-moneylenders.

Thus, the fall in prices meant, that the debtor had no money to repay his loans and the creditor had no cash reserves to grant loans. It was reported by the Sathyanathan Committee: 'the direct result of an economic depression, given a fairly stable currency, is a marked fall in the value of all commodities and a pronounced rise in the value of money. How much more than was the farmer affected, with his poor business education, want of knowledge of world prices, and the ignorance of the trend of market fluctuations. Before the onset of the depression, he found that the prices of his crops were excellent and continued to rise. So he speculated, often wildly upon land, borrowing at heavy rates to buy more land. Suddenly came the depression. He found to his bewilderment that his crops were fetching less and less in terms of money. His commitments to government and others in terms of money became harder and harder to meet, as he was, obliged to sell more and yet more of his crops to get the money required. The value of the land declined steeply and there were no purchasers even at low current market prices. To add to his difficulties, cheap rice from foreign countries was flooding India and depressing the price of local rice still further. It is any wonder then that the Indian agriculturist today is heavily involved in debt; obliged to pay in money to government, Zamindars and others the same as had had to do before the depression and forced, in order to meet this demand in money, to dispose of about twice the amount in his crop as before; unable to dispose of his land at even half the price it easily fetched in pre-depression day; unable, with credit shortened, to vow even for current family and cultivation expenses; compelled, therefore, to part with much his hoard of Jewels and ornaments in order to get ready and hence, left more at the mercy of unscrupulous money-lenders and middlemen than before'.²³⁰

But, even the few channels of credit in many parts of the Madras province had simply dried up. N.G.Ranga noted that 'none of the usual institutions which supply credit for current purposes are today willing to advance any credit to the peasants. Every one of them is still busy, in its own way, scraping up everyple that can be tapped from the ryots'.²³¹ Hence, demands were made since thirties on the government to assist in financing the agricultural operations.²³²

Thus when the depression struck, the credit became difficult, affecting both the ryot-moneylender and the debtors. On the other hand ruined many of the rich peasants who had direct links with the trade. At another level the fall in the commodity prices enhanced the rent burden on the middle and the poor peasantry and so also the burden of indebtedness. To make matters worse, many substantial peasants in the estates, since the 1908 Act made it easy for them, forced the Zamindar to commute their rent-payment from kind to cash; while prices were rising as they were between 1908 and 1928, these fixed cash payments weighed steadily less heavily on the tenants. When prices dived from 1929, the real value of these commuted rent-payments soared. Shorn of their levers of credit and piqued at their loss of profits, the rich tenants of many estates took up arms against their overlord in subsequent years.²³³ Thus the severity of depression made Coastal Andhra become a 'seedbed of
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peasant unrest'. All sections of tenants raised their voice over vices of the Zamindari system as a whole, as all were affected due to rents and illegal exactions though in different degrees. It was during this period, the Zamindari estates witnessed the emergence and rapid expansion of the peasant association.

On the other hand the Zamindari system itself was facing strains both politically and economically. The British, gradually started to bypass the Zamindars, to extend elements of direct control over the villages within the estates in the wake

of new developments. This was achieved largely through the **Estates Land Act of 1908**. Even earlier the **Proprietary Estates Village Services Act of 1894** transferred from the Zamindar to the government the responsibility to pay and discipline the headmen and **karnams** of villages inside the estates. The Zamindars complained bitterly about this Act right from its inception. The result of this Act can be best seen when several of the village officers participating in anti-zamindari struggles.²³⁵

The 1908 Act, as noted earlier, was set out to define the rights and obligations of Zamindars and their tenants, and thus to guarantee to the tenant certain privileges and rights vis-a-vis the Zamindar. The Act though, was not implemented in actual terms and was misused by the Zamindars, yet it remained as an **ideological** step and influenced the tenants thought considerably. This is evident from the statements submitted by the Zamindari tenants to the Prakasam Committee, who basing upon the 1908 Act claimed that they were the actual owners of the soil. For example, the memo of Bulusu Soorayya, a tenant of Pitapuram estate says that 'the tenant is the proprietor of the soil after the passing of Madras Estates Land Act of 1908 for all practical purposes as the tenant is dealing with the land in his holding. He is having every right in disposing of the land either by sale or gift'.²³⁶

Moreover the increasing use of legislation in general served to undermine Zamindari pretensions to autonomous lordship. The **increase** of representative institutions at the local and provincial level had much the same effect, for they created new channels of political communication between estate society and government. The President of Irrigation Advisory Board, Godavari Eastern Delta reports that the extension of Local Boards Act to Zamindari areas had contributed to the complete estrangement between the Zamindar and his tenants.²³⁷ The **Fortnightly Report** of the Nellore District Magistrate says that 'the Local Boards are now (1933) entirely in the hands of the Zamindars and this election is almost entirely a Zamindari versus anti-zamindari **fight**'.²³⁸

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Moreover, absentee ownership of the Zamindars, who started living in towns and cities far off from their estates, and administered their estates through officials, resulted in undermining the human relationship between the tenant and the Zamindar. The contacts became impersonal to the point where some

tenants never knew who their master was. With the introduction of commercial crops and extension of cash-crops markets, most of the important economic transactions were no longer made at the Zamindar's estate office.

During depression, as rent collections went down, the Zamindars had to resort to courts, thus costing them litigation costs. The Report of the Delegation sent to India by Indian League in 1932 says that 'there was an increase in the number of suits. The reason for this appears to be that Zamindars and landholders are feeling the effects of the continued economic depression and are freely availing themselves of the coercive process open to them for the recovery of their dues from their tenants who are experiencing equal difficulty in paying them owing to low price of the chief agricultural produce leading to strained relations between them'.

Many of the estates which were leased out periodically to the intermediaries did not bring any income to the Zamindars as the lessees defaulted.

As a result, several Zamindars fell into arrears to the government.

indebtedness of the Zamindars further ruined the estates. Thus the Zamindar's slackening grip on the economic life of his estate, combined with the expenses of litigation and ceremonial grandeur resulted in a degeneration of his position. Finally when the fall in prices halved the monetary income from estate agriculture, the Zamindar and his leading tenants fought to preserve their own personal portion.

Thus in such conditions, when estates had lost much of their relevance as a political system at the turn of the 20th century, in the eyes of the British and the advance of cash-cropping gave full scope to potential tenants to move away from the mutual obligations and loyalties to the Zamindars. The price-fall of the depression transformed antagonisms into anti-zamindari struggles creating a movement in favour of abolishing the

Zamindari estates, A dividing line ran through the estates between the Zamindar and his tenants.

'Revolution is impossible', Lenin wrote, 'without a crisis affecting both the exploited and the exploiters'.²⁴⁴ Though what followed the depression could not be called a revolution, yet the anti-zamindari struggles accentuated the onslaught on the Zamindari estates affecting both the Zamindars and the tenants.

It would be appropriate, at this juncture, to characterise the agrarian structure in the Zamindari areas in order have a clear understanding of the nature of anti-zamindari struggles and²⁴⁵

the nature of participation in these struggles. The following classification has been made depending on the quantitative data on landholding, the hiring of labour, indebtedness, accumulation of rural surplus produce and its investment.

Landlords: Holding rights over large tracts extending over several villages, these are absentee owners. In this respect they are Zamindars who paid directly to the government and acted as intermediaries between the State and the peasants. They relied mainly on rent from land, forests and other cesses, often illegal. They also possessed private lands (seri) and cultivated through farm servants, and compulsory labour by their tenants. Several of these private lands were also leased to sub-tenants. Several of these private lands were also leased to sub-tenants or sharecroppers on higher rents. Some of the Zamindars practiced money-lending, trade and other business.

Rich Peasants: They were rich tenants having established holdings and enjoyed secured rights. They largely carried on cultivation by themselves and with the help of hired labour and were basically the exploiters of the rural proletariat. They had easy access to the market conditions and freedom to market their produce. They had control over, what N.G.Ranga termed, the key services like marketing, financial institutions, communications etc.²⁴⁶ They also leased their lands to sub-tenants at normally

higher rents and many of them collected rents in kind while themselves paid rents in cash to the Zamindars in the wake of price rise.²⁴⁷ They also leased in other's land to accumulate more surplus.²⁴⁸ Following price rise, they accumulated profits from agricultural production and diversified their economic activities into trading and money-lending. These were the people who were mostly affected during depression years and led anti-zamindari struggles in later years.

Middle Peasants: They were the substantial tenants, but who paid higher rent than those paid by rich tenants. They largely cultivated land with family labour and rarely employed labour, and never worked for wages for subsistence. However, they resorted to tenancy cultivation and borrowing to supplement income. In pre-depression inflationary years, they benefited from price rise and during depression their position became insecure and precarious. The burden of debt and insufficient and low returns from land often pushed them down.²⁴⁹

Poor Peasants: They are the poor tenants, having tenancy rights but less secure holdings too small to suffice for a family's maintenance and income derived from land often less than that earned by wage labour; tenants-at-will or share-cropper and other landless agricultural labourers. Poverty was the main overall characteristic of this section and the majority of them were subjected to the domination of merchant-moneylending-usurious money and were deeply indebted. Rise in prices did not benefit them as they had no access to the market and possessed very little surplus product which was largely consumed. The depression years had a disastrous impact on the poor tenants due to rise both in prices and rents as they were forced to buy in the market a portion of their consumption requirements. The wages were slow to respond to the rise in prices of foodgrains. This section of peasantry could not command credit to purchase bullocks and carts. High rents kept the landless labourers away from the competition in renting the lands and were forced to increasingly resort to selling of labour-power. They were

relatively free and mobile when compared to the poor tenants who, despite all the wretched conditions tended to be attached to their tiny plots of land.²⁵⁰

Having classified the agrarian class structure, though loosely, it would be worth-mentioning that it was the rich peasantry that raised the banner of the revolt, the middle peasantry followed the suit while the poor peasants mainly remained as spectators or sided behind the rich peasants or the Zamindars depending upon under whom they were employed. However, these poor peasants too were drawn very superficially into the whirl-pool of anti-zamindari struggles when communists took charge of the movement in late 30s and 40s. The following chapter will study the various methods used by the peasant leaders in channelising discontentment and mobilising the Zamindari peasants into action.

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1. This note has been prepared from *The Fifth Report on East India Company Affairs*, 1812, W.K.Firminger, (ed), Volume, III, Augustus M.Kelley Publishers, New York, 1969, pp.1-117; *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency*, Volume, I, Asia Educational Services, New Delhi, 1987, *Cambridge History of India*, Volume, 5; Baliga, *Studies in Madras Administration*, Volume, I, Madras, 1960; B.H.Baden-Powell, *The Land-Systems of British India*, Volume, III, O.U.P, pp.6-7.
2. A tentative settlement of the whole of the Bengal for a period of ten years was announced in 1789 by Lord Cornwallis and the experiment of the Permanent Settlement was finally confirmed in 1792.
3. Baden powell, vol.III, *Op Cit.*, p.17.
4. *Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee*, (hereafter **R MELAC**; this Committee was also popularly called as **Prakasam Committee**), Landholders Statement, Part IV, Madras, 1939, p.102.
5. C.D.Maclean, *Op Cit.*, p.54.
6. That is there was no permanency right of the Zamindar over the land.
7. For example the ancestors of Nuzvid Zamindars acquired their Zamindari in this way by offering military assistance. **R MELAC**, Memorandum submitted to the Committee, Part II, p.119.
8. **R MELAC**, Memorandum submitted to the Committee, Part III, p.111.
9. Baden Powell, *Op Cit*, vol.I, pp.507-9. Also see Gorrepati Venkatasubbaiah, *Mana Zamindarilu*, Desikavithamandali, Gantasala, 1944, p.14.
10. P.N.Driver, *Problems of Zamindari and Land Tenure Reconstruction in India*, New Book Co., Bombay, 1949, p.9.
11. Baden Powell, *Op Cit*, vol.III, p.134. The Board of Revenue opined that 'the origin of the Zamindar's office was comparatively a modern one and whatever its origin, the Zamindars, derived their rights from the State which could not confer more than it has possessed and exercised'. *Proceedings of the Board of Revenue*, No.7843, dated 2nd December 1864.
12. Memorandum submitted by R.Mandeswara Sarma, Chief Secretary, The Andhra Provincial Zamindari Ryots' Association, to the Prakasam Committee, **R MELAC**, Memoranda, Supplemental Volume, p.603.
13. Baden Powell, *Op Cit*, vol.1, p.285.

13. Baden Powell, *Op Cit*, vol.1, p.285.
14. Section 2 of the Sanad issued to the Zamindars at the time of Permanent Settlement, reads thus, 'The British Government, has resolved to grant to Zamindars, and other landlords their heirs and successors a permanent property in their land in all time to come.'. RMELAC, Landholders Statement, Part II, p.15.
15. For causes of the failure of this Regulation see C.D.Field, *Land-holding and the Relation of Landlord and Tenant in Various Countries*, pp.564-565.
16. RMELAC, Memoranda, Supplemental Volume, p.603.; According to Indulal Yagnik, the total Zamindari area in India was 31 crores acres and amount of rent received by zamindaries from tenants was Rs. 80 crores and amount paid by them to government was Rs.18 crores. *Ibid*.; The Ryotwari System comprised about two-thirds of the total area in the Madras Presidency and the extent under the permanently settled estates, Inams etc., constituted about a third of the area in the province in the first half of the 20th century. About forty percent of the area of the Telugu districts was under the non-ryotwari system. About half of the area of the seven Andhra districts of Vishakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Nellore and Chittoor were under the Zamindari system.
17. Baden Powell, *Op Cit*, vol.III, p.136. Many of the Zamindars who gave witness to the Prakasam Committee were the owners of the estates which were purchased from the original Zamindars who took sanads in 1802.
18. For example, Nuzvid estate which was under the management of one Zamindar till the year 1881 was partitioned into six estates. RMELAC, Memorandum Supplement Volume, p.98. A memorandum submitted to the Prakasam Committee complains that, 'in the districts of West Godavari and Krishna there are many villages which are estates within the meaning of the Madras Estates Land Act, most of which have been a series of partitions extending over a long period been divided and subdivided into small shares so that several landholders now own very small extents of land', *Ibid*, p.105. However, the dismemberment of the estates was stopped to a large extent due to the passing of a special Act the Madras Impartible Estates Act (II of 1904) which was passed to prevent the partition of estates and make them inalienable except under certain conditions.
19. Raghavaingar, *Progress of the Madras Presidency during the last Forty Years of British Administration*, Madras, 1898, p.226.
20. The issue of Pattas was one of the major grievances of the Zamindari tenants in later years.
21. Raghavaingar, *Op cit*, p.226.
22. V.V.Sayana, *The Agrarian Problems of Madras Presidency*,

Business Week Press, Madras, 1949, p.265.

23. *Select Document Series, Madras Estate Land Act, 1908-48, T.N.Archives*, vol.1, 1986. A clause in Section II of this Act states that the proprietor may claim an enhancement of rent by virtue of any improvements made by him. *RMELAC, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.67.*

24. *R.M.Sarma, Zamindari Ryotu Samasya, Kovvur, 1933, p.7-8.*

25. 'From the time of Chokkalingam Pillai's case onwards, the general impression was neither in Zamindaris nor in Inams the tenants had any occupancy rights', says the document submitted by Maharaja of Pittapuram to the Prakasam Committee, *RMELAC, Part I, p.42.*

26. Before introducing the Estates Land Bill of 1908, Mr.Forbes accepting the failure of 1865 Act states that, 'to protect the millions of tenants from the horrors of arbitrary eviction and against the oppression of rack-renting, some measure was felt necessary'. Infact this impression by the government led to the passing of the Estates Land Bill. *RMELAC, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.622.*

27. *Select Document Series, Madras Estate Land Act, 1908-48, vol. I, 1986.*

28. *RMELAC, Part I, pp.87-89.*

29. Further the Act gave rights to the tenants over trees planted on their lands after 1908, to sue the Zamindar if he refuses to give receipt of rent payment to the tenant, it also empowers the Zamindar to own communal lands if they were un-utilised with the permission of the Collector and also to enhance rents in case of rise in grain prices and if improvements were made on lands by the Zamindar. *R.M.Sarma, Op Cit, pp.8-23.*

30. In those days the cultivators could and did leave the Zamindar and move to unoccupied land.

31. *Raghavaingar, Op Cit, p.227.*

32. Statement showing the divergence between rent roll and peshkush paid for some estates in the year 1928:-

Name of the Estate:	Peshkush: (Rs)	Total rent-rol: (RS)	role as no. of times to Peshkush
(Krishna District)			
Chintalapatti Vantu	0,17,517	00,76,804	4
Munagala	0,04,510	00,17,229	4

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Vutukur	0,02,810	00,28,831	10
Gampalagudem	0,02,599	00,43,180	17
Vuyyur	0,23,612	01,73,708	7
Kapileswaram	0,09,209	00,84,548	9
Telaprolu	0,13,754	01,08,989	8
Gannavaram	0,05,105	00,37,257	7
Musunur	0,04,759	00,39,118	8
Elamarru	0,08,854	00,57,018	6
Pamulapadu	0,02,899	00,18,402	6
Devarakota	0,79,485	02,91,763	4
(West Godavari)			
Vasantavada	0,05,639	00,58,552	10
Sanivarapupeta	0,08,574	00,29,343	3
Mirazapuram & Niduparru	0,22,306	00,70,570	3
(East Godavari)			
Pittapuram	2,31,810	08,02,763	4
Viravaram	0,26,756	01,21,068	5
Kolanka	0,14,350	00,68,146	5
Vangalapudi	0,03,788	00,23,618	7
Chintalanka	0,03,534	00,40,029	11
Gangolu	0,01,239	00,31,132	25
Jaggampeta	0,26,530	01,25,943	5
Gopalapuram	0,18,192	00,93,090	5
Gollaprolu	0,11,236	00,58,634	5
Kesanakurru	0,11,311	00,34,640	3
Polavaram	0,06,714	00,49,670	7
Kottam	0,26,173	01,91,142	7

Source: Compiled from Gorrepati Venkatasubbayya, *Op Cit*, p.27., V.V.Sayana, *Op Cit*, p.94, A.V.Raman Rao, *Economic development of andhra Pradesh, 1765-1957*, p.270 and K.Chinnaya Suri, *Agrarian Movements in Andhra, 1921-71*, un-Published Ph.D. Thesis, J.N.U., New Delhi, 1984.

33. Memorandum by the peasants of Gollaprolu estate submitted to the Prakasam Committee, *RMELAC*, Part II, p.93.

34. *Ibid*, p.95.

35. Memorandum by Tuni ryots, *Ibid*, p.96.

36. The manager of Challapalli estate himself gave this figure of 75,000 acres as belonging to the Zamindar. *RMELAC*, landholders Statement, Part II, p.250. The President of peasant association in Muktyala estate complained that the Zamindar acquired hundreds of acres in the estate where he had no single acre as seri land previously. *RMELAC*, Oral Evidence, Part IV, p.95. The existance of seri lands also posed problems regarding the construction of houses in the villages, as almost all the villages in the estates were surrounded by seri lands. If the villagers wanted to construct houses they were forced to pay heavy amounts as nazarana to the Zamindar. *RMELAC*, Landholders Statement, Part IV, p.287. Generally the origin of the seri land

took place in the system when a part of the patta land was separated as the personal land of the muttadar by the Zamindar for his maintenance. When the muttadar was ousted it naturally went into the hands of the Zamindar thus forming his own land. Gradually, this seri lands were created by occupation and encroachment of communal lands including public paths and cattle-stands and of irrigation tanks in many places, RMELAC, Memorandum, Supplement Volume, pp.623-4. This home-farm land was at the absolute disposal of the Zamindar and the relations between a landlord and tenant of his private land were not regulated by the provisions of the 1908 Act, RMELAC, Part I, p.40.

37. RMELAC, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.634.

38. All most all the tenants of all the estates gave instances of irregularities conducted by the Zamindar in the name of seri lands.

39. For example, in Kurupam estate of Vishakapatnam district out of 700 sq. miles of land, 154 sq. miles were rented out to muttadars in 1935, *Court of Wards Reports*, Madras, 1935-36.

40. RMELAC, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.622.

41. *Ibid.*

42. Many of the Zamindars who own home lands issue pattar in favour of their wives so that to be free from occupancy rights and create their wives as their tenants, RMELAC, Memorandum, Part II, p.137.

43. For example in Challapalli estate, the tenants (pattadars) charged rates from their sub-tenants Rs.20 on dry land; Rs. 100 on garden land and Rs.30 on wet land; In Vuyyur estate the rent on garden land collected from sub-tenants was Rs.100 to 120. RMELAC, Landholders Statement, Part I, pp.277-278. The pattadar could eject his sub-tenant even if he pays the stipulated rent regularly, even without any means of a suit. RMELAC, Landholders Statement, Part IV, p.104. The relationship between the pattadar and his under-tenant was based on a contract between both of them. In several cases the pattadar collected exorbitant rate from his sub-tenants and this left the pattadar with a very fair margin of profit, which became a source of contention between the pattadar and the Zamindar. Several of the Zamindars who submitted memo's to the Prakasam Committee argued that the sub-tenants be given occupancy rights and brought directly under the control of the Zamindars and complained that the tenants were rack-renting their sub-tenants, RMELAC, Part I, p.53. Several sub-tenants complained that the patta-owners possessing large areas of land were behaving like the Zamindars, RMELAC, Part II, p.103.

Some of the tenants argued that the question of under-tenants should not be taken at that stage (when Prakasam

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Committee was dealing with the **zamin-ryots**) claiming that the position of the tenants itself was not stable. *Ibid*, p.124. Infact many tenants do not even reside in the villlages where they hold their lands. The 1908 Act divided the ryots **into** two categories, i.e., those with and without occupancy rights, thus giving more powers to the occupancy tenants which deteriorated the position of the sub-tenants. This Act conferred occupancy rights to the tenants who held land for 12 consecutive years, thus giving him power to transfer, sell or gift the land. Now the tenant had fixity of tenure, free transfer and were mostly protested from arbitrary enhancement of rent.

Moreover, 'owing to the slow rate of economic expansion, the rapidly increasing population had to remain in villages, thus causing overcrowding,.. leading to excessive splitting of the peasant properties'. *League of Nations European Conference on Rural Life*, Poland, 1940, p.8. This phenomenon was present even in rural Andhra. The following table shows increase in number of non-cultivating landowners and agricultural labourers per 1,000 persons engaged in cultivation in Madras Province:

	1901;	1911;	1921;	1931;
Non-Cultivating Landlords	19	23	49	34
Non-Cultivating Tenants	1	4	28	16
Cultivating Landlords	484	426	381	390
Cultivating Tenants	151	207	225	120
Agricultural Labourers	345	340	317	429

(Source: V.V.Sayana, *Readings in Rural Problems*, S.Chand, New Delhi, 1950, p. 171

Thus, when there is a demand for land and price of land value is rising, no tenant would lease land on a **long-term** and would like to renew the existing lease from year to year, at **higher** rates of rent. Though the tenants demanded commutation of rents from kind to cash following the 1908 Act, they demanded **rent** only in kind from their sub-tenants, the actual tiller, thus depriving him the benefit from the price rise in food-grains. The following table demonstrates the surplus appropriated by the occupancy tenants in terms rent from the sub-tenants;

Repudi Estate:

Patta No.;	Rent collected from sub-tenant; (Rs)	Rent paid to the Zamindar; (Rs)	Surplus with the tenant; (Rs)
62	60	6	54
90	70	5	65
99	80	4	76
31	80	5	75

(Source: *RNELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.405)

Infact, this surplus with occupancy tenants **formed** the basis of a struggle for rent between the two sections of **rent**

receivers, i.e., the non-cultivating tenants and the Zamindars. However, some of the economic historians argue that the high rents demanded by the tenants was due to the Zamindars demand for a high rent from the tenants and that the ryot had no other way left except to ask for a still higher rent from the sub-tenant, which however is very fallacious as seen from the above table. See N.G.Ranga, et.al., *The Report of the Economic Enquiry Committee*, Bezwada, 1933.

As a result of his sub-infeudation a large number of intermediaries were created and all of them were only rent-receivers or rent-payers. Simon Commission reported that 'in some districts... as many fifty or more intermediate interests have been created between the Zamindar at the top and the cultivator at the bottom', *Report of the Indian Statutory Commission*, vol.1, p.340. The main culprit for the failure of tenancy laws the freedom given to sub-let land, which converted the occupancy tenant into a rent receivers and an inferior absentee proprietor. The tenancy laws failed to protect the real cultivator and in trying to curb the Zamindar they only multiplied the number of oppressors of the real cultivator. When ryoti interests became valuable a large number non-cultivators, the money-lenders, middlemen and others became interested in land and entered the field as active purchasers of these interests. The privileges and protections meant for the cultivator were thus transferred from the non-cultivating Zamindars to other non-cultivators and rich cultivators, making actual cultivator become worse in the process. This situation resulted in the appropriation of the surplus by the tenant and witnessed the emergence of the rich peasant section within the Zamindari agrarian structure. It was these non-cultivating section and rich peasantry fought with the Zamindars in post-depression years for more surplus, privileges and protection at the cost of the sub-tenant, when there own position was threatened.

44. RMELAC, Landholders Statement, Part II, p.10.
45. P.K.G.Mudaliar, *Note on the Permanent Settlement*, 1940, p.132.
46. N.G.Ranga, *The Modern Indian Peasant*, Anmol Pub., New Delhi, p.129.
47. *Ibid*, p.129.
48. Compiled from various reports of RMELAC.
49. Compiled from RMELAC, Collectors Report. According to Congress Committee's investigation, the average low rate was Rs.14-4-2 and the average high rate was Rs.24-8-0. It also reveals that the lowest rate collected by the Zamindars was not less than Rs.12 and the maximum being Rs.59 on paddy growing land. RMELAC, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.624.

N.G.Ranga's survey also supports the same trend:

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Area:	Dry Land, Rate per Acre: (Rs)	Wet Land Rate per Acre: (Rs)	Garden Rates (Rs)
Government Lands	5 annas to 2-8-0	3-8-0 to 5-12-0	N.A
Kalurayani-guden (W.G.dt)	1 to 2	6 to 12	12
Gajjaram estate('')	5 annas to 2-8-0	7 to 11	12
South Vallur('')	6 annas to 2-8-2	4 to 20	N.A
Tangellamudi (W.G.dt)	12 annas to 2-8-0	5 to 12	N.A

Source: N.G.Ranga, et.al., *Op Cit*, p.71.

50. *RMELAC*, Landholders Statement, Part II, pp.7-8. The Godavari District Manual states that the most ancient revenue system in the country was the 'Asara' or division of the produce. *Godavari District Manual*, p.312. 'Visabadi' system was merely a method of dividing the revenue assessed under the village system according to customary shares in which the village body held their land. It involved the curious condition that if any one thought his share over, and that of his neighbour under-assessed, he had a right to demand that the latter be made over to him at an increased rate, which he named, in exchange for his own. But if the neighbour agrees to the enhanced rate, the exchange was not actually carried out, but the complainant was allowed a proportionate reduction on his land. Baden Powell, *Op Cit*, vol.III, p.46.

51. *RMELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.624; V.V.Sayana, *The Agrarian Problems of Madras Presidency*, *Op Cit*, p.624.

52. There are number of such examples in *RMELAC*.

53. *RMELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.624.

54. *RMELAC*, Landholders Statement, Part IV, p.286. Also see Gorrepati Venkatasubbaiah, *Mana Zamindarilu*, *Opcit*, pp.25-27.

55. RaghavaIangar, *Op Cit*, p.220. For instance, the Maharaja of Pittapuram collected additional periodical enhancement of two annas per rupee promising to improve the lands in Venkatakrishnarayapuram village by providing a drainage channel. But, the Zamindar had never spend even a single pie towards their improvement, *RMELAC*, Part II, p.85.

56. *R MELAC*, landholders Statement, Part IV, p.279.

57. *Select Document Series, Op Cit.*

58. It is to be remembered that under the Rent Recovery Act (Act VIII of 1865) section 2 permitted the rents to be fixed by express or implied contract between a landholder and a tenant.

59. *R MELAC*, Memo-Part III, p.85. On the strength of the price lists, which were actually prepared by the estate officials, several estates filed enhancement suits from 1928 and collected the decreed enhancements with retrospective effect, *R MELAC*, Memorandum, Supplement Volume, p.620-21.

60. *R MELAC*, Memo-Part I, pp.34-35.

61. A retired Sub-Magistrate and ex-Diwan of Kottam estate states that, 'following the Estates Land Act, dated 1st July 1908, the Zamindars began making his collections both current and arrears. He began to collect every year two times the current demand whatever the yield of the crops in the holding might be. He left nothing to the tenants in the crop by keeping watch over it and appropriated it to himself. The tenant was thus a perpetual slave and a poor man living always hand to mouth', *R MELAC*, Memo-Part II, p.95. The Act gave the Zamindar the power to collect rent due to him in one of three ways; a) by a suit before the collector, b) by distraint and sale of movable property, and c) by sale of a ryot's holding, *R MELAC*, Memo-Part I, p.47.

62. *R MELAC*, Memo-Part III, p.47.

63. Prices of Agricultural Produce:

Name of the Commodity:	1876:	1910	1926(October)
	(Price in Rs. per Candy)		
Paddy	33-5-4	60-70	110
Maize	32-40	80	128
Variga	32-40	80	130
Cholam	36-40	80	160
Chillies	20-23	40-50	130
Cotton	25-27		60
Redgram	35-37	60-70	160
Greengram	30-37	60-70	160
Coriandar	16-20	40-50	160
Dry Paddy	22-25	50-60	100
Tobacco	12-15	20-30	75

Source: N.G.Ranga, *Economic Organisation of Indian Villages*, Vol.11, *Kitab Mahal*, Bombay, 1929, p.112.

Annual Paddy Prices, (in Rs.) 1902-1933

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Year	East Godavari	Krishna
1902	81	78
1903	83	80
1904	97	97
1905	115	115
1906	130	126
1907	144	135
1908	149	139
1909	148	139
1910	143	134
1911	151	136
1912	153	136
1913	147	131
1914	140	124
1915	143	128
1916	156	140
1917	185	164
1918	238	236
1919	274	268
1920	277	258
1921	237	217
1922	203	196
1923	197	193
1924	204	187
1925	226	191
1926	231	196
1927	225	218
1928	205	184
1929	177	152
1930	163	115
1931	147	110
1932	140	100
1933	130	100

Source: *RMEAC*, Volume on Prices and Graphs.

64. R.Rao, *Bobbili Zamindari*, Madras, 1907, pp.97-98.

65. *RMEAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.620.

66. Memorandum by the Members of the Sub-Committee of the district Board, Godavari, in R.Ris, no.235, dt., 21 August, 1900, p.18.

67. Resettlement Report of Krishna, West and East Godavari Districts, in *Board of Revenue (Land Revenue and Settlement)*, no.29, dt. 18th May, 1927, pp.30-31.

68. Along with these, few important feeder lines were laid connecting Narasaraopet, Gurajala, Guntur, Ponnur, Tenali, Macherla, Repalle etc.

69. Resettlement Report of Kistna, West and East Godavari districts, *Board of Revenue (Land Revenue and Settlement)*, no.29, 18th May, 1927, p.30.

70. A.V.Raman Rao calls them great arteries of commerce. A.V.Ramana Rao, *Op Cit*, p.239.
71. Board of Revenue (Revenue settlement, Land Revenue & Agriculture), no.278, 29th October, 1896, p.4.
72. Memorandum on the Moral and Material Progress of the Madras Presidency, p.3.
73. CO.Revenue (Special) no.158, 9th August, 1918.
74. G.O.Revenue (Special) no.2806, 27th July, 1918.
75. Cited in David Washbrook, 'Country Politics in Madras; 1880 to 1930', in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol, 7, no.3, 1973, p.511.
76. See Statistical Atlas, 1940-41 and 1950-51 for average rainfall of all districts of Andhra.
77. Board of Revenue (Revenue Settlement, Land Revenue & Agricultural), no. 438, 30th December, 1899.
78. G.O.Revenue, no. 1125, 5th November, 1900.
79. Review and Returns of Sea-borne Trade and Navigation of the Madras Presidency for the years 1899-1900 and 1903-1904.
80. See the graph showing the trend of prices of rice, Jowar, bajra and ragi in East Godavari, West Godavari and Krishna districts, Statistical Atlas of the Andhra State , 1950-51, Hyderabad, 1959.
81. Royal Commission on Agriculture p.267.
82. Statistical Atlas, 1940-41 and 1950-51. Infact the wages were slow to respond to the rise in prices in prices of foodgrains, see M.Atchi Reddy, 'Official Data on Agricultural Wages in the Madras Presidency from 1873', in the *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. XV, no.4, 1978, pp.451-466.
83. B.V.Narayanaswami Naidu, *Report of the Economist for Enquiry into Rural Indebtedness*, Madras, 1946 proves this.
84. Statistical Atlas of Madras, 1940, see respective district statistics.
85. Madras Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee Report. Cash rents would have been advantageous to the ryots had there been regular or proper survey and settlement arrangements.
86. RMELAC, Memo-Part II, p.16.
87. Rents in kind was collected generally through three different methods, namely, varam, crop-appraisement and cropwari

systems. Under the *varam* the proportion of share usually was half the gross produce; under the crop-appraisement the rent was fixed; under *cropwari* system different rates of rents for various kinds of crops was collected, *RMELAC*, collected from various reports.

88. See *RMELAC*, Memorandum Supplemental Volume, pp.612-645. The main reason for this manifold increase was the commutation of rents, along with customary taxes and levies into cash during the period of relatively high prices, arbitrary enforcement of higher rents on inferior soils, unjust levy of water-rates etc.

89. *Ibid.*

90. *RMELAC*, Part II, p.16.. The memorandum of Peddapur Taluk **Ryots'** Committee states that, 'the assessment in the Zamindari areas was not based on any principles. By frequent revision of rent, creating factions in the villages and encouraging one ryot to bid against another, the Zamindar brought the rent to the maximum level they can'. *RMELCA*, Part II, p.80.

91. *Ibid*, p.113.

92. Almost all the memos submitted by the tenants supports this demand, *RMELAC*, all volumes.

93. For example, in *Pittapuram* estate, in *Thondangi* village, the Zamindar taking advantage of the Act of 1908 filed a number of suits for increment of rents just before the depression in 1928 and forced the ryots of the village to pay Rs.0-1-6 increment of rent, *RMELAC*, Memo-Part III, p.97.

94. *RMELAC*, Oral Evidence, Part VI, p.120.

95. *RMELAC*, Collectors Report, p.62.

96. N.G.Ranga et.al., *Op Cit.*

97. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part III, p.97.

98. N.G.Ranga et al., *Op Cit.*

99.. *RMELAC*, Landholders Statement, Part II, p.247.

100. In *Gollaprolu* estate the net yield per acre was from Rs.25 to Rs.100 on the lands grown with chillies and cotton. The Collector of the Krishna District reports that the lands in *Gollaprolu* estate were richly suitable for a peculiar variety widely known as '*Gollaprolu* chillies' throughout India and produce of chillies in this estate was sufficient to supply chillies throughout Madras Presidency, Hyderabad and Bengal Province, *RMELAC*, Collectors Report, p.37.

101. This was the argument put forward by the Zamindars to show that the the tenants were sufficiently protected and that the

tenants complaints about rackrenting were baseless.

102. On an average the under-tenants paid 70% of their gross produce as rent.

103. It was said that since 1911, there was a 100% increase in wages, N.G.Ranga et. al., *Op.Cit.*, p.46.

104. This was more during depression years and it was the major complaint of the Zamindars to the prakasam Committee. V.V.Sayana observes, 'Rents are not paid regularly by powerful ryots, only small and weak ryots pay regularly'. V.V.Sayana, *Agrarian Problems of Madras Province, Op Cit*, p.110.

105. This economic activity undermined the Zamindar's role in the economic life of his estate and thus his ability to redistribute the material resources of his subjects while simultaneously increasing the bargaining strength of the tenant vis-a-vis the Zamindar.

106. In all of the legislative measures, a privileged class of tenants has been recognised, remarks B.V.Narayanaswami Naidu and P.S.Narasimham, in *The Economics of Indian Agriculture*, Part II, Madras, 1955, p.462.

107. D.A.Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics; The Madras Presidency, 1870-1920*, C.U.P., 1975, p.162.

108. Majority of the tenants who gave witness to the Prakasam Committee claimed as owning acres ranging from 10 to 50 and more.

110. Sir Fredrick Nicholson calculated that the rural debt at the beginning of any harvest was about Rs. 45, *Agricultural Banks*, pp.237-247. The Banking Enquiry Committee placed it nearly about Rs. 150 crores in 1930. W.R.S.Sathyanathan put it at about Rs.200 crores in 1935 and B.V.Narayanaswami Naidu stated that the total debt by the end of 1939 was Rs. 271.9 crores and Rs. 217.7 crores in 1945. *Madras Provincial Banking Committee Report*; W.R.S.Sathyanathan, *Report on Agricultural Indebtedness*, 1935; B.V.Narayanaswami Naidu, *Report of the Economist for Enquiry into Rural Indebtedness*, Madras, 1946.

Apart from these government surveys, private surveys were also conducted regarding this issue. Important among them were, N.G.Ranga, *Agricultural Indebtedness and Remedial Measures*, Tenali, 1931, B.V.Narayanaswami Naidu and V.Venkataraman, *The Problem of Rural Indebtedness*, P.J.Thomas, *The Problem of Rural Indebtedness*, Madras, 1934, R.S.Vaidyanatha Aiyar, *A Memorandum on the Ryotwari Landholders in Madras*, Madras, 1933 etc.

111. The following figures give the acreage under food and non-food crops with the total area under cultivation and percentages thereof from 1925 to 1945 in the Madras Presidency:-

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Year	Total sown Area (in acres)	Food crops (in acres)	%	Non-food crops (in acres)	%
1925-26	38,290,340	30,034,010	77.5	8,754,486	22.5
1930-31	39,193,201	30,470,033	78.0	8,723,168	22.0
1935-36	36,628,827	28,396,484	77.5	8,232,342	22.5
1940-41	37,343,724	27,826,422	74.5	9,517,302	25.5
1944-45	36,999,372	27,968,197	75.6	9,031,175	24.4

Source: B.V.Narayanaswami Naidu, *Report of the Economist, Op Cit*, p.10.

It is clear that non-food crops have been steadily gaining ground. This gradual shift was owing to the pull of external markets for non-food crops in the decade prior to 1935. In periods of shrinking of international trade, however, the prices and profitability of the commercial crops began to drop as they were most susceptible to the vagaries of world markets. Also see N.G.Ranga, *Economic Organisation of Indian Villages*, vol.11, Kitab Mahal, Bombay, 1929, p.103.

112. See D.Thorner, *The Agrarian Prospect in India*, Delhi, 1956 for a thorough discussion on this subject on all-India scale.

113. *Banking Committee Report, Op Cit*, Oral Evidence, vol.IV, p.33. Mr.Malcolm Darling says that 33 to 50 percent of the total debt of the Punjabi peasant was probably due to compound interest. Malcolm Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt*, pp.18-20.

114. *Banking Committee Report, Op Cit*, p.132.

115. *Ibid*, p.33.

116. Biswanath Das, a leading peasant leader, giving witness to the Banking Committee says that 'the sowcar does not know the amount of rent he (peasant) owes to the landlord and he does not know when his (peasant) lands would be sold. So there is very little for the moneylender to be profited. Consequently the moneylender charged a higher rate of interest and more extent of land as security'. *Ibid*, p.10.

117. Many of the moneylenders demanded, infact, gold and silver rather than land or crops as security in the Zamindari areas probably because in the Zamindari estates lands were not surveyed, many tenants had Joint pattas, even in surveyed estates proper records were not kept and above all 1908 Act gave the Zamindars first right over the tenant's produce.

118. *Banking Committee Report, Op Cit*, p.219. K.S.Narayana Murthy's investigation in a village in Krishna district reveals how a ryot had to hand his 12 acres to the moneylender on failing to repay his debt of Rs. 150 taken at the rate of Rs. 1-8-0 percent interest, Gilbert Slater, *Some South Indian Villages*, vol.1, O.U.P., Madras, 1928, p.116.

119. V.V.Sayana, *Op Cit*, p.167. Also see Bruce L.Robert, Jr., 'Agricultural Credit Cooperatives in Madras, 1893-1937: Rural Development and Agrarian Politics in Pre-Independence India', in *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol, XVI, no.2, 1979, pp.165-66.

120. Bruce's enquiry reveals that despite the growth in the number of credit societies, they failed to make a significant economic impact on rural society. He says 'moneylending continued unabated, the poor were excluded from the movement and societies were capable of capturing only a small fraction of the rural credit market'. Bruce L.Robert, Jr., *Op Cit*, p.163.

121. T.V.Achariyar, *Report of the Committee on Cooperation in Madras, 1939-1940*, Madras, 1940, p.9. N.G.Ranga's enquiry committee for instance reveals that in Pittapuram taluk, the Zamindar usurped the only two cooperative societies in the taluk to develop his financial fortunes at the cost of the tenants, N.G.Ranga et. al., *Op Cit*, p.66.

W.R.S.Sathyanathan summed up the motives of those who dominated the movement by stating, 'the whole movement is now greatly in the hands of unsatisfactory men, who are exploiting the general institutions under it for the purpose of self-aggrandizement or self gain for the service of their political or other ends'. W.R.S.Sathyanathan, *Op Cit*, p.61.

Bruce concludes his study thus, 'the societies worked to provide a structure which would more closely tie the rural elite with the political centre at Madras. It was a relationship the various actors cultivated for different reasons. The rural elite saw in the movement the opportunity to enhance their wealth and prestige. The politicians of dyarchy viewed it as a means of extending and strengthening their patronage networks in the countryside. Bruce L.Robert, Jr., *Op Cit*, P.184.

122. T.V.Achariyar, *Op Cit*, p.9.

123. Banking Committee Report, *Op Cit*, p.298.

124. Sathyanathan's report indicated that in Andhra ryot-moneylenders outmatched the professional moneylenders in the rural credit market. He mentions that the domination of big agriculturist moneylenders over the 'small and medium landholders' rendered the latter landless, W.R.S.Sathyanathan, *Op Cit*, pp.38-39 and 90.

125. N.G.Ranga et al., *Op Cit*, K.S.Narayana Murthy observes, 'there are more debts now, that the gulf between the rich and the poor is widened more and more, that the once poor are now poorer and the once rich now richer'. Gilbert Slater, *Op Cit*, p.119.

126. Percentage of population involved in debt in Krishna, West Godavari and East Godavari districts by 1930:-

Property value	Krishna	W.Godavari	E.Godavari
Below Rs. 500	55.77	69.31	91.84
From Rs. 500-1000	38.22	43.44	44.39
From Rs. 1000-5000	25.97	26.15	27.30
From Rs. 5000-10000	19.49	21.99	22.58
From Rs. 10000-20000	16.82	18.28	18.78
From Rs. 20000 and more	14.63	19.48	23.82

Source: A.V.Raman Rao, *Op Cit*, p.293.

127. V.V.Sayana, *The Agrarian Problems of Madras Province*, *Op Cit*, p.159.

128. Purpose of debts according to the Report of the Economic Enquiry Committee of 1930:-

Purpose:	Krishna:	W. Godavari:	E.Godavari
Purchase of new lands	25%	17%	20%
Cultivation expenses	25%	38%	37%
Liquidation of old debts	4%	33%	19%
Family expenses	37%	6%	14%
Litigation expenses	V/.	3%	1%
Trade	7%	2%	8%
Miscellaneous	1%	1%	1%

Source:-N.G.Ranga et.al., *Op Cit*, p.75. Also see Gilbert Slater, *Op Cit*, p.116 and W.R.S.Sathyanathan, *Op Cit*, pp.40-43.

129. *All India Rural Credit Survey*, (District Monograph, West Godavari District), Bombay, 1959, p.102.

130. K.G.Sivaswamy, *Op Cit*, pp.250, 290-91.

131. V.V.Sayana, *Op Cit*, p.162.

132. B.V.Narayanawami Naidu, *Op Cit*, p.52.

133. K.G.Sivaswamy, *Op Cit*, p.307.

134. *All India Rural Credit Survey*, *Op Cit*, p.139.

135. W.R.S.Sathyanathan, *Op Cit*, p.41.

136. RHELAC, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.30.

137. RHELAC, Oral Evidence, Part IV, p.95.

It will be interesting to note that in a Zamindari village the villagers were in arrears of Rs.6,000 which had to pay an annual rent of Rs.6,000. N.G.Ranga et.al., *Op Cit*, p.31.

138. Para 5 of the Sanad states that, 'the remissions which have occasionally been granted according to the custom of the country on account of drought, inundation or other calamity of the season shall now cease and never be revived', RHELAC, Landholders Statement, Part II, p15.

139. Baden Powell, *Op Cit*, vol.III, p.184.

140. RMELAC, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.628.

141. Apart from the factors such as price fall and high rents the peasant resistance was very widespread during the depression period. The decline after 1935 may be explained by the rising prices and legal protection during the Congress ministry by means of debt relief legislation.

142. For example in Yerrampet estate in West Godavari several of the villages were in arrears due to the Zamindar:-

Name:	Year	Demand	Collection	Balance
		(all in rupees)		
Chinnayagudem	1935	2,133-6-9	1,468-7-4	664-15-5
	1936	4,116-2-3	2,913-10-2	1,202-8-1
Chopparamannagudem	1935	313-1-9	152-10-6	160-7-3
	1936	881-6-4	570-13-5	310-8-11
Vadalakunta	1935	242-10-2	41-3-4	201-6-10
	1936	1,472-5-7	1,287-3-1	185-2-6
Vedullakunta	1935	278-4-8	123-6-11	154-13-9
	1936	694-14-6	565-13-4	129-1-2
Yerrampeta	1935	1,170-4-10	469-13-11	700-6-11
	1936	2,879-5-11	1,721-12-9	497-9-2

Source:- RMELAC, Landholders Statement, Part I, p.246.

Number of Defaulters:

District	1929	1930	1931	1932	1935	1939	1940
East Godavari	496	605	303	1388	1782	2682	2950
West Godavari	1187	1367	1020	1527	1316	827	236
Krishna	1414	2069	1891	2349	1019	598	970

Source:- Compiled from *Report on the Working of the Madras Estates Land Act of 1908* for respective years.

143. RMELAC, Oral Evidence, Part IV, p.104.

144. *Ibid*, p.87.

145. N.G.Ranga et.al., *Op Cit.*, p.67.

146. V.V.Sayana, *Op Cit*, p.110.

147. RMELAC, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, pp. 612-630.

148. Rent Suits:-

District	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1935	1939	1940
E. Godavari	624	809	724	578	761	713	2642	1076
W. Godavari	1471	1063	1181	1238	899	956	1316	951
Krishna	1115	782	840	1467	1402	1498	3046	3392

Source:- Compiled from *Report on the Working of the Madras Estates Land Act of 1908* for respective years.

149. It has to be remembered that 1908 Act gave the Zamindar to collect his rent in one of three ways, a) by a suit before the collector b) by distraint and sale of movable property and c) by sale of a ryot's holding.

150. For example the Zamindar of Gangole estate who had 714.04 acres of private land at the end of 1927 possessed ownership of 1431.47 acres of land by the end of 1936., *R MELAC*, Landholders Statement, Part II, p.21.

151. *R MELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.616.

152. *R MELAC*, Memo-Part II, p.68.

153. *R MELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.54.

154. Years: No.ofDefaulters: Arrears(Rs. in Lakhs)

1916-18	10,561	0.90
1919-22	12,556	1.38
1923-25	7,710	1.56
1926-28	8,393	1.58
1929-31	9,378	1.88
1932-34	12,346	3.74
1935-37	7,101	2.24
1939-40	6,191	1.28

Source:- Compiled from the *Madras Estates Land Act Report* for the respective years.

155. *Ibid.*

156. *Ibid.*

157. See *Report on the Administration of the Estates under the Courts of Wards* in the Madras Presidency.

158. See V.V.Sayana, *land Sales, Land Values and Land Transfers*, Delhi, 1952 for a detailed and descriptive study on this issue".

159. Like lack of proper and regular survey and settlement of fields, existence of Joint-pattas, and the difficulty of patta transfers, lack of proper irrigational facilities and loan facilities etc.

160. Population Growth in Lakhs from 1901 to 1941:-

District	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	% variation of 1901 & 1941
E.Godavari	14.66	16.53	14.71	19.20	21.62	47.4
W.Godavari	8.61	9.81	10.51	12.23	13.80	60.3
Krishna	8.83	10.17	10.82	12.54	14.44	63.5

Source: Compiled from the *Census Reports* of the Madras Presidency.

Agricultural Classes in 1950 in the following districts:-

District	Total Population in 1950	Agricultural Classes	% of Agri- cultural Pop- ulation to the Total Population
E.Godavari	22,07,024	16,59,730	68.71
W.Godavari	16,97,727	12,44,876	73.33
Krishna	17,79,484	11,56,245	65.00

Source: *Statistical Atlas of the Andhra State (1950-51)*, Hyderabad, 1959.

161. *RHELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.625.

162. *RHELAC*, Collectors Report.

163. *RHELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.628.

164. See N.G.Ranga et. al., *Op Cit.*, p.64.

165. *RHELAC*, Memo-Part II, p.73. Gottapati Brahmaiah, *Naa Jivitha Nauka*, Machilipatnam, 1976, p.73.

166. *RHELAC*, Memo-Part II. p.135. *RHELAC*, Part III, p.96.

167. *Ibid*, p.109.

168. *RHELAC*, Memorandum, Supplement Volume, p.629.

169. N.G.Ranga, et. al. *Op Cit*, p.86.

170. *RHELAC*, Memorandum, Supplement Volume, p.629.

171. N.G.Ranga et.al, *Op Cit*, says that in all the estate the condition was the same..

172. *RHELAC*, Memo-Part III, p.97.

173. *RHELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.630. *RHELAC*,

Landholders Statement, Part II, p.310.

174. Compiled from the *Courts of Wards Report* for the years 1928-1936.

175. *Zamin Ryot*, a drama written by V.V.S.Sarma describes very aptly the exploitative activities of the Zamindars and the problems of the tenants. Infact, the drama was banned by the Madras Government through G.O.No.576 dt.19.10.1938 on the grounds that the staging of the play might create unnecessary hitch and disaffection between the Zamindars and their tenants.

The following is the summary of the plot. The drama starts with some agricultural labourers who were on their way to the lands of the Zamindar of their village for transplantation work, express their discontent that they were not properly paid for their work by the Zamindar. One person complaints that the Zamindar does not allow the labourers to work in tenants fields who pays sufficiently until the work in Zamindars home farm was finished (p.2) Chowdary, one of the influential tenants of the place, meets them, dissuades them going to the Zamindar's home-farm and takes them with him to his own lands promising them a higher wage. The Zamindar who comes to know of this sends one of his servants to bring the workers back by force.

He threatens the villagers to vote for him in the ensuing district board elections and frightens them of dire consequences if they were found talking with opposition parties contesting against the Zamindar (10-11). It was a tradition in the estate to provide cocks and goats to the estate free of cost. The shepherds were forced to manure his fields with their sheep-folk.

Once, a poet approaches the Zamindar for help in his attempts to dedicate some of his patriotic works to Mr.Gandhi. The Zamindar treats poet very rudely. Thus insulted, poet goes to Chowdari who promises his help. Fearing trouble from Chowdari, the Zamindar causes his house to be looted and all his cattle to be killed one night (136-37). Then Chowdari and his family shifts to another village along with the poet and work with him for enlistment of workers and peasants to Gandhi Seva Sangh. Accordingly, a meeting was held under the presidency of Chowdari. On that occasion the poet speaks first on the vices of Zamindars and officials. He compares the Zamindars with Hindu mythological demons like Hiranyakasipa and Ravanaasura. The Zamindars, he says, having control over Legislators, Governors, District Board Officials, Collectors, Police Inspectors, Post-Masters etc., makes the agricultural labourers and tenants to shiver with his unabated tyranny. He alleges that Zamindars of illegal exactions (49-53).

Chowdari next addressess the meeting. He accuses the Zamindars of acquiring the estates and speaks on the origins of the Zamindari system. He says that they were first appointed as revenue farmers and later on they became the owners through back-door (54-55). But before he concludes his speech, he was

arrested by the police on a false charge preferred against him by the Zamindar that he has burnt down his hay-stack and killed four of his cattle. Chowdarl was tried and sentenced by a Magistrate to two years rigorous imprisonment (64).

While in Jail, he was given oil-mill work and whipped by the jail warden for not doing his work properly, in the presence of poet and other ryots who have come to the Jail to see him. Poet begins to address the ryots present on the sad plight of zamin ryots but the whole party was turned out of the Jail by the Jail-warden. The drama also comes to an end.

From the beginning to the end in this drama the ill-treatment meted out by the Zamindars to their tenants and resulting hardship to them is very well depicted.

176. N.G.Ranga, et.al., *Op Cit*, p.23. Gorrepati Venkatasubbalah, *Op Cit*, pp.30-32.

177. P.N.Driver, *Op Cit*, p.68.

178. 'In Madras the Zamindars have not been less enthusiastic in coming forward to levy all kinds of illegal dues of which the most scandalous are the cess and fees for use of communal lands, the tax in money on garden lands, the tax on trees etc.', K.G.Sivaswamy, *Feudal and Extra Levies in Zamindari Areas*, p.24.

179. RMELAC, Landholders Statement, Part I, p.275. In some estate it was called 'Khareejulu', RMELAC, Landholders Statement, Part II, p.252. In some other estates it was called 'Karnam Selagalu' or 'Sharabu Rusumu', RMELAC, Memo-Part II, p.122.

180. RMELAC, Landholders Statement, Part IV, p.103.

181. RMELAC, Memorandum, Supplement Volume, p.623.

182. *Ibid*.

183. This was a universal complaint of almost all the tenants who presented their views to the Prakasam Committee and was also confirmed by the N.G.Ranga enquiry committee.

184. All volumes of RMELAC confirms this illegal levies.

185. RMELAC, Memorandum, Supplement Volume, p.624.

186. *Ibid*, p.620.

187. RMELAC, Memo-Part III, p.100.

188. RMELAC, Oral Evidence, Part IV, Part IV, p.126.

189. This was officially confirmed by various district collectors, RMELAC, Collectors Report.

190. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part II, p.122.
191. *Ibid*, pp.82-83.
192. *RMELAC*, Memorandum, Supplement Volume, p.631.
193. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part II, p.142.
194. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part III, p.99.
195. *RMELAC*, Memorandum, Supplement, Volume, p.624.
196. N.G.Ranga, et. al. *Op Cit.*, p.67.
197. *RMELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.632, Gottipati Brahmaiah, *Op Cit*, p.69.
198. Tatavarty Venkateshwara Rao, gives a vivid account of such irregularities in rent collection in his book. N.G.Ranga, et. al., *Op Cit*, p.76.
199. All volumes of *RMELAC* supports this point.
200. *Andhra Patrika*, 14.3.1933.
201. *RMELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.57.
202. The following figures of a village in Venkatagiri estate indicate the extortionate character of the punitive tax:-
- | | Punitive tax;
(in Rs.) | Pasture tax;
(in Rs.) |
|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Devulapalli on | | |
| 29.1.1928 | 134-8-0 | 144-4-6 |
| 30.6.1928 | 70-0-0 | 180-0-0 |
- Source: N.G.Ranga, et. al., *Op Cit*, p.116.
203. *RMELAC*, Oral Evidence, Part IV, p.92.
204. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part I, p.287.
205. *RMELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.57.
206. Gottipati Brahmaiah, *Op Cit*, p.74, N.G.Ranga, et.al., *Op Cit*, p.81, *RMELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.57.
207. For instance, the rates of forest fees prevailed in the Kottam Estate were as follows:

Firewood (dry wood only):	Rate per Head Load	- 1 anna,
	Rate per Bullock Load	- 3 anna,
	Rate per Ass Load	- 2 anna,
Grazing Fees	Calf	- 2 anna,
	Buffallow	- 8 anna,

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Calf	- 4 anna,
Sheep	- 1 anna,
Goat	- 2 anna.

Source: *RMELAC*, Landholders Statement, Part I, p.248.

208. *RMELAC*, Landholders Statement, Part IV, p.104 & 125.
209. *RMELAC*, Oral Evidence, p.101.
210. *RMELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.638.
211. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part 11, P.84.
212. *Ibid*, p.112.
213. *RMELAC*, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.640.
214. N.G.Ranga, et al, *Op Cit*, p. 145, Gorrepati Venkatasubbaiah, *Op Cit*, pp.50-51.
215. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part III, p.105.
216. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part II, p.142.
217. V.V.Sayana, *Opcit*, p.110.
218. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part II, p.66.
219. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part III, p.99.
220. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part III, pp.112-3. Gorrepati Venkatasubbaiah enumerates a number of ways of how the Zamindars spend their incomes. He says they spend on dogs, cocks, horses, on pomp and show, drama companies, on cinema stars, polo games and on guindy races. Gorrepati Venkatasubbaiah, *Op Cit*, p.38-9 & 54.
221. *The Farm and the City*, Brochure issued by Food and Agricultural Organisation, 1953, pp.9 & 14.
222. 'The sufferings of our peasants can only be imagined when I tell you that they have received only 534 crores of rupees in 1932-33 as against 1,018 crores in 1928-29', N.G.Ranga, *The Modern Indian Peasant*, Anmol Pub., New Delhi, p.69.
223. *RMELAC*, Memo-Part II, p.64; Memo-Part III, p.97; Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.59; and also see N.G.Ranga, et. al., *Op Cit*, p.8.
224. All the government and private enquiries confirm this point.
225. *Report of the Administration of the Madras Presidency, 1933-34*, p.4.

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226. N.G.Ranga, Agricultural Indebtedness and Remedial Means, *Op Cit*, pp.1-9; P.J.Thomas, *The Problem of Rural Indebtedness*, Madras, 1934, p.19.

227. W.R.S.Sathianathan, *Op Cit*, p.28.

228. *Madras Provincial Banking Committee Report*, vol.IV, pp.401-2.

229. Bruce L.Robert, Jr., *Op Cit*, p.182, also see *Andhra Pratrika*, 7.2.1933.

230. W.R.S.Sathianathan, *Op Cit*, p.28.

231. N.G.Ranga, Agricultural Indebtedness, *Op Cit*, p.9.

232. CO. Revenue, No.948, 1st May, 1931.

233. They formed the social base for anti-zamindari and communist movements in Andhra.

234. D.Rothermund, *Agrarian Distress in India 1900-1935* (Mimeo), p.24.

235. RMELAC, Memo-Part I, p.46.

236. RMELAC, Memo-Part VII, p.81.

237. RMELAC, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, p.78.

238. *History of Freedom Material for 1931*, Andhra Pradesh State Archives, pp.1596-1601.

239. RMELAC, Oral Evidence, Part II, p.125.

240. *Report of the Administration of the Madras Presidency 1933-34*, p.20.

241. Financial position of some Estates (Rs in lakhs):

Estate	1928	1929	1930	1931	1933	1934	1935
Kurupam	2.50	2.08	2.59	2.30	1.95	2.12	1.90
S.Vallur	5.33	1.43	1.19	1.11	1.07	0.98	1

Source: *Madras Court of Wards Report* for respective years.

242. Arrear Balances (Rs in lakhs):

Estate	1928	1929	1930	1931	1933	1934
Kurupam	0.65	0.66	0.87	1.00	1.03	1.09
S.Vallur	0.35	0.38	0.41	0.47	0.49	0.50

Sources Ibid.,

Source: Ibid.

243. Infact this heavy indebtedness was one of the reasons for taking down the administration of the estates by the Courts of Wards.

244. Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, International Publication, New York, 1934, p.65.

245. Considerable theoritical work in differentiating rural structure has been done by several scholars.

Lenin discussed the agrarian classes of the European countries as follows:

- a) first, the agricultural proletariat, wage-labourers who obtain their livelihood by working for hire at capitalist agricultural enterprises,
- b) second, the semi-proletarians or peasants who till tiny plots of land, i.e., those who obtain their livelihood partly as wage-labourers, and partly by working their own or rented plots of land, which provide their families only with part of their means of subsistence,
- c) third, the small peasantry, i.e., the small-scale tillers who, either as owners or tenants, hold small plots of land which enable them to satisfy the needs of their families and their farms and do not hire outside labour,
- d) fourth, in the economic sense, one should understand by 'middle peasants' those small farmers who, 1. either as owners or tenants or as tenants hold plots of land that are small but, under capitalism, are sufficient not only to provide as a general rule a meagre subsistence for the family and the basic minimum needed to maintain the farm, but also produce a certain surplus which may, in good years at least, be converted into capital and 2. quite frequently, resort to the employment of hired labour,
- e) fifth, the big peasants pre-capitalist entrepreneurs in agriculture who as a rule employ several hired labourers and are connected with the 'peasantry' only in their 'low cultural level' habits of life and manual labour they themselves perform on their farms,
- f) sixth, the big landowners who, in capitalist countries, directly or through their tenants farmers systematically exploit wage-labour and the neighbouring small peasantry, do not themselves engage in manual labour and are in the main descended from feudal lords. V.I.Lenin, *Preliminary Draft Thesis on the Agrarian Question*, presented to the Second Congress of the Comintern, Moscow, 1920.

Mao Tse-tung's classification of China's rural classes is as follows:

- a) the landlord; a landlord is a person who owns land, does not engage in labour himself or does so only to a very small

extent, and lives by exploiting the peasant. The collection of land rent is his main form of exploitation.

b) the rich peasant; the rich peasant as a rule own land. But some rich peasants own only part of their land and rent the remainder. Others rent all their land. His main form of exploitation is the hiring of labour. A person who owns a fair amount of good land, farms some of it himself without hiring labour, but exploits other peasants by means of land rent, loan interest or in other ways, shall also be treated as a rich peasant,

c) the middle peasant; many middle peasants own land. Some own part of their land and rent the rest. Others rent all their land. A middle peasant derives his income wholly or mainly from his labour. As a rule he does not exploit others and in many cases he himself is exploited by others. Some middle peasants do practice exploitation to a small extent, but this is not their regular or their main source of income, d) the poor peasant; among the poor peasants some own part of their land. Others own no land at all but only a few odd farm implements. As a rule poor peasants have to rent the land they work on and are subjected to exploitation, having to pay land rent and interest on loans and to hire themselves out to some extent. In general, a middle peasant does not need to sell his labour power while the poor peasant has to sell part of his labour power,

e) the worker; the worker (including the farm labourer) as a rule owns no land or farm implements, though some do own a very small amount of land and very few farm implements. Workers make income through their labour power., Mao Tse-tung, 'How to Differentiate the Classes in the Rural Areas', *Collected Works*, vol.III.

Engels divided the peasantry into three classes; the small, the middle and the big peasants, Fredrick Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*, Progress Pub., Moscow, 197 , pp.14-15.

According to Hamza Alavi, the first sector in the rural economy or India is the landlord who own land and who do not undertake cultivation on their own account. Their land is cultivated by landless tenants, mostly sharecroppers who are classified as poor peasants. The second sector is that of independent small holders who own no more land than they cultivate themselves and enough of it to make them self-sufficient. They do not exploit the labour of others. They are the middle peasants. The third sector is that of capitalist farmers, also described as rich farmers, who own substantial amounts of land and whose farming is primarily based on work themselves. Unlike landlords, they undertake the business of farming and employ capital in it. Hamza Alavi, 'Peasant and Revolution', in K.Gough and H.P.Sharma (ed), *Imperialism and Revolution in South Asia*, New York, 1973, pp.292-94.

Dhanagare classifies peasants into four types basing upon the nature of rights, extent of field work actually performed and

type of **income** obtained from the soil. They are a) landlords holding rights over large tracts extending over several villages, they are absentee owners, b) rich landowners, proprietors with considerable holdings but usually on the same villages and rich tenants, having established holdings and enjoying secured rights, c) **middle** peasants, having holdings sufficient to support a family,, who cultivate land with family labour one who do not either employ (except during harvest) or receive rent and substantial tenants who have to pay higher rent than those paid by **rich** tenants, d) poor peasants; landowners with holdings that are not sufficient to maintain a family, and therefore forced to rent others land; poor tenants, having tenancy rights but less secure holdings with income often less than that earned by wage labour and tenants **at-will** or share-cropper, D.N.Dhanagare, *Peasant Movements in India, 1920-50*, O.U.P, Delhi, 1983, p.15.

Kalus Mading, *Peasants in South India: A Study of Social Values in Telangana*, Panchsheel Pub., New Delhi, 1988, pp.64-65.

N.G.Ranga classified the holders of six acres and below as poor peasants, seven to nine acres as middle peasants and ten to twenty acres as big peasants. He further argues that the unit of six to eight and half acres should be considered as an '**economic holding**' and a plot of fifteen acres as the '**best paying holding**', N.G.Ranga, *Economic Organisation of Indian Villages*, vol.1, Bezwada, 1926, p.61.

According to V.V.Sayana, a) agricultural labourers were the holders of two acres and less; b) small peasants were the holders of five acres and below; c) medium peasants were the holders of **five** acres to twenty ares and d) big landholders were the owners of more than twenty acres, V.V.Sayana, *Readings in Rural Problems*, S.Chand & co, Delhi, 1950, p.121.

Sunil Sen, *Agrarian Relations in India, 1793-1947*, New Delhi, 1979, p.41.

Alok Sheel feels that with the integration of peasant society into the expanding capitalist market, a process of permanent differentiation will begin. He divided it into three categories, a) rich peasant or the emerging rural bourgeoisie, b) middle peasant or the consumption-oriented peasant, striving to survive in the new context and c) the poor peasant or the disintegrating **middle** peasant in the **process** of being depressed into the ranks of the emerging rural proletariat, Alok Sheel, 'Peasant Nationalism in India in the Gandhian era', in Amit Kumar Gupta (ed), *Agrarian Structure and Peasant Revolt in India*, , Criterion Pub., New Delhi, 1986, p.72.

Saith and Tanakha distinguished into five classes on the basis of ownership of assets, tenancy, utilisation of loans, repayment capacity etc. They are a) owner cultivators b) largely owner cultivators c) largely tenant cultivators d) tenant cultivators and e) poor peasants. Saith and Tanakha, 'Agrarian Transition and the Differentiation of the Peasantry: A Study of a West

Uttar Pradesh Village', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. VII, No.14, 1972.

On the basis of revenue payments, W.R.S.Sathianathan classified the rural population into three groups, a) labourers and tenants at-will b) small and medium landholders and c) larger and bigger landholders, W.R.S.Sathianathan, *Op Cit*, pp.42-43.

Adapa Sathyanarayana, *Andhra Peasants under British Rule: Agrarian Relations and the Rural Economy, 1900-1940*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1990, pp.108-9.

Atluri Murali, *Social Change and Nature of Social Participation in National Movement in Andhra, 1905-34*, Unpub., Ph.D Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, p.133.

Royal Commission on Agriculture opines that the agrarian society consisted of rich, middle and poor peasants, *Royal Commission on Agriculture in India*, vol.14, p.268.

The Statistical Atlas of the Andhra State classifies agricultural classes into a) cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned b) cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned c) cultivating labourers and d) non-cultivating owners of land, agricultural rent-receivers, *Statistical Atlas of the Andhra State, 1950-51*, Hyderabad, 1959, p.157.

246. N.G.Ranga, *Credo of World Peasantry*, Indian Peasant Institute, Nidubrolu, 1957, p.11.

247. N.G.Ranga observes that more and more landholders of the delta villages were leasing out their lands, finding it more profitable than to cultivate directly, N.G.Ranga, *Economic Organisation of Indian Villages*, vol.11 Bezawada, 1926, p.60.

248. *Ibid*, p.2.

249. For 1000 persons engaged in Agriculture:

	1921	1931
	%	%
Agricultural Labourers	27.04	42.09
Cultivating Owners	39.08	39.00
Cultivating Tenants	24.00	12.00
Non-Cultivating Owners	0.56	0.34
Non-Cultivating Tenants	0.32	0.16

Source: *Census Reports*, Part I, Madras, 1931.

250. N.G.Ranga, *Economic Organisation of Indian Villages*, vol.11, Bezawada, 1926, p.170.

CHAPTER II

MOBILIZATION OF PEASANTRY

An analysis of the modes, methods and **ideas** of peasant **mobilization** can afford an **insight** the political messages being disseminated and the peasants responses to this.

The post-depression period positioned the Zamindari peasant at a critical Juncture with **exhorbitant** rents and huge debts, while security of tenure became his main concern. On the other hand, the social reform movement in the 19th and early 20th century, the Gandhian struggle and the literary movement prior to 1930s had already made the peasant politically conscious.¹ However, the trends of peasant mobilization changed radically and there emerged in 1930s a severe battle between the Congress **ideology** which suggested reformative **solutioins** and left ideology whose agrarian demands were more appealing to the mass of the peasantry. Both these groups ventured to capture the peasant platform but one common point between them was that they did not supersede the national liberation struggle in the name of peasant problems, while on the other they tried and succeeded in bringing the peasant under the fold of anti-colonial struggle. However, the leftists wanted anti-imperial and anti-feudal movements to go hand in hand, a programme which the Congress did not support as anti-colonialism was first on its agenda. Irrespective of their motives, they were successful in stirring the peasant conciousness against British rule and the Zamindari system.

The depression brought commodity prices down, and seriously affected agricultural incomes. This period roughly synchronized with a new phase in the freedom movement in the early 1930s. Following the **Gandhi-Irwin** pact in 1931, there was a lull in the activities on the part of Gandhi and the Congress. This disillusioned the Andhras, and particularly the young nationalists in the Congress party. A wave of **radicalisation** swept the ranks of the freedom movement from this period and a number of disillusioned cadres of the Congress created a situation in which there developed a general urge among the left oriented political workers to **form** independent kisan organisations. The initiative in this matter was taken mainly by

Congress Socialists and Communists and thus emerged a spate of **techniques** to mobilise and woo peasants to their respective folds.

Formation of peasant associations; using of press and publications; public meetings; conducting peasant schools; **organising** peasant days, weeks, marches; and **performing** hero-worship (**veera pooja**) were the important methods used in trying to influence the peasant mind. An examination of each of these techniques follows.

No proper history of peasant movements can be written without a survey of newspapers, which helped immensely in moulding the peasant consciousness. Infact newspaper history is inextricably tangled with political history. To educate, to inform and to enlighten, constituted the duty of the nationalist press, whether they represented the right or left ideology. It manifested a growing **self-confidence** amongst publishers and subscribers in making their growth almost parallel with the growth of peasant consciousness as a class and pushed further in evolving the 'collectivemementality'.²

The initiative came from the educated middle class. This small group of educators, the new intelligentsia of the universities, the religious reformers, free-lancing writers and emerging rich-peasantry became the self-appointed interpreters for the silent majority.³ Obviously they received stimulus from reformative ideas of nationalism and revolutionary ideas of Russian revolution, but the main impetus came from the study of actual local conditons, which in its turn led to the birth of what might be called peasant consciousness and to the strengthening of peasant motivation to action.

A number of Journals and newspapers were started to highlight the peasant problems. As early as 1920 *The Ryot* (weekly) was started by N.G.Ranga and his associates, but it was stopped due to internal bickerings in 1933.⁴ In 1929, the *Ryot Patrika* of

Rajamundry was started by M.Narasanna, but it ceased publication in 1933 owing to financial troubles.⁵ The **Zamin Ryot** started in 1928 by Nellore Venkatarama Naidu, became a premier kisan paper of the Andhra.⁶ **Vahini** of Madras was started in 1936,⁷ and **NavaSakti** of Bezwada in 1937,⁸ **Prajabandhu** of Madras in 1935,⁹ **Chitragupta** a fortnightly magazine in 1933,¹⁰ **Prajavani** of Srikakulam in 1935,¹¹ **Praja Sakti** of Bezwada in 1942,¹² and a host of other papers served the peasant cause.

The veteran newspapers like **Andhra Patrika**¹³, **Krishna Patrika**¹⁴ and the English daily **Hindu**¹⁵ served the interests of the peasantry. However their tone was very mild at times and they shied away from reporting the enthusiastic activities of the peasants.¹⁶

Krishna Patrika highlighted the acute food problem existing in Andhra areas during 1940s¹⁷ and advocated the peaceful settlement between the agitating peasants and the Zamindars.¹⁸ It waged a relentless battle against the Communist activities and urged the peasantry to follow Congress to alleviate their problems and to free India from British rule. A creative conversation between two workers published in this paper reveals the paper's stand.¹⁹

First worker: Congress is a bourgeoisie organisation. It favours capitalists and Zamindars. How can we believe it?

2nd worker(a Congress sympathiser): Congress's primary aim is to achieve independence. So it had to take co-operation from all classes. It had declared that after independence it will establish peasants and workers rule. It has also announced that the Zamindari system will be abolished.

1st worker: Why then is it giving compensation to the Zamindars?

2nd worker: Because it wants to solve the problem peacefully. Congress stands for the poor. It gives food, shelter, clothing, education and health to everyone.

In yet another article in 1946 *Krishna Patrika*, tried to persuade the peasant that the Zamindars could be reformed by the Congress policies and that already many Zamindars had immersed themselves in Congress activities and were investing their money in welfare activities. Saying that the "Congress will definitely bring change in the Zamindari class for the betterment of the peasant", it declared in its editorial in 1946 that the only aim of the Congress was to establish peasant and workers

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rule in independent India. It went to the extent of declaring that Gandhi was more than a Communist in solving the problems of the peasantry. However it also cautioned that the peasant was being pampered and that he was complaining about everything. It maintained that Congress was like mother to Andhras and Congress aims should be the guiding principle of Andhras.

Andhra Patrika was another nationalist paper, which gave importance to the peasant question, but advocated a cautious and reformative approach to solve its problems, without Jeopardising the ongoing freedom struggle and without antagonising any of the classes co-operating in the national movement. However, it was ruthless in criticising the government policies affecting the peasants. In one of its several editorials in this regard, it took the Madras Assembly to task for not taking up peasant issues. It did not miss any opportunity to report the peasant movements going on around the world in order to encourage the Andhra peasant. It reported widely the activities of peasant

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associations and waged bitter criticism against Justice Party during the 1937 elections and pleaded with the peasants to vote for Congress, which it emphasised would attend to their problems. The debt problem was widely exposed in all its articles during 1934 and 1935 and the Congress ministry was urged

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to find remedy to this problem. It published several poems in an attempt to make the peasant mind favourable to the Congress party, for instance, "for the well-being of the peasant, Congress should come to power; if taxes are to be reduced- vote for Congress". Another poem written by Settipally Venkataratnam,

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entitled ~~An advice to the Ryot~~, goes

"election have come to show the might of the peasantry, peasants should roar so that the entire world would bear, come on peasants; come ; to establish your rule, //

G. Brahmayya (INC candidate) like **Brahmanayadu** (a historical personality) should tumble down the prestige of Challapalli **Raja**, Narrayana (INC) should cut short the cattish strategies of Mirza Zamindar and destroy in the Nuzvid forests// Baddepudi (INC) lion should pounce upon on **Venkatagiri Raja** and declare victory//

Ranga, the great sovereign leader of Indian peasant

is leading you//

So my dear peasants make Congress a victorious party only to make these anti-Indian Zamindars, a sanyasi folk//"

(It should be mentioned that in the 1937 elections many Zamindari people contested against Congress candidates and were defeated throughly).

Another provocative article, was captioned "Who saves the peasant? It is Pitapuram Raja (Peoples Party) or Pallam Raja
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(INC)" The paper gave an opportunity to a number of peasants to enumerate their problems in its paper by allocating space at regular intervals. It also brought out special supplements on every Thursday from 1933 on the subject 'Agriculture and Co-operative Farming'.³⁴

Peasant marches and peasant weeks organised by the various
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peasants associations were given wide publicity. The editorials ruthlessly criticised on the short expenditures allocated to the agriculture sector in the budgets. When

Japan banned Andhra cotton, *Andhra Patrika* carried a series of articles provoking the peasants to agitate and to take up this
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matter to the corridors of Assembly. However, in all its attempts, *Andhra Patrika* like *Krishna Patrika* underplayed anti-zamindari movements and concentrated mostly in moulding peasants mind according to the Congress ideology and talked less about the needs of agricultural labourers. While welcoming the abolition of Zamindari system, it favoured adequate compensation to be given for the Zamindars.³⁸ Regarding the peasant-agricultural labourer relationship, it advocated a cordial and mutual understanding to be developed between them, and compared both to a wife and husband and also to two bullocks

tied to a cart; meaning that the two should go in a single direction in order to reach the destination.³⁹

The popular English *daily Hindu* too towed the line of the above two nationalist papers regarding peasant issues. However, it was very useful in exposing the repressive character of the colonial state.

Several other Telugu and English papers expressed similar views. *Telugu* (weekly twice) was very critical about 1908 Estate Land Act and subsequent Acts of 1934 and 1936 and published a series of articles about the loopholes in these Acts.⁴⁰ The *Vijaya* a fortnightly from Tanuku in its article of 1937 on 'the evils of capitalism and poverty' strongly blamed the zamindari system and British rule for the miseries of the peasants.⁴¹

Stanika Palana, a monthly from Bezwada brought special issues while the Madras Assembly was proceeding with Debt Relief Act and
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furnished the peasants with reliable information. *Vijayavani*, from Anantapur followed very closely the Kalipatnam peasant Satyagraha. *Swatantra Bharati* a weekly from Bezwada was critical of the policy of importing of food grains and demanded the government to take measures to encourage more indigenous
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agricultural production. *Bharati* a literary journal urged the peasants to be far away from caste and communal feelings. The *Janmabhumi* in its article entitled 'Peasants and Congress', reveals the attitude of the Congress party towards peasants, it reads thus, "as our struggle for independence progresses, its success will depend on the impression it makes on the masses, their active sympathy is essential. We should launch an intensive propaganda throughout the country. If this propaganda is to be effective, it should bring to the peasants, who are the bulk of the people, the concrete nature of the swaraj we aim at. Mahatmaji's eleven points of 1930 include many of the unspoken demands of our masses. It will be useful to consider them in greater detail and evolve a complete picture of what swaraj should do for the peasants. The present legal system is too costly and cumbrous to afford any protection to the peasant against the oppression of Zamindars and others. Some form of panchayat in which the peasants will be in a majority hand which
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will have the power to protect the individual peasant from tyranny should be the basis of the swaraj constitution".⁴⁶

Zamin Ryot, which began its publication in 1930, was one important paper which concentrated exclusively on the peasant question and was in the forefront in educating and mobilising the Zamindari peasants.⁴⁷

In the 1937 elections it worked very efficiently and was the first paper in Telugu to use cartoon pictures.⁴⁸ It published articles emphasising the need of peasant associations, the benefits and securities such associations provide. It also published information on the social and economic conditions of peasants in European countries.⁴⁹

Its editor Nellore Venkatarama Naidu published his famous song 'we don't want this association with the zamindars' in 1933 which infact became a ~~magic~~ song stirring the peasants against the Zamindari system. It indirectly helped in strengthening the Congress organisation by canvassing among the peasantry the need for independence along with the abolition of the Zamindari system. Its attack was also directed against the Communists especially in the 1940s when the Communists started supporting the British in its war efforts in the name of people's war.⁵²

Another peasant paper, which advocated the overthrow of the Zamindari system through violent means was the *Vahini* from Madras. According to the report of the Commissioner of Police of Madras, its editor K. Brahmaiah was a person with Socialist leanings and keenly interested in the peasant movements, and it was felt that the journal was likely to be used in furtherance of the Socialist and peasant movements and that his avowed object was to stir up the ryots and workers. Its articles were worded with provocative sentences, some such were, 'in Zamindari areas the ryot is alleged to be a slave whose vitals are sapped by the village officers to fill their stomachs, what Indian ryot produces goes to foreign countries; the endeavour of Gandhi to awaken the ryots from their lethargy and to unite them are said to have been responsible for the government appointing a Commission (the Linlithgow Commission of Agriculture) whose

recommendations, too, have not been accepted by them. The Congress should use all energies for the protection of the ryot.⁵⁴ The article concluded with the observation that until the **ryots gird** up their loins and enter the field of action India cannot obtain **independance** and their problems cannot be solved. In yet another article it advocated that Socialism was the only solution to the terrible Indian **prproblem** of land; it advanced three reasons for the general decline of the ryot despite the construction of anicuts and reservoirs a) he **is** not the owner of the land under his cultivation b) agricultural implements are not **his** c) the produce raised by him is not his; thus in socialism alone lies the **ryots's** salvation.⁵⁵ Justifying its claims for socialism *Vahini* argues that capitalism stands for the peace and happiness to a few. Political independence would promote peace and happiness among the people, only when it **is** allied with economic independence.⁵⁶ It says "the Zamindars and **maharajas** are veritably a drag on the community. . . . class war alone with all its revolutionary forces can solve the problems of our poverty and **unemployment**".⁵⁷ "If the Congress desires, **swaraj**, it should alter the present conditions and bring into force not only political freedom but also the Karachi resolution which defined
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economic **freedom** alone as **swaraj**". Inciting the peasants against Zamindari system, it remarked, "there can **be no** peace in Andhradesa, unless the domination of these deceivers, the Zamindars, everyone of whom is acting like a Dyer, is checked since the patience of ryots has been exhausted".⁵⁹

When security was demanded from *Vahini* by the government it ceased publication and its management started a new paper called *KrantI* from the same press in 1939, and continued its sharp criticism against the government and the Zamindari system.⁶⁰ It not only directed its attacks on the British and Zamindars but also against the Congress Ministry for not fulfilling the aspirations of the peasants; "why should we carry on the fight with the British government? If our country comes out victorious from the fight what are the benefits that will accrue to us? Congress should give proper answer."⁶¹ It also, said, "let

peasants and workers struggle for independence, what we want is not mere swaraj but the peasants and workers rule. In its editorial the *Krant* writes, "the greatest defect in the Congress programme is, it did not define swaraj it should have declared its chief item of its programme of work the ideal of the economic needs of the peasants and workers." However, throughout their publication *Kranti* and *Vahini* preached national liberation and though they criticised the Congress, they never attempted to overshadow the Congress organization in the fight for freedom.

Andhra vani another vernacular paper also raised the problem of the peasantry and in one of its issues it tried to stir the mind of the peasant. -- "why are you dumb, ye poor raiyats?

can you not in a loud voice proclaim your rights?
can you not raise your hand and show your might?
with a hungry stomach and a naked body
how long do you labour in vain?
you are not able to support your children,
how can you beat the burden of taxes?
look at your wailing children and your ailing wives?
do they not goad you to stand up demanding your rights?"

T. Prakasam's *Swarajya* (1921-1935) admirably served the peasant cause. Though the object of the paper was to propagate the ideas and programme of the Congress it published in great detail the problems of the peasantry. -- It highlighted the views of the

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Indian League delegation on the poverty in Indian villages. His *Village Republic* 65(1940-42) championed the cause of self-sufficient economy.

The Communist dominated papers, *Navasakti* and *Prajasakti* also played a significant role in moulding the mood of the peasantry in the anti-colonial and anti-zamindari agitations. In journalism and literature the Communists were the first to promote simple, clear, and crisp modern prose, in place of the archaic style preserved by generations of established Telugu writers. Though one may not label the Communist propaganda as revolutionary in that it never advocated for a complete change in the land relations; yet it was more radical than that of Congressmen and

Socialists. Though the C.P.I. leadership was essentially elitist, belonging to the middle and rich landlord upper **castes**, it was also sensitive to the problems of the poor peasantry and lower caste agricultural labourers.⁶⁶ As there was a ban on C.P.I. from 1934 to 1942, most of the Communists worked through the C.S.P., peasant associations and for the most part they remained in the Congress itself.

They ran **Prabha** under the guidance of Gadde Lingayya in 1935 for a few months to propagate Marxist ideas.⁶⁷ But the publication of **Navasakti** from Rajamundry in 1937 with Madduri Annapurnayya as its editor marked the beginning of a full-fledged Communist paper in the Andhra area.⁶⁸ Very soon it was shifted to Vijayawada and continued to be published as a weekly till it was banned during second world war.⁶⁹ It directed a number of

peasant marches,⁷⁰ and played a very important role in bringing the peasants to give witness before the Prakasam Committee.⁷¹ It warned the Madras ministry that if the Prakasam Committee recommendations were not implemented, peasants would resort to violent methods.⁷² **Navasakti** highlighted and focussed on the **Kalipatnam**, Challapalli, Munagala satyagrahas.⁷³ It advocated

the abolition of Zamindari system.⁷⁴ In its **Tripuri Sanchika**, **Navasakti**, published a front page article on various peasant struggles that occurred in Indian history and urged the peasantry to be vigilant of the exploiters and be ready to fight against

them.⁷⁵ Apart from reporting peasant events, it allotted two pages to world news, two to national news and a special feature when **Navasakti** was banned in 1939, the Communists brought out a secret cyclostyle paper named **Swatantra Bharathi** to propagate its ideas.⁷⁶ In 1945, **Prajasakti** came out as a daily from the

Communist party.⁷⁷ It followed the footsteps of **Navasakti**. It was more successful in bringing the agricultural labourers to its fold by advocating the distribution of **banjar** lands to them, and preaching for peasant-labourer unity, and adequate wages.⁷⁸ However, though it was bitter in its criticism against

the Congress in regard to the peasant question. *Prajasakti*, from the beginning wrote articles encouraging peasants in their fight against colonial rule and favoured Gandhi in his fight for
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freedom. Its headings ran like this, 'peasant is the patriot', 'peasant is the backbone of freedom struggle', 'peasant and worker co-operation should be the founding stone of free India'.⁸³

In all most all the papers satirical cartoons were carried. They exercised an influence all out of proportion, in the political and cultural life of the peasant. They expressed the growing feeling of antagonism towards the exploiters. At a time when the literacy rate was still very low, these cartoons spoke volumes. Few were spared and all sorts and conditions of men were freely caricatured and it proved to be an impressionistic device that needed no translation.⁸⁴

Yet it would be not right to claim too much for the press as the majority of the people did not see newspapers, let alone read them. The credit goes to the peasant activists who ventured to go to the villages to convey to the villagers what was written. We will see in a later section how this mechanism functioned.

Apart from newspapers and journals, several books were written to educate and inform the peasant about the exploitative mechanism of the colonial rule and Zamindari system and the ways and means to get rid of this evils.

In this regard, the first book to be mentioned would be *Malapalle* written by Unnava Laxminarayana in 1922, where the author unravels the way in which capitalists, landed aristocrats and bureaucrats were trampling under foot the toiling masses, and the growing nexus between the various limbs of the government such as the police, the magistrate, the Judicial and Jail department and corrupt, dishonest and cruel officials. The peasants and workers thereby affected are awakened, become class

conscious, form union and work for the emancipation from alien and exploitative rule. He ends the novel where India achieves independence and fashions a type of government suited to meet the

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demands of the peasant and working classes and all are happy. However, through out the novel the author stresses the underlying need for peasant worker co-operation and in the novel a Kamma landlord's son helps the agricultural labourer belonging to a harijan family in his attempts to secure minimum wages for the agricultural labourers. The book was proscribed by the Government in 1932, for its attack on government departments.

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Closely following the above novel, N.G.Ranga, wrote in 1933 a novel *Harijana Nayakudu*,⁸⁷ which emphasises the need for peasant worker coalition, to achieve their respective goals. He visualises a situation where the peasant and his labourer live happily respecting each others needs. This story is about an agricultural labourer belonging to a harijan family who attempts to reform his community socially. Finally he succeeds in his venture with the help of his master, a Kamma landlord's son. In each and every page Ranga tries to see that the agricultural labourers praises the benevolence of the rich peasant class. Though a mention is made about a few greedy and cruel peasants in the story, he ends it with the impression that the landed peasants and agricultural workers will lead a happy life if their efforts are coordinated with the peasant at the helm of affairs. To quote few references will make the intention of the author very clear. Basavalingayya, the harijan leader says, "I along with my community will always serve the peasants with loyalty, patience and strength, for the generosity you have showered upon me". Replying to this, Ramanayya, the landlord blesses Basavalingayya, "like you, the entire community of yours should serve us faithfully, loyally and with respect".

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Ryotu Bhajanavali, which was first published in 1934, served the interests of the peasant by not only informing them of the deplorable conditions surrounding them, but also roused popular sentiment of the peasants and helped to activate their energies

in full strength. The **Burrakatha** troupe of **G.Venkatasubbayya, Bhajana Samaj of Chityala**, Band troupe of **Divi taluq, Hutchinsons Recording company**, students of peasants institute, peasant **00**

marchers etc., carried these songs to all corners of Andhra. The appealing strength of the poems will be known if one reads them. These poems were collected and edited by N.G.Ranga and printed at the Swarajya printing press in Bezwada. One song reads like this:⁹¹

We do not want this association with Zamindars,
lying in ambush for our lives, it has destroyed our honour,
though there is a failure of crops, they will not give up taxes,
they will file rent-suits which would be followed by distress,
they would set upon their agents and would shoot us down, if
we were to make a protest,
every year they enhance the assessment; when will their violence
cease?
when we tell them that tanks have breached, they turn a deaf ear,
put an end to their cruel administration, oh God,
In the **Venkatagiri** Zamindari they collected Rs.70/- per acre,
oh, Father (God) we cannot hear the burdensome taxes which bring
tears to our eyes
we prefer to migrate to government villages at least,
there is no system of imposing taxes, they do it blindly,
we labour eternally without minding the hot sun and raise crops,
in the end they snatch,
we have to pay bribes publicly, besides there are court-expenses,
when can the ryot live happily?
they would not spend even a pie for the benefit of the ryot,

They would spend money like water on polo games without realising
that it is the people's money,
it seems they would go to the legislative council on our behalf,
but having gone there, they would ruin us, m
they execute decrees (against us) and holding the bowl in their
hands, they come begging for votes,
they impound cattle, catch hold of the milch buffalo and trouble
us for votes,
they don't allow land revenue remissions to be decided by
legislation,
they would even bribe politicians and rally them to their side
concealing the fraud,
they would make them write such good reports upon themselves
(Zamindars)
so that the world might appreciate the latter,
Oh, God we don't want this association with Zamindars.

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An another poem, entitled 'why do you do nothing',

why do you do nothing? you, the kisan king,
can't you tell people your rights?

can't you publish your prowess with gusto?

how do you bear this burden of taxes?
while failing to feed your beloved family,

wadding through mud, walking through thorn,
crops you raise after untold sufferings, yet, you don't find
enough to eat,
is there then no limit to your slavery?

you ply the plough, break open our beloved mother earth,
and these millionaires, butterflies, are dancing your death
dance dance.

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The poem ~~'unite, unite, oh, the peasant'~~ celebrates the
unity of peasant.

we yearn for food, for freedom, for favour,
if only we all are united,
we, the peasants,
we, the workers

Might there is today amidst the peasant and the proletariat,
caste or creed we need not bother,
together we live, united we inarch.

Another poem encouraging the peasant and treating him as
national hero read thus,

The entire country is now depending upon you, oh, peasant,
you are the crusader oh, peasant,
come on come on, and show your power, oh, peasant.

Showing direction to the peasant mass, one song runs like
this, 94

To establish the rule of all hard working people,
peasant-labour people unite and march forward,
establish a rule where the peasant get his proper share of
production
establish a rule where the worker does not succumb to
exploitation,
establish a rule where the artisans live strengthening the
country side,
political **independance** may come,
alien rule may go,
but real life to the country will come
only when the peasant is developed
To establish a rule where all hard working people take part.

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Another song entitled **Peasant's State**: envisions a peasant
rajya:

Did Gandhi tell simply,
 that **if** peasant comes to power,
 Rama Rajya would have come
 for the peasant **is** innocent and **uncheatable**,
 so what deficit would we have?

Oh, peasants, the state is yours,
 hey, peasant king, you are kings,
 peasant days have already come,

come on come on- for peasant's service,
 freedom and food, the peasant will give,
 peasants should rule and we should see Rama Rajya.

In many songs the message was clear, raising protest meant changing the order of domination and sub-ordination. However, in these songs both millenarian and mundane aspirations and concerns were linked with the concept of Ram Rajya and Swarajya.

Apart from *Ryotu Bhajnavali*, several other books containing similar songs were published during this period and important among them was the book entitled *Karshaka* (meaning Peasant).⁹⁶ In this the author asks the peasants to ward off caste feelings which would prove suicidal to the cause of the peasantry. He questions the existence of God for not helping the peasants to resolve his problems. He provokes the peasant by saying that "you are the maker of the state, not the aristocracy". He accuses scholars and poets, who are not working for the cause of the peasantry, that they sold themselves to the donkeys who have money.

This was also the time when many young people were turning to the Marxian thought following the success of the revolution in the Soviet Union, and the growth of left wing in the Congress party. Formation of the C.P.I and C.S.P gave further fillip to this trend. The economic deterioration of the peasantry in the wake of depression clubbed with the disillusionment of Gandhian style of politics, a section of Andhra youth advocated a radical approach in solving the peasant problems. Narrating this trend in later years, N.G.Ranga observed, "during this period (1930-40), leftist literature was a craze among us all. The publication of

the 'Left Book Club' of London, Soviet literature and also the books of John Strachy and JawaharlalJee, Edgar Snow, Maxim Gorky, G.H.D.Cole were extremely popular. Literature on China,

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had a vogue of all their own". P.Sundarayya in his autobiography, states that after reading Communist Manifesto he became a ardent Communist and started spreading Communist

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ideology among masses.

Krishna District Congress Socialist Party published a telugu book entitled *Life of Lenin* to encourage the peasants to turn to Lenin's mode of agitation. However this book was proscribed by

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the Government.

Another book *Socialism Ante* (What does Socialism Meant)¹⁰⁰ demanded that land, industries, cultural institutions etc., should be equally distributed and enjoyed by all citizens. *Sandesam* (Message)¹⁰¹ which was a telugu translation of 'Appeal to the Youth' written by the French Anarcho Communist Prince Kropotkin, deplores the unjust and one-sided law of the country and calls on young men, women, peasants, workers and military to join hands to destroy the law of the country and over-throw the present social order in which zamindars and landlords live at the cost of the poor labouring classes.

Karl Marx Upadesamulu (the teaching of Karl Marx)¹⁰² was a translation of Lenin's *The Teachings of Karl Marx*. It advocated that the lower middle class small manufacturers, small traders, handicraftsmen, peasant proprietors- one and all fight the bourgeoisie in safeguarding their existence as sections of the middle class. This book too was proscribed by the Government in 1937.¹⁰³

Lenin Upadesamulu (Teaching of Lenin)¹⁰⁴ was a telugu translation of the book *Lenin* by R.P.Dutt. Its forward 'Russia Viplavam 1905' was banned by the Congress Ministry in the Madras Presidency, on the grounds that it contained passages tending to incite armed rebellion and the commissioning of offences

involving violence, and that it was expressly published to serve as a help in devising programmes and in working them out in practice.¹⁰⁵

Paris Commune,¹⁰⁶ was a literal translation of Lenin's book *The Paris Commune*. It characterises the Paris Commune of 1871 as the dress rehearsal in world history of the socialist revolution of the working class. The object of this translation seems to be to rouse the working class in India to militate action for the violent overthrow of the present order of society.

India Bhavishyathu (the Future of India)¹⁰⁷ argues that the conditions in the country would remain the same so long as the Zamindari and capitalist system continue to prevail and says that if India wants real independence these evil systems should be removed. Another book arguing on the same lines was *Swatantra Garjana* (The Roar of Independence)¹⁰⁸ written by V.V. Subramanya Sastry. *Viplava Yugamu* (Terrorist Age)¹⁰⁹ says that the conditions of the poor peasants is deplorable and that the women folk of poor ryots, who failed to pay their taxes and rents were forcibly removed to bungalows and raped.

The telugu drama *Zamin Ryot*¹¹⁰ depicts the conditions of peasants in the Zamindari areas. From the beginning it narrates the ill-treatment meted out by the Zamindars to their tenants and the resulting hardship of the latter. It was calculated to discredit the Zamindari system. The Government of Madras prohibited this on the grounds that the drama might create unnecessary tension between the Zamindars and their servants.¹¹¹

Another telugu drama entitled *Guru Babu* designed to foster Communist ideas in the minds of the masses was proscribed.¹¹²

Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, Engels *Communist Fundamentals*, Lenin's *Imperialism* were among the number of translations made into Telugu. This trend was given further

fillip with the establishment of Vishwa Sahitya Mala Publications at Munganda (East Godavari District) in 1935.¹¹³ It is said that the publishers themselves took these books to the houses to introduce them to the masses. During the second world war, Communists launched *Prajasakti* publications and published Communist literature. It was responsible for the publication of *Maa Bhoomi* (Our Land) drama which was staged several times in Andhra.¹¹⁴

A pamphlet entitled *Peda Ryotula Kashtalela Potayi?* (How will the difficulties of poor peasants be solved?) was very critical of Congress agrarian policies.¹¹⁵ It demanded progressive taxation of agricultural communities, and land for the tiller. It appealed to the middle peasants to co-operate with the labouring class in solving their problems.

The pamphlet issued by the 'Workers and Peasants' Party and addressed to the Congress as early as 1927 demanded that if Congress comes to power it must guarantee to the peasants that the land belongs to the tiller, reduction of land rents, exemption from rent for poor peasants, protection against the avarice of money-lenders and assistance by means of credits to the cultivator.¹¹⁶ It appealed to the Congress, that if it wished to conduct the struggle for national liberation, it must become the party of the people, representing not only the few of the electorate, but the unfranchised majority.¹¹⁷

Sri Sri, the idol of two generations of aspiring telugu writers, was a revolutionary poet leading a writers' movement a full decade before the C.P.I. organized its literary front in the form of the All India Progressive Writers Association in 1943. This organisation gave much attention to the cultural and social development of the people.¹¹⁸
¹¹⁹

Though many of the books of leftist leanings did not exclusively deal with the question of peasantry, they reflect the radicalisation of thought, in the country-side, and providing

wide canvass for the peasant mind to respond. They created a suitable environment, conducive to rational and radical thinking. The symbols and slogans of the Russian revolution became very popular.

Kambhampati Sathyanarayana was another active Communist ideologue who deeply appreciated the Communist movements in USSR. He authored Soviet Union Today, Dialectical Materialism: Ends and Means, and also translated Stalin's Foundation of Leninism.¹²⁰

Apart from these Communist produced literature, special mention needs to be made of **Prof.N.G.Ranga**, who gained prominence for his techniques of peasant mobilisation.¹²¹ He wrote several books on peasant problem.¹²² The following are the books written by him.¹²³

Economic Organisation of Indian Villages, Deltaic Villages, vol.1, 1926,
Economic Organisation of Indian Villages, Dry Villages, vol, II, 1928,
Hand-loom Weaving Industry, 1930
Economic condition of the Zamindari ryots, 1933,
Tribes of the Nilagiri's -Their economic conditions, 1928,
Harijana Nayakudu, 1933,
Agricultural Indebtedness, Remedial measures,
Labour in South India, 1934,
Modern Indian Peasant, 1936,
Kisan Speaks, 1937,
Peasants and Congress, 1937,
History of the Kisan Movement, 1939,
Kisans and the Communists, 1942,
Outlines of National Revolutionary Path, 1945,
Challenge of World Peasantry, 1942,
Colonial and Coloured Peoples, 1942. etc.,

In all these books he gave prime position to the peasant.¹¹⁴ The peasant's social, economical and cultural problems were thoroughly probed. Peasant-labour relationship was discussed; peasants role in freedom movement was prescribed. These books were translated into telugu and were widely popularised. He advocated peasant-labour unity. For him most of the grievances of the landless peasant against landed peasant could be remedied in a remodelled economy, provided both make common cause and

present a united front against the common exploiters- **the capitalist** class and their allies. He was a bitter critic of Zamindari system. He argued that the colonial peasantry were **the** greatest revolutionary force. ¹²⁵

In his book '**Peasants** and the Congress' he advocated that on **the** basis of truth and non-violence and democratic discussion and genuine mutual **forebearance**, both **Gandhites** and socialists can co-operate **with** each other as **kisan** sabhaites and work for the **establishment** of not only political independence, but also the ultimate peasant' and **workers'** Raj. ¹²⁶ He says that the long term object of the peasant movement was the complete capture of power in the State. ¹²⁷ He argues that the peasants, more than industrial workers, enjoy certain advantages in developing their organisation, and they are a) the peasants are still near to their village traditions of self-government, b) they are more self-reliant, c) they have more **self-confidence**, being in charge of food production and d) the Indian peasants to this day settle their social affairs through their local caste of group ¹²⁸

Panchayats. He popularised such ideas by organising associations, peasant institutions, marches, conducting tours, etc,. He provided a central organisation, leadership and an inspiring **ideology** during 1930s even before the Communists could think of the peasant question.

Several government legislations were translated into telugu to keep the peasant abreast of the situation around **them**. **For** ¹²⁹

instance, Madras Debt Relief Act was translated in 1938. Government Reports were also immediately translated to inform the peasant mass along with critical analysis of the same. **N.G.Ranga's** Enquiry Report on the economic conditions of Zamindari peasants and **Prakasam Committee's** Report on Madras Estate **130** Act were given wide publicity in the Andhra country.

Apart from these, several other books were written highlighting the problems of the peasantry. **R.M.Sarma's** *Zamindari Ryotu Samasya* (Problems of the Zamindari peasant)¹³¹ and **Gorrepati Venkatasubbaiah's** *Hana Zamindarilu* (Our Zamindars)¹³² deserves special mention. **R.M.Sarma** gives a **detailed** account of the development of the Zamindari system in India and argues that the Zamindar is not the owner of the land. He also brings out the rack-renting by the Andhra Zamindars and furnished statistical data in an accessible manner to common man. **Gorrepati Venkatasubbaiah** explains the evils of Zamindari system and brings out the bad habits of the Zamindars and the manner they squander the public wealth.

Peasant leaders undertook frequent tours addressing the peasant population about their problems and enlisting their support for anti-colonial and anti-feudal struggle. National leaders also visited the rural areas to mobilise the peasantry in this regard.

Nehru's tour in 1936-37 was a highly successful one in persuading the peasantry to support the Congress so that their problems would be eradicated. To quote some of his speeches would be relevant at this juncture.¹³³ In his speech at Punanipadu (Krishna District) he said "India is full of peasants and peasantry have much the same difficulty all over India, therefore the problem of peasants is an all-India problem. In swaraj, they will not be exploited." In Itchapur speech he claimed that "there are eighty percent of the peasants in the Congress party all over the country." He declared that "the fight for swaraj is a fight for peasants rights". Though the peasants generally could not quite understand his plea for socialism when they came across a reference that carried definite local implication like 'the Zamindari system should go' they **cheered**.¹³⁴ Wherever he went he talked about agrarian uplift and the amelioration of the peasant classes. He exhorted the ryots to form peasant association and to affiliate them with the Congress so that they might form the militia of the Congress in

the fight with British imperialism. He opined that the British imperialism and the Zamindari system were responsible for the poverty of the masses in the country, and said that "capitalism and Zamindari system never stood for the rights of the peasants and they were against purna swaraj".¹³⁵ He touched on poverty and unemployment and attributed these to the Zamindari system.

M.N.Roy during his tour in 1937 urged that propaganda should be undertaken in the villages to carry on the fight for political and economic freedom. He stated that the Congress was the medium through which the revolutionary vanguard could establish contact with the masses and asked the peasants to support the Congress.¹³⁷ S.S.Batlivala, Socialist leader from Bombay, toured the Andhra area and asked the audience to form 'watch and ward' groups in every village to keep under observation the conduct of government officials and to convey to the Congress Ministers the grievances of the villages. He closed his speeches with a slogan 'long live revolution' which was repeated by most of the audience.¹³⁸

P.V.Sivayya, a Socialist leader in his speeches visualised that "it is only so long as the British government remains in the country that the Zamindar will exist. When the British government leaves that country, then the system of exploitation will cease".¹³⁹ He also provoked the peasants to get organised, "so long as you depend on petition and good will, there is no salvation for you, do not fall prey to caste distinctions, does a Reddy landlord give more wages to a Reddy labourer? This is only a trick, a trick to break the unity among the workers. This will be useful for enhancing the richness of the wealthy. There should be village, taluk and district unions, if you achieve this, the money lenders will see their end.".¹⁴⁰

P.Sundarayya, who was the Secretary of the Madras Provincial Labour Protection League and Provincial Trade Union Congress and Joint Secretary of the Andhra Provincial Congress Socialist Party in his speech at Rajamundry in 1936 said that "the government,

Zamindar and **sowcars** should be destroyed even if it meant a violent revolution, we should establish a real workers and peasants government, there is a difference between communism and Socialism. Socialism is only the first stage of communism, while Socialism insists that every person should be paid the same wage, men are expected to work to the best of their **ability**, and are provided in the Communist system with the necessities of life in proportion to the work done by them.... we have to fight these Zamindars and capitalists on one hand and with the arbitrary British government on the other.¹⁴¹

N.G.Ranga toured the length and breadth of the Andhra area and the general tone of his speeches was **anti-zamindari** and anti-colonial. For instance, he said "the country would roll in prosperity when its labourers and peasants are in good condition. We should not give up our agitation until these estates are taken out of the control of these Zamindars, and are placed in the possession of a Collector of the government. Even the Congress has accepted this socialism. It has agreed to improve the conditions of the ryots and labourers. Those who try to ruin the country are **eunuchs**".¹⁴²

In yet another speech delivered at Nuzvid, Ranga said "the government say they will give swaraj. They give us that swaraj wanted by the Zamindars, by the millionaires, and by the Rajas of the Native States. The Zamindars are also saying within their own minds that they want swaraj. They do not want the swaraj which we want. They are already in possession of the swaraj which they want. The British is trying to create endless trouble between the Zamindar and the ryots. If you do not convert **Malas** and **Madigas** (Harijans) as your own people, they will fall into the hands of the white people and stay with them. We must have to celebrate the downfall of Zamindars as we feasted for the death of Narakasura (a demon by name Narakasura, who was killed by Sri Krishna and for which the festival Deepavali is being celebrated)." Where ever he spoke he ended his speech with the slogans of victory to Swatantra Bharath, the Zamindari system should perish, and land tax should go.¹⁴³

These speeches and tours created a deep disaffection and stirred peasant consciousness to raise their voice against the exploitation of the Zamindars.

Formation of peasant associations marked the beginning of the growth of peasant awakening towards their political, and
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economical conditions and responsibilities. Several associations were formed in the coastal districts of Andhra. In 1905, Gudivada Taluk Peasant Association was formed. In 1915 Krishna District Peasant Association was formed and annual conferences were held since then. By 1923 peasant associations at district level were formed in Guntur and East Godavari districts. Due to the efforts of N.G.Ranga, M.Bapinadu, Blkkin Venkatarathnam and others Andhra Provincial Peasant Association was formed in 1928 in Guntur, and it was registered in 1936.¹⁴⁷

In 1929 Andhra Provincial Zamindari Peasant Association was formed under the guidance of N.G.Ranga and Rebba Pragas Mandeswara Sharma. In 1931, Peasants Protection Committee, in 1935, South Indian Federation of Agricultural Labour and Peasants was formed. These organisations made the peasants feel confident to voice their grievances and agitate for their redressal. The evidence of these organisations directing the peasant movements can be seen throughout 1930s and 1940s. They emphasised modernisation of the peasants social and cultural outlook so that they might prepare themselves socially and politically to establish their millenarian peasant raj or swaraj. This perception was repeatedly put forward in Ranga's speeches and articles.¹⁴⁸

The most outstanding novel development in educating the peasant population was the establishment of the Indian Peasant Institute in Nidubrolu on 12th April, 1934 by N.G.Ranga.¹⁵³ This was the first such institute to be established in India. All the prominent social and political leaders of Andhra were invited to deliver lectures to the students on social and economic problems facing the country. The students belonged to local

peasant families, though few people came from other areas of Andhra. *Ryotu Bhajanavali* was selected for the daily *bhajan* and with this the organisers helped to attune the students with the agitating peasant approach to Indian nationalism. The press of the day published extensive reports of daily speeches and the lectures delivered there to spread the cause of peasant problems. The institute also held its sessions in various parts of Andhra to popularise and train the youth to take up the peasant cause. The main purpose of this institute was to unite agricultural labourers and peasants, to educate them the peasant culture, their needs, and to train them to run peasant movement and to serve the

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peasant cause.

In its deliberations, discussion on socialism, Gandhism, women upliftment etc., were conducted. Seminars were organised to enable the students to exchange their views. It was made compulsory for each student to speak on issues either supporting or opposing. Mock parliament sessions were run in the Institute. Various issues were discussed in the Institute, for example, International problems as perceived by Gandhi, Political and economical system that protects coloured people, How Gandhism emerged, The aims of Congress, 1857 Revolt, American Revolution, History of Sun-Yet-Sen, China, French Revolution- Its aims and achievements, Afghan's struggle for Independence against England and Russia, Irish peoples freedom struggle, Lessons from South American Revolutions, The evils of capitalism, The need for united anti-imperial struggle, How peasants became a revolutionary class?, Peasants economic problems- Low prices and high prices, The problems of agricultural labourer, What is the chief objective of a colonial peasant? Zamindari system in a historical perspective, Revenue system in India, National planning- its necessity, etc.

A number of the students of the Institute rose to become prominent public workers in the ensuing peasant and national movements. It held its sessions in Rayalaseema in 1936-37, in Madanapalle in 1938, in Vizagapatnam and Srikakulam in 1938 and 1939, in Cuddapah and Guntur districts in 1940 and 1941, in Krishna in 1947-48 besides its annual or biannual sessions in

Nidubrolu throughout this period.¹⁵⁶ Several of the graduates of the Institute organised preparatory schools in almost all the districts and conducted weekly or week-end sessions for many years. The leftists also ran a number of such schools and a government Fortnightly Reports that in Manthavaripalem (Guntur district) the lecturers were largely Communists from North India and the general tendency of their lectures was to dispargue the philosophy and patience of non-violence.¹⁵⁷

Traditional methods were used for spreading enlightenment among the public, such as the burrakatha, jangam katha, veera katha and mono-acting. A number of the traditional bards were hired to sing and popularise peasant songs, poems, ballads, which were specially composed, which proved extremely popular during the 1937 elections. Infact the Communists after studying these methods of propaganda, developed them and made effective use of them and subsequently the Congress too came to utilise them¹⁵⁸ enthusiastically.

The Institute also initiated the practice of honouring writers and poets who devoted their writings to political and social problems. For instance Garimella Satyanarayana, the author of the famous song 'we do not want a white government', Adavi Bapi Raju and Sree Swami Siva Sankara, and several others were thus honoured in the Peasant Institute. This encouraged many other writers to devote themselves to writing poetry on peasant and political themes. Kavi Brahma Etukuri Venkata Narasayya, Venkata Kavi, Palnati kavi Veerabhadrachari etc., were encouraged to contribute valuable poems on the plight and problems of¹⁵⁹

peasants. A special reference can be made regarding the kisan poet, Settipalli Venkataratnam,¹⁶⁰ who wrote inspiring songs and presented them at the Institute.

The institue gradually became a powerful lever, for stimulating the youth to undertake the onerous responsibility of leadership. The students were appointed as the Chairmen of Reception Committees, Presidents or Speakers in various activities conducted by the Institute. Another important thing

taught in this institute was how to report about the meetings, narrate the troubles of peasants, enumerate their grievances against Zamindars and moneylenders in such a way as to find place in the press. Much importance was given for the publicity of conducting peasant institution. To put in Ranga's words, "students should realise that it is not enough to hold meetings, organise marches, conduct demonstrations and carry on propaganda and other educational work. They will have to see that as much publicity in the press for such activities as possible is obtained."¹⁶¹

Another technique to mobilise peasantry was the observance of
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all-India days, in order to develop all-India kisan unity. The Lucknow session of All India Kisan Sabha, inaugurated the all-India kisan day on the first of September every year. The observation of this Day was intended to make peasants feel, think and act in terms of their all-India needs, responsibilities instead of each province being left to look after itself. This was the tradition established by the Congress to bring the Indian masses under its fold through its national days. This technique proved successful as peasants enthusiastically observed this Day. Encouraged by its success AIKS organised several such days and were followed by the Provincial peasant organisations. For instance in 1938, five all-India days were celebrated bringing the peasants scattered throughout India together to express their sympathy and support for sections of peasantry in their struggle against their exploiters: 1) all-India Debt Cancellation Day was celebrated on 27th, March 2) All-India Mandsa Day on 3rd April, 3) All India Mangrol Day on 3rd, July, 4) All-India Rayalaseema Famine Relief Day on 20th August and 5) All-India Bihar Kisan Day on 23rd, January, 1938. Accordingly, peasant weeks were organised at frequent intervals, during which peasants grievances were brought into focus by organising meetings, reporting to appropriate authorities, distributing pamphlets, etc,. On these occasions new associations were formed wherever such
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organisations did not exist and new members were recruited. Resolutions like, 'struggle for freedom ; abolition of Zamindari system were passed.

Such propoganda methods succeeded 'in ranging myriads of peasants enthusiastically on the **side** of peasant associations to achieve atleast minimum **demands**'.¹⁶⁶

Peasant inarches was another effective **method** employed. The marches for the peasant was to enliven them politically. Though taking out marches may be a simple activity, and they might not have much of a message to deliver, the very fact of a batch of strangers coming **into** a village would be sufficient to arouse interest and make peasants think. The marches became a reality to the masses, since 1933.¹⁶⁷ These marchers used to start from a meeting ground and proceed to the collectorates, or taluk offices or panchayat offices and submit a list of demands. Apart from local demands- the list generally included the ultimate demands like abolition of Zamindari system, establishment of socialised industrial system etc.,.

These urged upon the Government, the need for immediate legislative action on the basis of the appeals received from time to time by the provincial ryots associations. As these marches were found to be of some help, they attracted a number of peasants and succeeded in stirring up the rural **atmosphere**. As the movement developed the demands of the peasants have come to occupy a prominent place in the national programme.¹⁶⁸ It is said that the peasant marches resulted in strengthening the Andhra Provincial Peasants Association in having a membership of 56 thousands with eight affiliated district associations. As these marches were organised to bring pressure on the government to pay greater heed to the needs of the peasants and to take immediate legislative action, they gained a political importance and brought political consciouness in the peasant mass.

During the marches, a fine-batch of peasant youth volunteered for the marches singing peasant songs all along the streets, keeping the peasant morale in high esteem. In this regard **N.V.Naidu's** inspiring song, 'we do not want association with this

zamindars' became the clarion call to all the **peasants**. The atrocities of the Zamindars and moneylenders were voiced from the house-tops. These marches made the peasant demands echoed from every village. The wonderful propaganda of the leaders and workers created a spirit of self-reliance and **self-confidence** in the masses.

To consolidate, and **give** a definite shape to the general awakening that resulted from this propaganda, the Andhra Peasants' March¹⁷⁰ was organised under the leadership of Andhra Provincial Ryots Association. It started on 3rd July 1937 from Itchapur in Vizagapatnam district and reached Madras on 27th March 1938. It was led by **Komma Reddy Satyanarayana Murty**, President of the Andhra Provincial Peasants Association and Joint Secretary of the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee. **Chalasani Vasudevarao** was the General Secretary of the Peasant Association. **N.G.Ranga M.L.A(Central)** and President of the All-India **Kisan Sabha**, inaugurated the march. Prominent Congress leaders, Communists and others co-operated with the marchers and contributed towards the success of the march. Many youngmen on behalf of the socialist, youth and labour organisations also participated. The marchers carried on their programme since their start covering on foot the districts of **Visakapatnam**, East and West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Nellore, Kurnool and other places. They sang songs along the route condemning the Zamindari atrocities, rack-renting, debt problems etc,. In the name of paisa fund, they collected money for **this** march. They raised slogans like 'abolish Zamindari system, down with imperialism, long-live revolution'. On the whole the march covered 1,512 miles on foot, 542 miles on bus, for 130 days. They visited 525 villages and secured 800 petitions signed by 25,000 peasants, and gathered 300 appeals of peasants and workers in regard to their respective local grievances. Copies of these petitions were submitted from time to time to the local district authorities concerned. They also organized meetings in 500 villages and 60 firka ryot conferences. It is said that these meetings were attended by around 450 thousand of peasants and workers.

This march enabled peasant associations to have excellent mass contact. It was intended to unite the diverse elements in the peasant **community**, to boost their activities and to focus the attention of the Congress Ministry on the day-to-day grievances **and** immediate demands and to get mass sanction to **all** their demands. It submitted a memorandum to the government demanding reduction of rents and water-rates, remissions, **improving** of irrigation sources etc.,.

This march created tremendous awakening among the **peasants**. Their demands for the immediate declaration of moratorium, reduction of land revenue and improvement of the status of Zamindari tenants pressurised the Madras government pass Agricultural Debt Relief Act on the 1st of October 1937,¹⁷¹ and appoint an enquiry committee to probe into the conditions of
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zamindary ryots.

The success of the march can be seen when the peasants presented their evidence before the Committee bravely.¹⁷³ They presented their memorandum and oral evidence in an organised,
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uniform and effective manner.

Whenever peasant associations conducted its meetings several interesting and inspiring programmes were organised in their premises. For instance when AIKS organised its annual meeting in Vijayawada, cattle exhibitions, health exhibitions, scientific and cultural shows like burrakatha, (a distinctly telugu folk form of ballad singing), street plays and folk dances were conducted which infact appealed to the peasants more than the speeches and resolutions passed at the Session.¹⁷⁵

True to the traditional saying that a nation lives by memories of its heroes, the peasant leaders cultivated the cultre of worshipping the heroes like Shivaji, **Brahmanaidu**, Balachandra etc,. Whenever national leaders visiting Andhra huge processions were taken out to garland them. The poem, written by **Kaviraja**,

"we have brought heroic scent, tell us who is the hero; we will apply it and garland him", was very popular among the masses.¹⁷⁶

The peasant associations also took up minor and small issues that happened in the village, say some problem, some dispute or conflict and **intervened** to solve them, so that such participation and **involvement** would help to identify the organisation with the common masses and also help to activate village level units. Primary health centres were also organised in the villages to help and attract poor peasants to join their associations.¹⁷⁷

As national flags were **usually** hoisted by the peasants, the same were unfurled at the peasant meetings. But where greater

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strength was sought to evince red flags also were used.

Another interesting technique followed was to publish the investigative reports relating to peasant problems and familiarise their content to the possible extent, or the peasant associations themselves appointed enquiry committees to investigate **into** the conditions of the peasants and bring out the facts. Generally such enquiries were conducted **in** new areas, where the peasant movements were sought to be **developed**, to highlight the economic conditions and sufferings of peasants and suggest remedies. Proceedings of such enquiries were published widely in the press, to create interest. Based on the report a schedule of minimum demands was prepared and published by a conference of the peasant of that district. A district peasant association was then formed in the wake of the conference to popularise and give effect to that schedule of minimum demands and gradually penetrate, **into** the peasant mind and making him to think favourably of the association. The best example to this type of operation **is** the appointment of Zamindari Ryots Enquiry Committee by the Nellore District Ryots Conference in 1931 to enquire into the conditions of the peasants in the Venkatagiri Zamindari with N.G.Ranga as president and N.V.Naidu as the secretary.¹⁷⁹

The mere visit of the committee to the remote villages created a stir in the mental and social atmosphere of that area and its people. The very fact of an enquiry in a zamindari area stunned the peasants, and soon they started questioning the atrocities of the Zamindar. It was the Venkatagiri peasants who waged one of the first battles against the Zamindari system. Thus the enquiry turned out to be an active instrument to awaken the peasants and inspire them to feel free and important.

Another such enquiry on an all-Andhra scale was appointed in 1933 by the third Andhra Zamindari Ryots Conference.¹⁸⁰ This, the All-Andhra Zamindari Ryots Enquiry Committee with N.G.Ranga as Chairman and N.V.Naidu and R.M.Sarma as other Members, toured through almost all the estates, met thousands of peasants, interviewed local leaders, delved into the zamindari records, inspected irrigation channels, tanks etc., and passed through forests, embracing grazing areas. This Report was published in the vernacular press and was given widest publicity, preparing the public mind to sympathise with the victims of the Zamindari system. The full Report was presented to Gandhi in 1934, thus provoking the Congress to bring into its orbit the Zamindari peasants problems.¹⁸¹

These activities gave a coherent political expression to all expressions of peasant dissent, apart from creating national consciousness, which helped the Congress in bringing about all-class harmony during the national movement. These mechanisms made the peasants aware of the problems faced by them in the Zamindari system and colonial exploitation. Politically, the peasant became more mature and conscious than before.

The evidence of the success of these techniques of mobilisation can be seen at the turn of the nineteen thirties. Anti-zamindari movements spread like a wild fire sweeping the entire tracts of Andhra estates. The peasants in Munagala, Muktyala, Kalipatnam, Challapalli, Gampalagudem, and other areas

waged relentless battles to cut into size the Zamindars and their powers. The abolition of the Zamindari system by the Congress ministry was not a **manna** from heaven but the hard earned achievement of the peasants. The credit goes to the peasant associations, which employed new methods in uniting the peasantry and bringing them to the battle front.

Hunger alone cannot arouse the people, neither can mere exploitation howsoever ruthless. But the urge towards action comes when they are moved by some elemental idea such as nationalism, revolutionary socialist **ideology**, or religion. When made keenly conscious of their conditions, when organised into a well-knit party, and political leadership emerges, when animated by a strong sentiment of nationalism and at the same time confronted by exceptional crises like economic depression, famines, war or acute unemployment, the peasantry turn to action. The ideology should be made meaningful and understandable for the less sophisticated and here comes the necessity of imaginative techniques of mobilisation.

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13. Its Editor was Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao, was a Zamindar, banker, and managing partner of the Amrutanjani Co. Ltd., as published on the back cover of the book, *Why Village Movement?* written by J.C.Kumarrappa, Rajamundry, 1935; He purchased 'Krutti Vennu' estate consisting about 2000 acres in 1933. However, he invested all his incomes arrived from the lands in the improvement of the estate and was popularly known as a benevolent Zamindar. Infact, when Prakasam Committee, was on its tour taking oral evidence, several of the witnesses gave a good account of his administration in the estate. Gorrepati Venkatasubbayya, *Deshodharaka Charitra*, (Biography of Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao Panthulu), 1967. *Andhra Patrika*, though never compromised in reporting the pathetic tales of the peasantry, it did not propagate radical ideas among the peasantry.
14. Started on 1.2.1902 by Konda Venkatappayya and Dasu Narayana Rao. Mutnuri Krishna Rao, became its editor in 1907 and continued for four decades in that position. These people were ardent Congressites, and they tried to mobilise the peasant population to come under the Congress fold.

15. *Hindu*, 20.9.1878 (first issue). It was also a nationalist paper and voiced peasants issues mainly from Congress perspective. It was associated with Maharaja of Vijayanagaram, for some time at the turn of the century. C.J.Nirmal, *Op.Cit.*, p.67.
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17. *Krishna Patrka*, 17.7.43.
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26. *Ibid*, 21.10, 33, for instance, it reported about American peasants who were agitating durring that period for the redressal of their grievances.
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28. *Andhra Patrika*, 1.2.37.
29. It brought out the report of W.R.S.Satyanathan on debt problem in the Madras Presidency in telugu on 14.9.35.
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31. *Ibid*, 10.9.37.
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37. *Ibid*, 20.6.33.
38. *Ibid*, 26.1.47.
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40. *Telugu*, 21.1.38.
41. *Vijaya*, 1.2.37.
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44. *Swatantra Bharathi*, 5.7.47.
45. *Bharrathi*, May, 1942.
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48. *Zamin Ryot*, Silver Jubilee Issue, 4.4.54.
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61. *Kranthi*, 3.12.39.
62. *Andhravani*, 22.12.38.
63. V.Venkateshwarlu, *Biography of Prakasam*, p.142. According to Bhandaru Parvatulu this paper first appeared on 19.10.1921, *Prakasam Gadhavali*, Prakasam Institute of Development Studies, Hyderabad.
64. *Swarajya*, 19.11.32.
65. *Village Republic*, 10.10.40.
66. R.Brass and Marcus F.Franda (ed.), *Radical Politics in SouthAsia*, Massachusetts, 1973, p.291.
67. P.Sundarayya, *Viaplavapathamlo Naa Payanam* (My Journey towards Revolutionary Path), Part I, Prajasakti Pub., Vijayawada, 1990, p.129.
68. *Navasakti*, 15.12.37.
69. Interview with parakala Pattabhirama Rao, on 22.9.90, in Vijayawada.
70. It brought out every minute details of the Andhra peasant marches, and gave prior publicity in the villages about the advancing marches and encouraged to participate.
71. *Ibid*, 19.1.38.
72. *Ibid*, 11.1.39.
73. Y.V.Krishna RAO, (ed) *Andhra Pradeshlo Communistu Udhya Charitra*, 1936-42 (History of Communist Movement in Andhra Pradesh), Visalandhra Pub. House, Hyderabad, 1988, Pp.418-487.
74. *Navasakti*, 7.12.39.
75. *Ibid*, 8.3.39.
76. Interview with Parakala Pattabhi Rama Rao, *Op.Cit.*
77. P.Sundarayya, *Op.Cit.*, p.130.
78. It started as weekly in 1942 with Katragadda Rajagopala Rao, Chalasani Vasudeva Rao, Tummala Venkataramanayya and Kondapudi Laxminarayana as editors and turned out as daily on December 3rd, 1945 and continued till it was banned on April 22, 1946. Interview with Parakala Pattabhi Rama Rao.
79. *Prajasakti*, 7.10.72.
80. *Ibid*, 27.10.43.
81. *Ibid*, 5.11.43.
82. *Ibid*, 26.7.44.
83. *Ibid*, 18.3.44.



Navasakti 4.1.1939

The above cartoon depicts Rajaji screaming that Zamindars were being hurt while T. Prakasam hitting the Zamindars with his Report to save tenants from the Zamindari system which is compared here with a frying pan.

85. Unnava laxminarayana, *Halapalli*, Part I & II, (first published in 1922), Jayanti Publications, Vijayawada, 1988.

86. G.O.No. 1023, Home (Conf.) Department, dt.3.7.36.

87. N.G.Ranga, *Harijana Nayakudu*, (first published in 1933), Kisan Pub., Guntur, 1987.

88. *Ibid*, Pp. 49-50.

89. *Ryotu Bhajanavali*, Andhra Provincial Ryot Congress, Vijayada, 1949. The writing of peasant songs for the peasant institute started from 1934 and each year a number of such songs were added to this list. They largely contained Soviet-oriented leftism, which during this period was dominating the intellectual thing. According to Gorrepati Venkatasubbayya it was first published on 22.4.1934, *Op.Cit.*, P.144.

90. *Ibid*, p.146.

91. This poem was written by N.V.Naidu and printed in 1935 edition, of *Ryotu Bhajanavali* published by G.Laxminarayana of the Peasant Institute popularly known as Ramaneedu Vidhyalaya, at Nidubrolu, in Guntur district.

92. *Ryotu Bhajanavali*, *Op.Cit.*, Written by Settipally Venkataratnam, p.8.

93. *Ibid*, Written by K.V.Ramakrishna, p.25.

94. *Ibid*, Written by Tripurana Raghavadasu, Pp.68-69.

95. *Ibid*, p.71.

96. Kondaveeti Venkata Kavi, *Karshaka*, Sattenapalli, 1939.

97. N.G.Ranga, *First For Freedom*, New Delhi, 1968, p.238.

98. P.Sundarayya, *Op.Cit.*, p.30.

99. Secret File, December 1937, Memo Nos/45-1/H, ddt 20.5.1936, (Home Department).

100. *Socialism Ante?* (What is Socialism?), Rajamundryy, 1938.

101. *Sandesam*, (Message), Laxmi Pub., Kakinada, 1936.

102. *Karl Marx Upadeshalu* (Teachings of Karl Marx), Laxmi Pub., Kakinada, 1936, p.40.

103. G.O.No. 925, Public (General) Department, dt.19.5.37.

104. Mahidara Ramamohana Rao, *Lenin Upadeshamulu*, (Teachings of Lenin), Vishwa Sahityamala Pub., Munganda, 1938.

105. G.O.No. 1560, Public (General) (Conf.) Department, 1938.

106. Mahidara Jaganmohan Rao, *Paris Commune*, Vishwa Sahityamala Pub., Munganda, 1938.

107. It was a speech delivered by K.Radhakrishnamurthy at the school of politics conducted at the Japobin Lodge, Guntur in October 1943 and was published in book form *India Bavishyathu* (Future of India), Renaissance Publications, Tenali, 1944.

108. V.V.Subramanya Sastry, *Swatantra Garjana*, (The Roar of Independence), Andhra Vani Press, Vijayawada, 1941.

109. Kranti Kumar, *Viplavayugam*, ("The Age of Revolution"), Swechapuram, 1941, p.4.

110. V.V.Subramanyam Sarma, *Zamin Ryot*, 1938, pp.11-14.
111. G.O.Ms no.357, Home Department, dt.23.1.39.
112. G.O.No.2049 Public (Conf.)Department, 18.1.41.
113. Interview with Parakala Pattabhi Rama Rao.
114. *Ibid*.
115. *Peda Ryotula Kashtalela Potayl* (How will the difficulties of poor peasants be solved?) Nellore, pp.2.13.
116. *Manifesto of the Workers and Peasants Party to the Indian National Congress*, Madras, 1927.
117. *Ibid*, p.7.
118. Sri Sri was the first poet who transferred Marxist ideas into a simple and yet powerful poem Mahaprastanam, which influenced the minds of thousands of young nationalists.
119. R.Brass and Marcus F.Franda (ed), *Op.Cit.*, p.293.
120. Sarojini Regani (ed), *Who is Who in Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh*, Vol.1, Hyderabad, 1978, pp.147-8.
121. Gorrepati Venkatasubbayya, *Op.Cit*, pp.83-85.
122. The starting of All India Kisan Publication in Madras in 1933 facilitated for the publication of N.G.Ranga's books.
123. The first eight books were written under the category of Andhra Economical Series. He obtained his B.Litt degree from Oxford University for his research paper on 'The Economic Organisation of the Cotton Industry of Southern India'. This experience helped him to probe the economic conditions of *zamin* ryots.
124. For instance in his book *Kisan Speaks*, he says 'this book is primarily intended to show out *kisans* and *kisan sabhas* what all can and has to be done immediately and inevitably, if even minimum of relief from their troubles and assistance towards progress were to be vouchsafed to out masses without any more delay', Madras, 1937, p.ii.
125. N.G.Ranga, *Outlines of the National Revolutionary Path*, Bombay, 1945, p.103.
126. N.G.Ranga, *Peasants and Congress*, *Op.Cit.*, p.vi.
127. N.G.Ranga, *Modern Indian Peasant*, Madras, 1936, p.3.
128. N.G.Ranga, *Outlines of the National Revolutionary Path*, *Op.Cit*, p.76.

129. Wadrevu Bapiraju, *Madras Ryotu Runa Nivarana Chattarn*, (Madras Debt Relief Act), Rajamundry, 1938.
130. *Zamindari Committee Report*, Andhra Provincial Congress Congress, Machilipatnam, 1939.
131. R.M.Sarma, *Zamindari Ryotu Samasya*, (Problems of Zamindari Peasants), Kovvur, 1933.
132. Gorrepatipati Venkatasubbya, *Mana Zamindarulu* (Our Zamindars), Gantasala, 1944.
133. *Under Secretary Safe (Secret) Files, No.982, dt. 10.1.37.*
134. *Ibid, No.981, dt.10.1.37.*
135. *Ibid.*
136. *Fortnightly Reports*, for the first of September, 1937.
137. *Public (General) Department, D.O.No.p.4-15, dt.21.8.37.*
138. *Public (General) Department, D.O.No.p.4-17, dt.20.9.37.*
139. *G.O.No.1090, Public (General) Department, dt.27.6.38.*
140. *Public (General) Department , From S.B.CID, (Strictly Con) NO.658/C, dt.15.3.38.*
141. *G.O.No. 2618-19, Home (Conf) Department, dt. 7. 10.36.*
142. *G.O.No. 353, Public (Conf.) Department, dt.28.2.35.*
143. *Ibid.*
144. Speaking at All India Kisan Sabha (Faizpur) Session in 1936 about the need for formation of peasant **asociations** N.G.Ranga observed that 'this alone can solve the demands of peasants and also paves the way towards the advent kof kisan and mazdoor **Raj**, **N..G.Ranga, Kisan Speaks, Op.Cit, p.iii.**
145. Y.V.Krishna Rao, *Andhra Pradeshlo Swat antraniki Mundu Ryotu Poratalu, Ryotu Udhyamalu*, ("Peasants Movements and Struggles in Andhra Pradesh before Independence), Vijayawada, 1981, **pp.12-15.**
146. *Andhra Patrika, 2.8.28.*
147. **Kommareddy** Sathyanarayana **Murthy** 50th Death Anniversary Memorial Issue, Vijayawada, 1990, **p.65.**
148. **Gorrepati** Venkatasubbayya, Acharya Ranga, *Op.Cit, p.33.*
149. Y.V.Krishna Rao, *Andhra Pradeshlo Ryotu Udhyamalu: Poratalu*, (Peasants Movements in Andhra Pradesh), 1990, **p.61.** The

Zamindari Peasant Association and Peasant Protection Committee were affiliated to Andhra Provincial Peasant Association, N.G.Ranga, *History of Kisan Movement*, Madras, 1939, p.108.

150. It popularised the faith of the absolute need for peasants and agricultural workers to cooperate with each other and work together for their mutual benefit and also their dependance upon each other, N.G.Ranga, *Fight for Freedom*, *Op.Cit*, p.227.

151. For instance, speaking at the Andhra Provincial Ryots Conference in 1929, he said "if the ryots won't work from now onwards with alertness, social unity and cooperation in thinking and capture the coming Swarajya government, then they will be destroyed", *Rural India*, vol.IV, no.12, Dec, 1929, pp.269-81.

152. Acharya Ranga, 88th Anniversary, Special Issue, 1987, p.42.

153. Kisan Sri, Acharya Rangaji, *Vividha Drukpadhallo* (Prof.Ranga: In Different Perspectives), Tenali, 1961, p.240.

154. Acharya Ranga, 88th Anniversary, *Op.Cit.*, p.46.

155. *Ibid*, pp.50-52.

156. N.G.Ranga, *Fight for Freedom*, *Op.Cit*, pp.193-94.

157. *Fortnightly Reports*, 10.6.38.

158. Communists used Burrakatha very widely to propogate their ideology. Nazar, the most famous burrakatha troupe leader and other Communist burrakatha performers propogated the necessity of peasant association and movements among the peasantry of Andhra during this period. Interview with Mukkala Nagabhusanam.

159. N.G.Ranga, *Fight for Freedom*. *Op.Cit*, p.194.

160. Settupally Venkataratnam, a peasant poet, began his career from 1934, writing songs every year which were favourably received by the peasants. However he died in 1939 at the age of 26. Following his death all his songs were published by N.G.Ranga. Interview with Daruvuri Veeraiiah.

161. N.G.Ranga, *Peasant and Congress*, *Op.Cit*, p.6.

162. *Ibid*, p.49.

163. *Ibid*, p.50.

164. *Andhra Patriak*, 18.2.32.

165. *Ibid*, 19.10.37.

166. N.G.Ranga, *Modern Indian Peasant*, *Op.Cit*, p.3.

167. Kommareddy Sathyanarayana Murthy, 50th Death Anniversary

Memorial Issue, Op.Cit., p.11.

168. This is evident from the Karachi Congress resolutions which demanded substantial reduction in agricultural rent or revenue paid by the peasantry and in case of uneconomic holdings exemption from rent for such period as may be necessary.

169. N.G.Ranga, *Fight for Freedom, Op.Cit, p.29.*

170. *Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee, Memorandum Supplemental Volume*, Madras, 1938, p.29., *Ryotu Vani*, 1990, p.5, *Fortnightly Reports*, 4.4.1938.

171. For details see *Madras Legislative Council Debates*, vol.4, Dec. 1937-Jan.1938.

172. *Madras Legislative Assembly Debates*, vol.5, 1937, p.841.

173. *Navasakti*, 19.1.38.

174. N.G.Ranga, *Peasant and Congress, Op.Cit, p.73.*

175. *Eighth All India Kisan Sabha*, Bezwada, 1944, pp.14-19.

176. *Gorrepati Venkatasubbayya*, Acharya Ranga, *Op.Cit, p.34.*

177. P.Sundarayya, *Op.Cit, p.75.*

178. N.G.Ranga, *Modern Indian Peasant, Op.Cit., p.3.*

179. N.G.Ranga, *Fight for Freedom, Op.Cit, p.139.*

180. *Ibid, p.152.*

181. Nehru, while speaking on the need of separate kisan sabhas observed, "the important fact to be borne in mind is that there is deep ferment in the peasantry all over India and a powerful, though partly un-conscious, desire on their part to do something to get rid of their main burdens, which have quite unbearable. They are expectant, and if the Congress call does not reach their ears, some others will and they will respond to it. The Congress has realised this in a large measure, and inspired of its political pre-occupations, it has laid down an agrarian programme", N.G.Ranga, *Peasant and Congress, Op.Cit, p.8.*

CHAPTER III

PEASANT PROGRAMME OF THE CONGRESS MINISTRY

1937-39

The Congress policy towards peasantry was not a revolutionary one. It was designed to bolster well entrenched agrarian interests and did little or nothing for the weakest sections of the rural society. This attitude had been clearly amplified in the two years rule of Congress Government in the Madras Presidency.

Congress agrarian policy in the 1920s was quite equivocal; in the 1930s it moved to align Congress with the interests of tenants and small Zamindars. Although the Congress contained many of those who had been active in the earlier kisan sabhas, the general policy was in favour of landowning classes. The party believed that it was only by serving the true interests of both the tenant and landlord that it could find a solid base for freedom struggle and was pledged to stand by the one as firmly as the other in its hour of need.¹ But by the late 1920s there were challenges to this sort of class harmony. Leftist groups in the Congress began to call for clearer lines of policy on economic and social matters. Communists and peasant leaders started pressing for more radical reforms in this sphere. The follow-up of these activities was the passing of the fundamental rights resolution in Karachi session of the Congress in 1931, regarding these matters. It advocated reform in the system of land tenure and revenue and rent and for the imposition of a graded tax on income from land above a reasonable minimum.² But mild reform programmes did not satisfy left-wing aspirations. The Congress Socialist Party which met for the first time in Bombay on 21-22 October, 1934 passed a much more radical socio-economic programme. Its objectives included the elimination of princes and landlords without compensation; redistribution of land to peasants; encouragement of co-operative and collective farming by the state; and complete exemption from rents and taxes of all peasants with uneconomic holding.³

These policies helped to stir Congress to greater activity. The 49th Congress Session at Lucknow in March 1936 laid particular stress on the fact that the most **important** and urgent problems of the country was the appalling poverty, unemployment and **indebtedness** of the peasantry, fundamentally due to an antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue system, intensified by the great slump in prices of agricultural produce. It called upon the Provincial Congress Committees to frame full agrarian programme.⁴ **Faizpur**, in fact, revealed the difficulties of Congress agrarian **policy-making**. Congress could not spell out a clear policy for future reform because there had been no resolution within Congress of the **important issues** that such a change entailed. Should estate-holders get compensation or not? Should there be any private rights in land in the future or should all land be vested in the state? What should be the nature of agricultural production in the future peasant proprietorship? Co-operative farming or collective farming? The brochure of Congress Golden Jubilee attributed the problems of rural indebtedness mainly to the extravagant expenditure on the ceremonial occasions by the peasant population. Obviously it failed to see through the nexus between moneylender, rent and exhorbltant taxes, which infact was the real basis of rural indebtedness.⁵

Whatever may be the shortcomings in the Congress agrarian policy, Congress and peasant together identified in their struggle for independence, the peasant visualised himself free from problems in **independent** India and perceived Congress as a vehicle which carried him to the destination.⁶ For the Congress peasant support was essential to carry on its fight against imperialism. Pandit Nehru was more out-spoken in putting out agrarian problems on the forefront. He argued that the ending of all parasitical interests in land was the meeting point of nationalism and **socialism**. 'In swaraJ, they will not be **exploited**' he said.

The Congress election manifesto for the **1937** elections promised to eradicate the problems of the peasant and did not go

further than the Karachi programme of six years before.⁹

In the Madras Presidency agrarian **issues** offered the most attractive theme for the Congress to fight the Justice Party in the February 1937 elections. National fervour might mobilise a small section of the population temporarily, but **it** could not by **itself** sustain a prolonged and massive assault on the British **Raj**. The Congress therefore, needed to have a firm grasp on a large section of the population, a section at least as large as the 1937 electorate. To win their continuing loyalty and their votes it had to appeal to their interests as well as to their nationalist sentiments. Nehru, during his election campaign in the Madras Presidency declared that the fight for 'Swaraj is a fight for peasants rights'¹⁰ Congress leaders promised reforms **in** taxation and the land revenue system which would favour the less wealthy and place a moratorium on the debts of the rural population.¹¹ Peasant discontent in the Presidency was considerably heightened in the post-depression **period** which saw commodity prices going down, seriously affecting agricultural incomes.¹² This situation was advantageously exploited by the Congress, in its ruthless attack against the Justice Party.¹³ The Congress party meticulously planned its election propaganda, so that its political conferences were accompanied by ryot's conferences. These arrangements were probably the result of the policy adopted at the Lucknow session of placing an agrarian programme in the
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fore-front of Congress activities.

Most of the audience who attended Pandit Nehru's electoral meetings were the peasant population, and they came with their grievances.¹⁵ Even the Communists and Socialists urged the peasants to vote for the Congress in order to find a solution to their long standing agrarian problems.¹⁶ The sentiments of nationalism and slogans of **anti-feudalism** held sway over peasant population. The Congress emerged as the leading party in the Madras Assembly election and the Justice Party and People's Party were trounced in the wake of popular resentment to their

policies.¹⁷ This election gave the clearest possible proof that the peasants were solidly behind the Congress.¹⁸ Indeed the party was distinctly made more powerful and popular among a large sections of the population. The demands of the peasants were more concrete and they felt strongly that it was the responsibility of the Congress to fulfill his aspirations. Infact when **Rajaji** refused to form an interim ministry in the initial stages, as the Fortnightly Report states, the average voter in the villages felt disappointed at such refusal, 'he would rather be happy if the Congress accept office and fulfill their election promises¹⁹ regarding reduction of land-tax etc.,.

Finally, when the Congress Ministry assumed office in July, 1937, it worked from the promises of its agrarian policy. The Ministry drew up plans for reform legislation conscious of the need, to fulfill the great promises 'we have held out to the people' as **Rajaji** stated.²⁰ Its approach, however, was cautious and the two important measures viz., the Agricultural Debt Relief Act and the appointment of Madras Estate Land Act Enquiry Committee (popularly known as **Prakasam** Committee) and its findings and recommendations made no claims to be revolutionary.

In accordance with its electoral promise, the Congress Ministry passed the Agriculturists Debt Relief Act to solve the debt problems of the ryots.²¹ According to the 1929 Report of the Central Banking Enquiry Committee, the magnitude of rural indebtedness in India was about Rs.900 crores and Rs.150 crores in Madras Presidency alone.²² **Mr.Sathyanathan**, who studied the problem of indebtedness of the Madras peasants in 1935-36, estimated that the burden of indebtedness was Rs.204 crores.²³ It jumped to Rs.272 crores by 1939.²⁴ To protect the peasant from this vicious problem the Debt Relief Act was passed on January 27, 1938. The Congress proposed to wipe out altogether all interests on the debts that the agriculturists contracted prior to October 1, 1932. **Rajaji** Justified this measure on the ground that it had

become **indispensable** to save agriculture from further decay.²⁵ But this legislation was only a half-hearted **measure**, for it did not release the peasants from the entire burden of debt as promised during the elections. Of the total debt of **Rs.204** crores, it could only abolish **Rs.80** crores. The **beneficiaries** of this Act **included** absentee landlords and Zamindars while the bulk of agricultural labourers were kept out of its **purview**.²⁶

There was much disappointment among the peasantry and the Andhra Provincial Peasant Association appealed to the peasants to fight against this Act.²⁷ They demanded total abolition of the debt, a demand which the **Rajaji** Ministry did not heed. But on the whole, the Agriculturists Debt Relief Act was a major legislative measure of the Ministry to initiate the Congress party's socio-economic reconstruction programmes. It stands entirely on a different plank from the previous remedies such as the Debt Conciliation Boards, Land Mortgage Banks, etc,. It incorporated for the first time in the annals of debt legislation the much-needed principle of compulsion.²⁸ Yet, the Act could not prevent the peasant from succumbing to the debt burden, as the Act did not provide any corresponding financial aid to the peasants.²⁹ Hence the peasants were forced to go to the traditional money-lender for loans to help them tide over problems of low production due to vicissitudes of the seasons, low prices and high taxes. Consequently, the money lender had the upper hand once again in the bargain.

The other important measure made by the Ministry was the appointment of the Committee to study the status and the conditions of the tenants in the Zamindari areas. The **Prakasam** Committee which was formed in 1937 was the end result of long standing problems of the **zamin** ryots and their expression during the post-depression period, which the Congress Ministry could no longer ignore. Infact, the Zamindari peasant, for a long time was ignored by the nationalists. Even after Gandhi's entry in Indian politics this peasant did not receive the attention of the

Congress in the early 1920s. Infact Gandhi's championing the cause of the peasants of Champaran in Bihar, Jawaharlal Nehru's identification with the peasant masses in the United Provinces, Vallabhai Patel's historic Bardoli Sathyagraha, Andhra's famous Pedanandipadu 'no-tax' campaign and many such other agitations were all intended to ameliorate the grievances of the peasants. In all these agitations, however, only the peasants under the direct rule of the British government were involved. With the world-wide depression, the acute grievances of the zamin peasant started surfacing and unrest enveloped the Zamindari tracts of the Madras Presidency. At this Juncture the socialist groups within the Congress party gained strength and considered the peasant question with serious attention.³⁰

The zamin ryots were the most exploited of the Indian agriculturists. Their main problems were the imposition of excessive rent, land alienation and inadequate irrigation facilities. Such was the frustration and annoyance that made one tenant to state that, 'the air we breathe, the water we drink, the sand we use, the bird that flies, etc., are all claimed by the Zamindar as his. Thus we are made to live in a world of absolute slavery. Economically we are exploited. The Zamindar does no duty here except collection, collection, collection, even our votes by *zulum*'.³¹ This explains why the Zamindari areas, though rich in material resources, were not able to meet even the basic needs of life of the agriculturists. The lack of a forward spirit on the part of the estates; the rents levied and collected proved a crushing burden to the peasants devouring even their wages. But the zamin-ryot did not succumb to the exploitative machanism of his over-lord. When his subsistence economy was seen threatened he started displaying his power of resistance and enterprise. The peasants started uniting to fight for fair rent and security of their tenure.³² Infact, from time immemorial peasants had exercised the trick of bowing before an unmanageable storm but sticking on firmly to their roots and continued their will to live. The impact of the onglong freedom movement, activities of

the Socialists, Communists and Nationalists, the stories of Russian revolution had got their own effect on the peasant mind and added further impetus to the growth of self-consciousness, of dignity and self-assertion of the **zamin-ryot**. They were no longer prepared to serve as the howers of wook and drawers of water for their feudal over-lords and the *Andhra Patrika* in 1938 reports, that they started questioning his authority.³³

The **zamin-ryot** movement, from 1930s became more sustained and intense in Madras Presidency and in Andhra in particular where it was **champoned** by N.G.Ranga. Infact, he was one of the

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founder-organisers of the Indian peasant movement. Under his leadership the activities of the **zamin** ryots gained momentum. A large number of peasant marches and peasant weeks were organised during thirties to highlight the grievances of the peasant mass.

There was also the demand for the complete abolition of the Zamindari system. The main and immediate demand of the **zamin** ryots however, was the reduction of land tax. The Andhra Peasants March, as already mentioned, generated an euphoria in the countryside.³⁸ The main and urgent demands of the marchers were the reduction in rents and water-rates, remissions, repair of

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irrigation sources among other things.

The scale and magnitude of these agitations of the **zamin** ryots made it difficult for Congress party which formed the Ministry in 1937.⁴⁰ However, within the rank and file of the party there was no unanimity with regard to the policy to be adopted. The Zamindars in the party like Dr.Subbarayan were bitterly opposed to any action in this matter. Even the Premier **Raja**ji never shared the Socialists convictions on the **zamin** ryot's issue.⁴¹ When compared to his relentless campaign in favour of prohibition and other items, he was not very enthusiastic about the cause of the **zamin** ryots. But, at the same time, he could not concede all the claims of the Zamindars for the retention of their ancient rights and privileges. Infact he was of the view that the

existing exploitative conditions in the **zamin** areas would harm the Zamindars themselves, if they were allowed to continue without
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checks. Moreover he was bound by the party mandate to seek some remedies for the tenant's grievances. This tenancy question seemed to him so complex in nature that he wanted to make a thorough study before he could venture into a legislative remedy. For this purpose, in September 1937, he set up a Joint Committee of the two Houses, selecting three from the Council and **six** from the Assembly, and entrusted **this** Committee with the work of **inquiring into** the agrarian conditions⁴³ in the Zamindari and **other** proprietary areas in the Presidency. This Committee was also required to recommend legislations to solve this problem. The main terms of reference for this Committee were the Judicial interests of the ryots in relation to the landholders, collection and remission of rent, survey, record of rights (including water rights), levies from ryots in addition to rent, utilisation of local natural facilities by tenants for their domestic⁴⁴ and agricultural purposes and maintenance of irrigation works. It can be mentioned here that the very necessity of a **Committee** to enquire into the problem was questioned by some members for two different reasons. Some suspected the proposed reform as a revolutionary move and pleaded that there was no necessity for any change and that the existing arrangement would be sufficient **with** minimum alterations, while some others thought that it would unnecessarily prolong matters and pleaded that the Zamindari institution was out **of** date and it should be abolished forthwith without any enquiry. Those who held these extreme views were, however, a minority and the majority of the members felt **the** necessity of a Committee for thorough enquiry into the problem.

A section of the legislators also pleaded that the Committee should be presided over by a man with judicial **qualifications** which was however opposed and the Government's resolution was finally carried out.⁴⁷ As the terms were so vast in their scope, it took about 15 months for the Committee, officially known as Madras Estate Land Act Committee but popularly known as **Prakasam**

Committee, to complete **its** study. A questionnaire was issued to the the public and about 600 **memoranda** were received from Zamindars, **mokhasadars**, Inamdars, landholders, ryots associations, Bar associations, lawyers, Congress Committees and

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several tenants. The Committee obtained information from the District Collectors on points raised **in** the second questionnaire regarding rates of rents prevailing on dry and wet land; rates of assessment prevailing **in** nearest ryotwari areas; the crops generally raised; the number of irrigation channels; total rent roll of the estate; rates of rent or **waram** paid by sub-tenants to ryots; the forest areas in the estate and whether the estate was surveyed and if so, was **it** a Government survey or a private survey.⁵⁰

During the fifteen months of its investigation, the Committee toured various parts of the Presidency to collect evidences, and examined 358 witnesses. The evidence was printed **in** three volumes. A Supplemental volume of evidence containing the **English** translation of the Telugu evidence was printed.⁵¹ Twenty six historical documents were also appended to the Report.⁵² In a sense, it can be said that the **Prakasam** Committee Report besides being a monumental work on the history of the **zamindary** system and Revenue Administration in the Madras Presidency, contains a **mine** of historical information for further research.

The responses to the queries were on expected lines. While the Zamindars maintained that they were the owners of the land, the peasants and their representatives claimed that the peasant was the owner.⁵³ One of the **memos** also suggested that the Zamindars **must** be prohibited from cultivating more than fifty acres of land.⁵⁴ The entire lot of the peasant class demanded that the right to water-supply should be inherent as appertaining to the land. Another general demand of the peasantry was the reduction of the land rent; they pleaded that the land revenue in Zamindari villages must be changed to be on par with the ryotwari villages. Many of the petitioners urged that the Zamindar and the

tenants should have equal rights to under-ground minerals.⁵⁵ They also demanded that a minimum of two acres of land in each village should be reserved free from rent for communal purposes.⁵⁶ Few others urged the government to have statutory provision to enable the ryot associations and their representatives to have a voice in the administration of Zamindars.⁵⁷ On the whole the zamindars enthusiastically participated in giving witness before the Committee.⁵⁸ Their answering to the questions of the Zamindar of Mirzapuram was precise and accurate.⁵⁹

The Committee completed its Report by March 1938, but there was undue delay in announcing the recommendations of the Report.⁶⁰ The final Report of the Committee was presented to the Assembly on January 30, 1939 and on the following day T. Prakasam presented the Report to the Council.⁶¹ It declared the peasant as the proprietor of the land and recommended the reduction of land tax to the 1802 level. This Report was accepted by five out of the nine members. But of the remaining four, three accepted all the main proposals and only the representative of the Zamindars, the Zamindar of Mirzapuram opposed all the main recommendations.⁶³

The debate on this Report lasted for seven days in the Assembly and six days in the Council. The crucial point in this debate was whether the recommendations made by the majority of the members of this Committee should be accepted by the Government for the purpose of passing a law on the subject. The Congress members accepted the Report in general, while Zamindars and their representatives in the Legislature disapproved of any legislative measure on the basis of the Committee's majority
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recommendations. The Zamindar of Mirzapuram criticised the Report on the ground that it was grossly unjust and inequitable to the zamindars. He strongly claimed that the Zamindar was the owner of his estate and that no alteration could be made therein unilaterally by the Government. Infact, since the beginning of the constitution of the Committee, the Zamindars were under the
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impression that the whole atmosphere was against them. Apart from their opposition in the Legislature and the Committee, the

Zamindars tried to undo **Prakasam's** Report by persuading the then Governor Lord **Erskine** to invoke his special powers.⁶⁸ They also tried to **influence** Rajaji through the Congress High Command. According to Prakasam, the Zamindar of **Mirzapuram** proposed to the Committee, that **its** Report should be kept sealed as a confidential document because the presentation of the same to the Assembly and publication in the press would in his opinion 'bring about a revolution in the country'. This proposal was rejected by the Committee.⁷⁰ In their attempts, the Zamindars influenced civil servants in delaying the work of the Committee. The Special Officer appointed by the Congress Ministry to scrutinise the proposals and embody them in a Bill was believed to have reported against the major **recommendations**. The permanent officials interposed obstacles in the way of **accomplishing** real progress.⁷¹ A **contemporary** nationalist weekly, *Krishna Patrika*, openly alleged that the officials were purposefully obstructing the legislaion with regard to the betterment of **zamin ryots**.⁷²

T.Prakasam spoke for two days defending the Report and ended his speech with these words, 'if right is not there, if Justice **is** not there, reject it, and I shall not have the slightest **objection**'.⁷³ The Government wanted to accept this majority Report, but at the same time did not want to hurt the interests of the Zamindars. Rajaji assured the Zamindars that he was not contemplating any revolutionary legislation in this regard, 'he who wants political security would not take any revolutionary

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action', he said. Prakasam also assured that there was 'no Moscow in the government's proposal', meaning that the Government did not contemplate nationalisation of the Zamindari lands. The Report itself did not recommend any such scheme. What the Report recommended was that if the Zamindars were unwilling to make any alteration in the original agreement as regards their ownership claims, they should accept the rate of rent that was fixed **in** 1802. Infact, Prakasam himself agreed that there were no new proposals in the Report and it only reiterated the suggestions, proposals and recommendations made by the Madras Government from

1802 onwards, 'we only tried to remove the injustice heaped upon the ryot', he said.⁷⁶ But the Zamindars would give up neither their ownership rights nor the additional rent they had been collecting in violation of the original agreement.

Meanwhile, the agitation for the **implementation** of the **Committee's** recommendations was started by various kisan sabhas in the Province. The Andhra Provincial Peasant Association warned the Government that if it failed to **implement** the recommendation, the peace would be disturbed in the country.⁷⁷ The Communist controlled weekly *Navasakti* in its editorial appealed to the **zamin** ryots to organise '**zamin-ryot week**' in support of the Committee's recommendations. On the other hand violent disputes between the peasants and Zamindars over the rent issue were occurring in **Kalipatnam**, Mukthiyala, Munagala and other estates in the Andhra
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region. With such an atmosphere around them, both the Assembly and the Council decided by the majority to ask the Government to bring in a legislation at an early date on the basis of the majority recommendation of the Committee, but in the meantime the Congress Ministry resigned and the Report was put in cold storage.⁸⁰

The net effect of all the labour that the Legislature and its Committee expended for more than fifteen months was that it provided a basis for a better understanding of the problem in the estates by the legislators and this, in turn, facilitated the next Congress Ministry to abolish the Zamindari land tenure system altogether immediately after independence.

The Report, when observed closely, shows that it was biased in favour of reasonably substantial peasants, who took a leading part in organising the agitation. It also reveals the reformatory nature of socio-economic programme of the Congress. The tenants who gave witness to the Committee possessed around ten to eighty
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acres of land. Their demands revolved around the reduction of rent and repair of **irrigation** facilities and nothing was heard of

sub-tenants or agricultural labourers. The question of **Inamdari** peasants was completely ignored in the Report.⁸² No single **recommendation** was made regarding the **interests** of the depressed classes, who form the bulk of the agricultural labouring population of this country. Exposing this lacuna of the Report **M.C.Rajah**, M.L.A criticised the Congress in these terms, 'It is true that most of the agricultural labourers have no votes to give at the elections, whereas the tenant **is** in a position not only to vote for, but also to canvass for as **well**'.⁸³ The Congress had no answer to this criticism. This general neglect of the agricultural workers and other depressed classes by the Congress, despite Gandhi's intensive campaign against **untouchability** and his constructive programmes, partly answers the question why the general mass of these classes followed the lead of their caste organisations without reposing faith in the professions of upper caste leaders, to win concessions from the British government.

The Report on the whole offered no alternative to the parasitic mode of production. By the Zamindari Bill it could have only created a new land-lord class.

The terms of reference of the Committee were themselves too narrow in nature. They included neither the abolition of the Zamindari institutions and Courts of Wards nor the personal expenditure of the Zamindars, in its discussion. But its recommendations, despite defects satisfied and were supported by the agitating peasant organisations and it is not surprising considering the socio-economic base of the agitating peasantry. They clearly reflected the aspirations of the status-seeking peasants. The social composition of the Legislature too represented largely the Zamindari tenants, who were not actual cultivators, and this partly highlights why the question of the agricultural labourer was side-lined.

At this Juncture, it will be appropriate to analyse Gandhi's perception of peasantry and the role he assigned them in the

freedom struggle. Though the focuss on the Gandhian views on peasantry may not be directly relevant to this study, it becomes imperative to understand them to take any analysis of the Congress peasant policy. The economic ideology of the Congress was mainly created by Gandhi. His constructive programme was an integral part of the economic creed of the Congress. It largely accepted the Gandhian theory of ends and means and resolved to bring social Justice through only 'peaceful and legitimate' means.

The peasant occupied the central place in Gandhian philosophy. He was fully aware of the necessity to enlist the peasant mass to participate in the freedom struggle. This is apparent from his observation in 1916, "our salvation can alone come through the farmers. Neither the lawyers, nor the doctors,

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nor the rich landlords are going to achieve it". He repeated his observation in January, 1921, "Swaraj depends on the agriculturists. If they do not help, then swaraj cannot be attained. If they cooperate with the Government, then all your

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virtues will not help in winning swaraj". "Fathers of the world were struck with stark poverty",⁸⁷ and "swaraj is a direct means of improving their conditions and enable them to clothe and free themselves" he declared.⁸⁸ He impressed upon the peasants that swaraj was the only remedy for the redressal of their

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grievances," and he declared that "Swarajya is Ramarajya".

He dramatised his ideas by a constant stream of articles, speeches, and declarations and above all by his own example. Gandhi in the peasants loin-cloth and shawl, sitting at the spinning wheel, writing notes in his weekly silence, sitting lost in contemplation and lying exhausted during a fast, were all ways of getting his image across to largely illiterate population and this had an immediate appeal to the ordinary masses. The austerity of the life-style of Gandhi encouraged villagers to place trust in him.⁹¹ His speeches gave self-confidence to the

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peasantry and they became more optimistic than ever before. Congress programmes under his guidance often focussed on local grievances and provided local benefits attractive to peasants and

then used the resources to further more national objectives.

He stressed however, more on constructive programme than attacking the roots of exploitation of peasantry. His khadi, anti-malarial campaigns, harijan upliftment programme, kept peasants busy in reform activities. He did not regard the non-payment of taxes as part of the programme of civil-disobedience,⁹⁴ and only in late 1921 was this discussed in⁹⁵

All India Congress Committee. He strictly **instructed** the peasants not to **with-hold** taxes from the government or rent from the landlord. He maintained that attainment of swaraJ was⁹⁶

impossible unless this rule was strictly observed. Non-payment of taxes was a fatal temptation and this would lead to violence, and he reminded the peasants again and again that they were not **non-cooperating** with Zamindars, "we are engaged in a fight with one big Zamindar, the bureaucracy, which has made us and the Zamindar themselves **serfs**".⁹⁷ Referring to the no-tax campaign in Andhra, he made a veiled threat, that they should bear the **responsibility** for any mishap that may occur and that they would not be blamed by anybody if they do not take up the no tax campaign movement.⁹⁸ On the Chirala-Perala movement he said, "if the movement succeeded, the glory would in part go to the Congress, but if it failed, the discredit of it should not attach⁹⁹

to the Congress". When the movement was intensified and after Andhra Provincial Congress Committee favoured no-tax campaign, he preached strict maintenance of non-violence, "when the military opened on the peasants, they are expected to expose their willing breasts to the bullets and still not harbour revenge or resentment. They must let their utensils and belongings be taken away from them silently, like Draupadi or **Preblad**, they are praying to God and proving their **no** faith in Him" He announced that the God bless the Andhras. He urged volunteers to go about the villagers and take signatures of the peasantry agreeing¹⁰²

to the peaceful agitation. Such a caution, thought was necessary in the case of the over-exuberant Andhras. In fact the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee withdrew its support to the

No-Tax Campaign in Pedanandipadu in deference to the wishes of Gandhi.¹⁰³

From the 1920s serious efforts were made in Andhra by some nationalists to organise the peasants to redress their grievances. As early as 1922 N.G.Ranga and others tried to organise the peasantry in Krishna, Godavari and Guntur districts.¹⁰⁴ The Andhra peasants took the lead in creating their own association in 1928.¹⁰⁵ Gandhi did not take notice of this happenings. He undertook his tour in Andhra in 1929, wholly in the interest of khadi, in connection with the constructive programme resolutions of the Congress. His 1933 visit to Andhra was in connection with the cause of harijan uplift.¹⁰⁶ He took no note of the

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anti-resettlement movement launched by the peasants in Andhra. He was critical of the Andhra Congress that it had too many leaders totally disunited and had very few followers. He wanted them to work in coalition with the Zamindars for mutual

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good. While on his tour to Visakhapatnam, he acknowledged the rich contributions from Zamindars. Infact, Gandhi was fully aware that the Zamindars would prove the chief stumbling block to the non-cooperation programme and they could be brought to knees if the tenants could be induced not to pay rent.¹¹¹ But at no time did he advice peasants to stop payment of rent. It was only to keep the Zamindar at their heels. He compared the with holding of revenues by peasants as an act of rowdyism by which they can achieve nothing.¹¹²

He tried to develop a moral bond between the peasant and the Zamindar. Though he criticised the atrocities of Zamindars and their mode of levying cesses, legal and illegal, he attempted to build a model Zamindar, who would reduce rents, know their peasants and inject hope into them, establish schools, purify the village well and tank, teach the ryot to sweep his roads and clean his latrines by himself.¹¹³ He was highly critical of dividing India between rich and poor. He was against Congress taking a stand for the rights of the peasant irrespective of the interests

of the land-lords, because by such step, "we will only dig our and their graves if we took that stand".¹¹⁴ "If peasants aim at asserting their rights, they can do so only by cooperating with Zamindars, not by harassing or killing them", he said.¹¹⁵ In the 1930s when the Andhra peasants possessed the lands of Munagala Zamindar, he vehemently criticised the Andhra Congress Committee for supporting their move. He warned that the Congress Government would dig its grave if it failed to restore the land to the legal possessor.¹¹⁶

Gandhi did not contemplate the elimination of the princes and landlords nor did he contemplate redistribution of land to peasants.¹¹⁷ He aimed at the reformation of the princes and the

landlords.¹¹⁸ He assured that peasants would secure rights which virtually amount to ownership, without a violent redistribution of land. Though he agreed that the land belongs to the tiller, he had no intentions of wiping out the Zamindar. He held that the man who supplied brains and metal was as much a tiller as the one
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who laboured with his hands. When the Zamindars and the peasants develop cordial relations the former need not be eliminated. He preached that peasant, if he attempted to force out Zamindar, would ruin themselves as yadavas in Mahabharatha, who were themselves annihilated when they were out to destroy others.¹²⁰

He did not like a separate kisan organisation for his peasant. He was of the opinion that kisan sabhas were organised only with a view to capture the Congress organisation and as a result the poor peasants were being grounded between the two mill-stones.¹²¹ He encouraged N.G.Ranga to start a peasant organisation only to educate and make the peasants Congress minded and politically conscious.¹²² In January 1934 he inaugurated the Rama Needu Peasant Institute in Nidubrolu to harness the peasant activity.¹²³

Throughout the freedom struggle he resisted the peasant

taking drastic steps and limited them to follow the Congress constructive programmes, in a non-violent method for the attainment of swaraj. But in this attempt the real and crucial issues such as high rents, evictions, high prices, social humiliations and exploitation at the hands of the Raj and the Zamindars were not accounted for in the Congress programme. Infact, national integration was committed at the unilateral cost of the peasantry.¹²⁴ Gandhi was of the opinion that it was dangerous to make political use of peasants and workers.¹²⁵

The constructive programme was a success politically and a failure on the social and economic fronts.¹²⁶ It was successfully used by the Congress leadership for tension management.¹²⁷ His success in Champaran and Bardoli made him the undisputed leader of the peasants or a messiah who could ameliorate the peasants lot.¹²⁸

But in reality he exercised a restraining influence on the revolutionary potentiality of the peasants. Was he collaborator of the exploiting classes? Gandhi was basically opposed to violent revolution. His theory was 'means must Justify the end'. He pleaded that non-violence was the only Justifiable means to eradicate evils and bring about a revolt in society. The Gandhian ideology preached class collaboration and class harmony as a cordial principle.¹²⁹

Even those peasant movements initiated by the Congress under Gandhi's leadership were invariably restricted to seeking relief against the excessive rates of land revenue, and were in no case directed against the Zamindar.¹³⁰ The Congress support to resettlement struggles in Andhra is clear example of this nature.¹³¹

Gandhi was pleased with the Zamindars who showed patriotic zeal and appealed to the rest to follow suit.¹³² The Zamindars as a class, under the umbrella of nationalism, escaped the wrath of the Gandhian peasant. He tried to reconcile the irreconcilable interest to keep intact the national character of the movement.

He was successful in deepening the anti-imperialist feelings among the peasants who shed their fear to challenge the authority of the British. In his enthusiasm in seeing the country free, he did little to make the Congress speak for the peasant, though he made the peasant speak for the Congress.¹³³

Through his technique of mobilization and gospel of peace and non-violence, he became to the peasantry a symbol of opposition to the oppressor, who so ever he may be and led a specific type of controlled mass movement.¹³⁴ It was Gandhi who for the first time, turned the attention of the Congress and national workers to the village and its klsans.¹³⁵ His popularity rested in his peasant image which was projected by the local leaders and the press. He achieved hegemony over peasant mind by explaining that to fight two enemies i.e., colonial oppressors as well as class enemies i.e., Zamindars, at the same time was impracticable. The argument of 'class adjustment' however, in the name of nationalism given in defence of Gandhi's approach, though relevant, falls to explain the situation in totality. Thus, the Gandhian and Congress paradigm of peasantry was partly responsible for the out-break of anti-zamindari struggles in Andhra.

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31. **RMEAC**, Memo-Part II, p.143.
32. *Andhra Patrika*, 2.8.28.
33. *Ibid*, 4.2.38.
34. The Andhra Provincial Peasant Association was first founded by N.G.Ranga in 1928 at Guntur.
35. **C.O.Ms. No.353**, *Public (General) Department*, dt.28.2.35.
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37. *Ibid*, pp.603-606.
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40. *Pioneer*, 25.7.37.
41. *Vlsalandhra*, 23.2.66.
42. *Navasakti*, 1.2.39.
43. *Madras Legislative Assembly Debates (MLAD)* Vol.1, 1937, p.841.
44. **RMEAC**, Memo-Part II, p.xi.
45. *Minutes of the RMEAC*, Madras, 1939, pp.17 & 18.

46. Almost all the members who participated in the discussion in the both the Houses supported the constitution of a Committee.

47. *MLAD*, vol.III, 1937, p.896.

48. The Committee consisted of Mehboob Ali Baig, the Zamindar of Mirzapuram, M.Pallam Raju, B.Venkatachalam Pillai and P.S.Kumarswami Raja representing the Assembly and B.V.Narayanaswami Naidu, V.V.Jogaiah Naidu and A.Rangaswami Ayyangar representing the Council with T.Prakasam the Revenue Minister as its Chairman and T.Vishwanatham, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Revenue Minister as the Secretary of the Committee.

49. Questions regarding proprietorship of the soil, rent, powers of landholders in the collection of rent, rights to water-supply, survey of estates, utilization of local natural facilities etc., were raised. *RMEAC*, Memo-Part II, p.xii.

50. *Ibid*, Reports from the Collectors, pp.27-28.

51. *Ibid*, Oral Evidence, Part IV, p.243.

52. See Appendices to the *RMEAC*.

53. See the *RMEAC*, regarding landholders statement and memoranda submitted to the Committee.

54. *Ibid*, Memo-Part II, p.104.

55. *Ibid*, p.119.

56. *Ibid*. p.77.

57. *Ibid*, p.79.

58. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et.al., *Op.Cit*, p.429.

59. *Navasakti*, 19.1.38.

60. *Andhra Kesari prakasam Centenary Celebrations Publication*, 1974, p.82.

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64. *Navasakti*, 1.2.39.

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66. *Ibid*, p.448.
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69. *Vlsalandhra*, 23.2.66.
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72. *Krishna Patrika*, 10.6.39.
73. *Navasakti*, 25.1.39.
74. *HLAD*, vol.IX, 1939, p.403.
75. *Ibid*, p.11.1.38.
76. *Navasakti*, 7.12.38.
77. *Ibid*, 11.1.38.
78. *Ibid*, 11.1.38.
79. *FNR*, dt.18.3.39, 4.4.39, 19.5.39, 20.6.39.
80. The Ministry resigned on August 26, 1939 in protest against the British Government's unilateral decision to involve India in the Second World War.
81. See *RMELAC*, Oral Evidence, Part IV.
82. *Navasakti*, 77.12.39.
83. *MLAD*, vol.IX, 1939, pp.756-758.
84. Participating in the debate regarding the Report of the Madras Estate land Act Committee, T.T.Krishnamachari, M.L.A., observed "we the members of the Legislature are middle class people. We represent of the *Mirasidars*, we represent the Zamindari tenants who are not actual cultivators, and we also represent the *Kanamdars* of Malabar. The major portion of the members may therefore be compediously termed as representing the *bourgeois* element. We cannot escape from this position". *MLAD*. vp;.IX. pp.587-588.
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86. *Ibid*, vol.XIX, p.281.

87. *Ibid*, vol.XVI, p.181.
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89. *Independent*, 2.7.20.
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116. *Ibid.*, vol.LXVIII, p.353.
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CHAPTER I V

ANTI-ZAMINDARI STRUGGLES

This chapter deals with the description of a) peasant **movements** against Zamindars in the Andhra region during the first Congress Ministry period, b) the rivalry and activities of Communists and N.G.Ranga under the Congress banner among the peasantry, c) the provincial elections and coming of Congress to power in the Madras Presidency and d) the eruption of peasant struggles once again during the Congress rule finally leading to the abolition of the Zamindari system. This description revolves around questions like 1. why were there **anti-zamindari** struggles only during Congress rule while the peasants remained subdued during the **inter-ministry** period? 2. how and why did the Communists gain control over peasant associations out-smarting N.G.Ranga during the war period following the resignation of the Congress Ministry in 1939, this logically leading to another **interesting** question of 3. what was the reason behind Congress success in the 1946 provincial elections despite Communist hold over a vast mass of peasantry and 4. why did Zamindari peasants once again waged struggles, sometimes violent, under the leadership of the Communist party immediately after Congress assuming power? How can this shift in the loyalties by the Zamindari tenants from Congress to Communists and again from Communists to Congress during agitations and electoral process respectively be explained?

The peasants association with the Congress started and got strengthened with the arrival of Gandhi on the Indian political scene from the second decade of the 20th century. Following the success of the **Champaran** and Kaira satyagrahas under the leadership of Gandhi, a general awakening among the peasants started growing and the Andhra peasant was no exception. Prior to these movements the Congress under moderate leadership did not evince much interest regarding the problems of peasantry. Infact, the nationalists pressed for the establishment of permanent settlement of land revenue in ryotwari areas.¹ Thus these two campaigns not only reflected the growing importance of peasant population in the Congress programme but also established

Gandhi as a magic man of peasant Satyagraha and at least provoked the educated among peasants the potentialities of Satyagraha as a weapon for redressing their grievances. Henceforward the dormant economic discontent of the Andhra peasant was whipped to activity during various stages of freedom struggle. It can be **said** that the peasant movements in Andhra largely rested upon the political awakening of the peasants and the leaders capitalised on **their** economic **greivances** for starting a mass movement. The peasants were made to believe that their redemption could come only when the British rule was eliminated.

The **Chirala-Perala** movement of 1921,² no-tax campaign in³ Pedanandipadu, the Palnadu **pullari** Satyagraha during⁴ non-cooperation movement of 1920-22 drew thousands of peasants into the whirlpool of politics. The Pedanandipadu campaign for the first time told the Andhra peasants to their wonder and **satisfacton**, that **it** was quite legitimate for them to refuse to pay land revenue, the payent⁵ of which they had come to look upon almost as a religious duty. They became familiar with this weapon of Satyagraha, an open, non-violent, organised, **politically** alive revolt against injustice. This strengthened the determination and fighting morale of the peasants. The Gandhian method of protest invested the peasants with the saintly approach of Satyagraha to achieve the **protection** of their rights for themselves. This confidence and growing stature of the peasant mind helped greatly the communists to organise effective and enthusiastic **anti-zamindari** struggles in Andhra in late 1930s. During the civil disobedience movement Andhra masses became familiar with **sibirams**, Gandhian technique of launching active political campaigns. This was perfectly⁷ adopted by the peasant leaders in their fight against Zamindars. The mood and **base** created among the peasantry was positively exploited by the Socialist and Communist peasant leaders as launching pad to direct peasant struggles.

The Congress Socialist Party (C.S.P) which was formed in 1934, framed its agrarian resolutions and demands in clear^g **terms**. It demanded the abolition of Zamindari system,

recognition of occupancy rights of tenants in all the landlord-tenant areas, debt freeze and substantial agricultural wages. The Communist Party of India (C.P.I) which became helpless and whose following shrank considerably between 1929 and 1933 on account of mounting repression, formulated a new policy adopted at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (July-August 1935) according to which the Indian Communists had to give up their radical protestations and to organise an anti-imperialist broad-based mass movement, comprising the working class, peasantry and the middle class through consolidation of all leftists elements whether in or outside the congress.⁹ Thus under new dispensation, known as the United Front strategy, they started working under the reformist leadership of the nationalist movement. Now the Congress became a 'revolutionary party of the Indian people' and CSP a 'sister Marxist party'.¹¹ In response to the CPI's consiliatory gestures both the Congress and the CSP, which actually never left the Congress, opened their doors to the Communists in 1935. This alliance electrified the already existing situation in which Zamindari peasants were active through various peasants associations. The Communists after getting access to the party machinery, preferred to work at the grass-roots level,¹² thus accelerating the process of development of agrarian crises and mobilizing the peasantry.

Even earlier the leftist groups within the Congress began to call for clearer lines of policy regarding agrarian reforms. In the 1920s the party's agrarian policy was to ignore the peasant as a separate entity. But from the early 30s following the pressure from Socialists, Communists and peasant leaders, Congress started to look at the peasant question seriously. This is evident from the resolution passed at Karachi, Lucknow and Faizpur sessions of the party in 1931, March 1936 and December 1936 respectively. Even earlier, Gandhi's famous eleven points, on the basis of which he offered to give up proposed Satyagraha in 1930 included basic demand of reduction of land revenue to at least fifty percent.¹³

The salt Satyagraha of 1930 galvanised the rural masses particularly. This resulted in the Congress leaders readily responding and making the offer, on behalf of the Congress, that the rents payable by tenants would be reduced, illegal cobwebs abolished and debt burdens and rates of interests reduce.¹⁴ That has proved to be great fillip to the peasant movement, especially after the achievement of parity with the Imperial Government through the Gandhi-Irwin pact.¹⁵

This period witnessed the rapid growth of organisation of Zamindari peasants, all over India, more particularly in Andhra. In 1933 the first ever peasant marches of India had taken place in Krishna, Guntur, East Godavari and West Godavari districts.¹⁶ At the Karachi session in 1931, the Congress demanded the right of labour to form unions to protect their interests with suitable machinery for settlement of disputes and substantial reduction in agricultural rent or revenue paid by the peasantry and in case of uneconomic holdings exemption from rent for such period as may be necessary.¹⁷ At the Lucknow session in March 1936, the Congress urged the Provincial Congress Committees to frame full agrarian

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programme to reduce the burden of the peasantry. This Congress session also witnessed a change in the character of the annual swadeshi exhibition. The exhibitions during earlier sessions used to be big shows and were intended to encourage swadeshi products and to contribute towards the expenses of the Congress from the returns of exhibition. But at Lucknow session, on March 28, Gandhi inaugurated an exhibition, which was intended to give the spectator a glimpse of the Indian villager and his craft and everything which had no educative value was excluded from that exhibition. It was decided that all swadeshi exhibitions at subsequent Congress sessions should be rural exhibitions of

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similar character. In Jawaharlal Nehru's words, 'the whole object of the Lucknow Congress resolution was to increase²⁰ the influence of the masses in the Congress organisation*.

Infact, it played vital role in securing the mass support of the peasantry to the party, as is evident from the landslide victory of Congress in the 1937 elections.²¹

Then came the Faizpur Congress session of December 1936, which achieved the distinction of being the first Congress which met in a village and Gandhi exhorted the congressmen to take a
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 vow to hold future Congress sessions in villages. The Congress drew up a thirteen point programme for granting immediate relief
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to the peasantry. At its Haripura session of 1938, the Congress stated quite clearly that peasants could and should certainly be enabled to develop their own class organisation, even though the Congress should be rapidly approximating itself into a peasant Congress, in its policy, programme and even in membership.²⁴

These resolutions provided for the CSP, which was dominated
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 by Communists by this period, the basis to work among the peasantry. As a result, the formation of All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) took place in 1936, with N.G.Ranga as one of the founders. These resolutions, also prove that the Congress ideology and programme went on becoming more and more radical and socialistic with the passage of time. These infact, represent the background of deep agrarian crises in the wake of economic depression. It also served as a positive feedback to the already politically awakened peasants to raise their voice much more vehemently. It made the peasant perceive Congress as a vehicle which carries him towards free India, free from problems.

The Congress election manifesto for the 1937 elections added further momentum to strengthen the confidence and consciousness of the peasantry. Though it reiterated the resolutions passed at Karachi, Lucknow and Faizpur, now the peasantry found the way to see that the programme to be implemented. The electioneering proved as a boon to the growth of peasant power. The candidates toured their constituencies and contacted the voters, the majority of them being peasants. Socialists and Communists campaigned
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vigourously in support of Congress candidates. The electioneering was similar to the elections conducted to the Central Assembly in October, 1934. In 1934, all the eleven of

the Congress candidates romped home with comfortable leads, and especially the election of N.G.Ranga on Congress ticket had brought the anti-zamindari campaign more closer towards Congress. N.G.Ranga who Joined Congress in the early 1930s attempted to build up a following in the Congress by recruiting new members from areas where the Congress had previously had little presence. To begin with, he brought many of his contacts from the resettlement and anti-zamindari campaigns into the Congress, and he lobbied for changes in the Congress constitution which would please many of his rural contacts.³⁰ He demanded that the peasants be given Congress tickets in the 1937 provincial elections.³¹ He also demanded that the Congress candidates should take a pledge prepared by the Andhra Provincial Peasant Association to solve the peasant problems.³² Infact, the Congress election manifesto issued from Madras in connection with 1920 election promised to reduce tax burden for poor peasant.³³

In the Madras Presidency agrarian issues offered the most attractive theme for the Congress to fight against the Justice Party in the Febraury 1937 elections. The slump in prices that came with the depression of 1929-34 made congressmen more able to exploit agrarian discontent. Evictions rose as landlords found it difficult to collect rents, substantial tenants producing cash crops for the market, saw their incomes dwindle, while on the political side, detainees released from prisons increased the numbers of seasoned volunteers available for work in the countryside.

The Government of India took notice of these developments and cautioned its provincial governments to prevent the Congress leaders from making provoking statements and making 'the present agrarian movement developing on the line which the Congress President has clearly in view, viz., the creation of a semi-revolutionary mentality among the peasnts'.³⁴

The atmosphere in fact was expectant and restive. The Congress was carrying on incessant propaganda among the masses with a view to make them more conscious of their political rights.³⁵ The provincial leaders also brought down prominent all-India leaders to make tours Rajendra Prasad in November 1935, Jawaharlal Nehru in August 1936 and Vallabhal Patel in December 1936 and they themselves spread around the province in the weeks before the polls giving speeches in every constituency. Nehru, during his election tour declared that the fight for Swaraj was fight for peasants rights.³⁶ A propaganda film, in support of Congress, the first political film in South India was made but

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the government did not allow them to show it. In many constituencies Congress volunteers toured the villages, while songs, dramatic performances and processions were used to rouse support.³⁸

An impression was left among the peasantry that there will be no more taxes after Congress comes to power, but also that hospitals, wells, roads etc, will be improved and built in every village.³⁹ According to the Justice leader A.P. Patro, 'the Congressmen captured the imagination of the ryots, slogans such as ryot versus raja, no rent to be paid, down with landlords and government who were responsible for the crushing poverty of the ryots, the Justice Party is the handmaid of Government for oppression of the poor, Congress only could redeem them from poverty and distress and burdens of taxation' were freely used.⁴⁰

The Congress fielded Zamindars as its own candidates in a number of constituencies.⁴¹ In places like coastal districts of Andhra where it was opposed by Zamindars or Zamindar's agents, the Congress used anti-zamindari slogans and campaigned through

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Zamindari tenant associations. Thus Congress electoral appeal was tailored to local conditions. This was evident in Nehru's speeches. In Zamindari areas he exhorted the peasants to form associations and to affiliate with the Congress so that they might form the militia of the Congress in the fight with British

imperialism. He pointed out the British imperialism and the Zamindari system were responsible for the poverty of the masses in the country.⁴³ Peasants were advised not to be afraid of the Zamindars and fall prey to their **inducements** and **threats**.⁴⁴ Even the Communists and Socialists urged the peasants to vote for the Congress in order to find a solution to their long standing agrarian problems.⁴⁵

The sentiments of nationalism and slogans of **anti-feudalism** held sway over peasant **population.**The Congress emerged as the leading party **in** the Madras Assembly elections and Justice Party and Peoples Party were trounced in the wake of popular resentment to their policies.⁴⁶

It can be said that these elections turned out to be a great **anti-zamindari** and anti-imperialist upsurge **in** Andhra. Congress obtained **64.5%** of total **votes**, Justice party got 19% and Peoples party secured only **4.4%** votes.⁴⁷ This outcome was not only due to Congress agrarian programme but also the response to the work done by peasant associations, which carried on propoganda with peasant songs. Nearly 55,000 copies of peasant songs were circulated **in** Andhra.⁴⁸ N.G.Ranga observed that the 1937 elections had tremendously increased the conscious among the peasantry and their ability to protect their interests. The tumbling defeat of the Zamindars had shown the **increased** possibility of achieving their minimum demands.⁴⁹

Though the voting right was confined only to the middle and rich peasantry, the election had great **impact** also on the millions of rural population who had no vote.⁵⁰ It marked a radical change in the whole gamut of **zamindary** peasants social relations and the emergence of new forces in the rural areas, which **infact** led rural protests during late 1930s, which inturn were followed by the spread of Communist base.⁵¹ By this time (1937) several Communists had Joined either Congress or the CSP and some had even managed to secure key positions in their provincial and national executive committees.⁵³ In a **number** of

its conferences peasant association hoisted red flags along with the tricolour national flag.⁵⁴

The defeat of Justice Party which had been the ruling party for years and which was looked upon by the peasants as a symbol of British imperialism and Zamindari oppression not only reflected the peasant resentment towards Zamindars but also increased their resolve to fight to the finish and consolidated the gains so far achieved. The complete rout of Peoples Party of Zamindars led by the Maharaja of Pittapuram⁵⁵ was another example of peasants venting their spleen. Victories over these elements worked as a tonic in building confidence among the peasantry.

When there were differences of opinion on the question of acceptance of office in the Madras Presidency,⁵⁶ and when RajaJI infact refused to form Ministry, the average voter in the villages, according to Fortnightly Report of April 1937, 'felt disappointed, ... he would rather be happy if the Congress accept office and fulfil their promises regarding reduction of land-tax etc .

The formation and functioning of interim ministry with K.V.Reddi Nayudu, the leader of the Justice party as the Chief Minister on 1.4.37 and which worked upto 14.7.37 only strengthened the contradictions between the Zamindari peasants and zamindars. During these months the attitude it adopted towards the freedom movement was in no way different from that of the dyarchic governments under the Act of 1919. The proof of such behaviour can be had from the ban which it imposed on the Summer School of Economics and Politics organised at Kothapatnam (Guntur district) by Annapragada Kameshwara Rao on the ground that the object of the school was to instruct young men and women in communistic and revolutionary activities in order to equip them to take part in an attempt to overthrow the government established by law and that its existence was a threat to public peace.⁵⁹

However, the Justice party ministry went out of office when on July 14, 1937, Congress Ministry was formed with C.Rajagopalachari as Chief Minister⁶⁰ following the assurance given by the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow that he would not unnecessarily interfere in the administration of the government.⁶¹ Now it became the responsibility of the Ministry to fulfill its promises. After all it was the 'electoral manifesto' of the Congress that linked the Congress politicians and the electorate at the time of the elections. As Nehru maintains, 'the electorate plumped for the Congress candidates, not because of their individual merits, but because they represented the Congress and its programme'.⁶²

In accordance with its electoral promise, the Congress Ministry passed the Agriculturists Debt Relief Act in January 1938 to solve the debt problems of the peasants.⁶³ Peasant associations, since 1931 had been agitating for debt relief.⁶⁴ On May 12, 1935 the Andhra Provincial Rural Indebted Relief Conference was held in Vijayawada. It demanded that no person should be sent to Jail for debt arrears, for scrapping of debts due to buying of land from 1931 and reduction of tax burden in the Zamindari areas.⁶⁵ The Andhra Provincial Peasant Association observed the first week of November as 'Moratorium Week', and submitted memorandum to ministry.⁶⁶ Thus as a result of these pressures the ministry brought out the above Act, which was also in partial fulfillment of its manifesto. But this legislation did not release the tenants from the entire burden of debt as promised during the elections.⁶⁷

The Andhra Provincial Peasants Association (APPA) appealed to the tenants to fight against this Act.⁶⁸ Several meetings and marches were organised in Andhra. Along with debt relief they also demanded Zamindari abolition. On 25th January 1938, nearly 3000 peasants participated in a procession in Chintalapudi in West Godavari demanding reduction of interest rates and abolition of Zamindari system. The tahsildar of Chintalapudi expressed surprise over such a huge gathering of peasantry in

Zamindari estate.⁷⁰ N.G.Ranga commented that the Congress was not serious about peasant problems and warned that the peasants would be forced to act on their own.⁷¹ Moreover, by the time of passing of the Act nearly three-fourths of the smaller peasants had lost much of their holdings and more than half the land of middleclass peasants had also changed, because of implacable⁷² pressure of falling prices and the mounting burden of debts.

Thus on the one hand the Act created faith among the peasantry that Congress was their party and on the other hand the belief that it is only through their own efforts that they can solve their problems when the Congress government was around. Another measure which helped to develop such thinking among peasants was the appointment of Prakasam Committee to study the status and the conditions of the tenants in the Zamindari areas by the ministry in September 1937.⁷³ This was preceded by zamin-ryot activities from early 1930s which became more sustained and intense with the intervention of N.G.Ranga and Communists through peasant associations, marches and peasant schools.⁷⁴

Politicization of peasantry had already begun through these measures. By 1936 N.G.Ranga had come to say openly that the power of politics should be used to strengthen the peasant movement. He warned that, 'those who advise us not to enter politics and not to have our own line of action in politics are either eluding themselves or trying to mislead us. How can our peasants hope to achieve any of their demands unless they learn to play their part in political life Just as expertly as Zamindars and mahajans'.⁷⁵ He was responsible for the formation of the Peasants' Group of M.L.As in the Central Assembly in September 1935 with the object of creating useful public opinion on peasant problems and to pave the way for the emergence of new policies.⁷⁶

In Andhra this period was marked by the intensification of peasant rallies and marches. According to N.G.Ranga, 'they were

the most powerful instruments in the armoury of the movement to bring home to the public as well as the authorities concerned the strength of peasants organisation, the tempo of the feelings of our masses **in** support of certain demands, the extent of public support lying behind our movement, and our needs and the true nature of our suffering'.⁷⁷

The biggest of them, the 120 days peasants march covering the whole of Andhra was organised between July, 1937 and March

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1938 when the Congress Ministry was **in** power. About the objectives of the march, N.G.Ranga said, 'it seeks to stir up the whole Andhra **country-side**, whip up the **kisan** organisers and gather support to the new charter of our minimum demands and to demonstrate to which ever ministry that may be in power and to all anti-imperialistic national organisations the mass basis strength and class consciousness of our movement and the capacity of our comrades for service, suffering endurance. We have to

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carry on a ceaseless agitation against the Zamindari **system**'. The March in fact met its object. It proved the excellent mass contact the peasant organisation have had.⁸⁰

Speaking about the success of these kisan marches, **in** a tribute paid to N.G.Ranga on his fifty fourth birthday, Prof. Kinah Stock who in 1937 followed up and down the country among a mixed train of Congressmen and Socialists and Communists working under the guidance of klsan sabha stated, 'I learnt something of the work of past seven years. There were the Andhra Peasant Institutes and their summer schools sending back to the villages men trained and capable of holding a watching brief for the people's interests. There was the demand for a moratorium on agricultural debts. There were the great kisan marches that brought men together from hundreds of villages and taught them to write and organise and face the government with reasoned, practical **demands**'.⁸¹

If such pressure made the Congress Ministry to appoint a Zamindari enquiry committee, the appointment of the Committee in turn acted as a catalyst to further intensify the

anti-zamindari agitation in scale and magnitude. The response to
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the Committee wherever it toured was tremendous. The peasants participated **enthusiastically** in giving witness before the Committee, despite the presence of Zamindari representative in
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the Committee. The Committee stationed at Rajahmundry from January 7th to **13th**, 1938 to obtain witnessess from peasantry. Local leaders, comprising of Socialists, Communists and Congressmen campaigned among the peasantry to face the Committee without fear. They brought peasants **in** processions to
84 Rajahmundry. This type of campaign provided efficient **results**.

This was repeated **in** all other areas. The police reports for the year 1938 stands best testimony to study about the impact of the appointment of **Committee** had on the peasantry. It observes '**with** the constitution of Enquiry Committee, vigorous propaganda was commenced by agrarian leaders in several taluks in the Krishna district against Zamindari system. Action under section 107, criminal procedure code, had to be taken to avert serious consequences'.
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The Committee completed its Report by March 1938, but there was undue delay **in** announcing the recommendations of the Report. Sensing trouble to their position, the Zamindars **in** the **meantime** resorted in express speed to acquire as many acres of land as possible. They launched collection of rent arrears and enhancement of legal suits, **in** addition to harassment and
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arbitrary attachment of lands, depriving thousands of ryots. When the Debt Relief Act was in the offing, the Zamindars collected dues with utmost stringency for which thousands of holdings were sold out at nominal prices.⁸⁸ Atrocities were committed on the peasants who gave witness before the Committee. Zamindars of **Kalipatnam**, **Munagala**, **Muktyala**, **Challapalli etc.**, tried to suppress the peasant movement ruthlessly in the wake of
89 softened attitude of Congress Government. But each repressive act of the Zamindars only resulted to push tenants towards the
90 Communist influence.

Thus as Congress policy helped **indirectly** to turn Zamindars **into** despots, **it** also accelerated the process of the peasants' **radicalisation**. The alliance between the peasantry and the Congress and Congress agrarian programme on one hand strengthened the peasant faith in Congress and confidence of himself, **it** also tended to be ruptured in violent form when the rural masses started becoming **disillusioned**.

A number of rallies, demonstrations and meetings were organised for the implementation of the recommendations of the committee. The Andhra Provincial Peasant Association warned the government that if **it** failed to **implement** the recommendations, peace would be disturbed in the countryside.⁹¹ The Communist controlled weekly *Navasakti* in its editorial appealed the **zamin** ryots to organise '**zamin-ryot week**' in support of the

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Committee's **recommendations**. The Andhra Provincial Peasant Association President **Kommareddy Sathyanarayana Murthy** in December 1938 and January 1939 toured the entire coastal Andhra districts explaining the implications of Committee's

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recommendations and the need for its implementation.

In West Godavari, the district peasant association under **Peteti venkataratnam**, **Garapati Sathyanarayana** and others and in **East Godavari** under the leadership of **Penmetsa Suryanarayana** and **Chintam Sathyanarayana** carried the campaign in favour of the Committee's recommendations. District wise peasant **meetings** were held. The peasant **associations** attempted an organised opposition

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to Zamindari repression. Pamphlets entitled '**what the commonman should do**', **Prakasam Committee Report**' and **Marches-Appeal**' were published by the Andhra Provincial Peasant

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Association and were distributed extensively.

With such an atmosphere around, the report was represented to Assembly on January 30, 1939 and the debate that followed was closely watched by the entire peasantry of the province with rapt attention. They launched massive demonstrations supporting

the bill. **Rajaji's** speech in the Assembly declaring that the Zamindars were only employees of the State and that they have no right over their estates had great impact in peasant thinking.⁹⁷ Though the Congress ministry resigned without passing the bill,⁹⁸ the report and the issues revolving around it reverberated till the Zamindari system itself was abolished in 1948-49.

The peasant organizations, with their definite structures helped to built-up peasant movements in more concrete terms, during this period. By marches, meetings, conferences, observance of peasants days and leaflets and booklets and songs these associations endeavoured to bring to the active notice of of the peasants the necessity for developing the organised strength of the peasantry. Leaders made regular tour propaganda through the estates and widened the base of the movement. The Andhra Provincial **Zamin-Ryot** Association which was formed on 14th August 1929 grew steadily over years and possessed an excelled organisational set-up. The main features of the organisations were the conduction of by-annual conference of the delegates, a central executive consisting of 100 members elected for every two years, which would be responsible for laying the strategy and technique of the entire Andhra **Zamin-Ryots** Association movement and controlling it and a working committee or a sort of presedium numbering 25 elected members, to function during its intervals. From the central executive a president, three honorary presidents, one working secretary and two Joint secretaries were
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to be elected.

This organisation carried an intensive propoganda in the Zamindari areas and later on more or less merged with Andhra Provincial Peasant Association, which directed the movement in both the ryotwari and Zamindari areas. The peasant movement till 1938 was limited to campaigns and mass contacts. But events that occurred prior to 1938 increased solidarity and confidence among the peasantry and gradually drawn towards agitational approach following the atrocities committed by the Zamindars in the wake of **Prakasam** Committee Report. The resolution issued by Andhra

Provincial Peasant Association and published in *Navasakti* reflects this mood of the peasantry.¹⁰⁰ It advocated the peasants to launch united struggles for complete abolition of Zamindari system, among others.¹⁰¹

Infact, the Zamindari peasants had the experience of waging battles against erring Zamindars. As early as 1930, peasants in Mandasa estate protested against the heavy cash rents fixed by the 1922 settlement.¹⁰² They even went to High Court unsuccessfully when the estate staff forced the peasants to pay rent.¹⁰³ The first agitational success of the Zamindari peasants was tested in Venkatagiri estate when the peasants launched¹⁰⁴

Satyagraha against the Zamindar regarding grazing rights. This was a case where the traditional rights of peasants for gathering freely fuel, fodder and manure were brushed aside and even the rights to graze cattle in the neighbouring forests was dismissed. The peasants protested and withheld customary fees payable for grazing. When the estate servants attempted to **impound** the cattle, unlawful assemblies recovered the animals. The forest Satyagraha to secure grazing rights started in 1931 and petered out by 1934 owing to lack of leadership which was by then Jailed. The peasants succeeded only in reducing the fees for grazing. Despite its failure, the brave stand of the **zamin** ryots of Venkatagiri remained as a worthy memory regenerating the feelings of peasants in their fight against Zamindars. It was in Nellore district again that the Zamindari candidates faced defeats in local boards election in 1933 hitting hard **105** Zamindari attempt to capture and continue in political power.

It may be said that wherever the Zamindar was participating in politics, the agitation was intense. This tendency can be witnessed during 1937 elections. The election results injected some confidence to the ryot movement. The non-implementation of electoral promises infuriated peasants and gradually they started opting for agitational approach and in the process came closer to the Communists, as they were the only alternative for Congressmen.^{106.}

The irony was that Congressmen themselves were dissatisfied with the slow implementation of the Congress policy of land reform in general and Zamindari in particular.¹⁰⁷ The maximum that the Congress could do was to restrict the rights of the Zamindar. But that was not enough for the peasant who demanded more by launching powerful mass movements, aided by revolutionary
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press. The masses who had faith in Congress expected that it would help them in their struggles. They moved towards Communist leaders who were showing particular boldness in practically defying the Congress Ministry in organising rallies and demonstrations. The Communists, although achieved very little general success through peasant movements in India, by this time they turned their energies towards directing and organizing agrarian unrest at local level. Acting within the leftwing of the Congress they were working towards an independent peasant movement with organisation and political independence, under the cover of collective affiliation with Congress. Waiting for opportunity they developed a strategy to achieve a hold upon any future agrarian movement.¹⁰⁹ The rural situation in Andhra came in handy. Though the Communist dominated AIKS did not formulate any definite scheme¹¹⁰, it was keenly alive to the opportunity now afforded for exploiting the conditions in a bid for the abolition of the Zamindari system. It tried to combine anti-zamindari movement with freedom struggle by proposing an active war resistance programme like wholesale railway travel without tickets, anti-recruitment drive in rural areas etc.

The situation in 1938-39 was very well represented by a Communist document published in *Communist*. Comparing with 1914 situation, it said, 'then, there was no Communist International, no Soviet Union, no Red Army. Then, the national liberation movements in China, India, and other countries had not grown into mass movements. Today (1938-39) the situation is radically different. There stands the victorious land of socialism, the Soviet Union, exercising profound revolutionary influence on all peoples, today, powerful Communist parties have grown in every

country, parties that under the severest conditions of **illegality** are carrying on heroic struggle against the war-mongers and uniting larger and larger sections for the onslaught on the citadels of **imperialism**. Today, national liberation **movements** have reached **unprecedentedly** high level, in China the people stand united in their struggle against Japanese imperialism, in India the National Congress has become the organ of a powerful **mass movement**'.¹¹¹ Though this document exaggerates the impact of Communism, yet it observed the **radicalisation** of politics on Indian soil.

The peasants were unlikely to bear passively much longer the sufferings that have been their lot. In this communism has acted as a catalyst. N.G.Ranga who has been identified as a mass leader in the early stages failed to retain control because of his vacillations and **pre-occupations**, busy with the factional politics in the Congress he left grass root organisation to the more energetic and committed workers.¹¹² This was also the period which proved that the Zamindar or the British had no roots in the villages which only hastened the polarisation easier between the Zamindar and **anti-zamindar** forces. On the other hand the class **contradictions** within the peasant stratum was effectively bridged with heavy doses of ideology.¹¹³

Superior organisational techniques, a programme which appealed to all without alienating any section, the prestige and aura of romance brought to the Communist movement by October revolution, the ability of Communists to **identify** themselves completely with the cultural renaissance in Andhra at that time facilitated the Communists to gain control over peasant movement at the fag end of the Congress ministry period. Moreover many of the Communists of the day were those people who were active during Civil **Disobedience** movement. The abrupt suspension of that movement disillusioned many of the young Congressites and turned to Communism.¹¹⁴ Correspondingly the negative factor of Congress leadership which due to the compulsions of its all class strategy and **its** urban middle class social base, made it unable to

identify either culturally or socially with the peasant masses, their demands and their sub-nationalist aspirations added as a fillip to the growth of Communist cadres¹¹⁵ finally resulting in the eruption of powerful movements in the Andhra countryside.

Thus the anti-zamindari campaign which appeared very suddenly in the early thirties in the form of marches and petitions turned aggressive so suddenly by late thirties. In the earlier period if the anti-zamindari agitation grew out of tensions within the estates, precipitated by the depression, at the turn of the decade it gained support within provincial politics, while the political status was gradually been ebbing away from the Zamindars. Local bodies were widened in both membership and power in 1930s by various Acts and were soon flooded by anti-zamindari candidates as a result of the widening base of the franchise.¹¹⁶

Another significant political development that occurred during Thirties was the gradual withdrawal of British Raj from provincial government following 1935 Act. Politicians were now left to groom their constituencies, who till then were pleasing their masters, which in turn increased the importance of the local peasant, though marginally.

That is why when Congress won elections, the Congress leaders and the successful candidates held triumphant meetings and parades for weeks. These worked in building the confidence of the peasants. Besides, the Congress victory had touched off a wave of euphoria, resulting in a rash of strikes and demonstrations. Nanduri Prasada Rao, a hardcore Communist writing in 1946 observed that the peasants voted for Congress expecting reduction of burdens if Congress comes to power. He opined that they led agitations to force their ministry to rescue them from Zamindars, debt and rent.¹¹⁷

The sequence of development of peasant consciousness during Thirties can be seen in the wide-spread awakening caused among

the peasantry by the marches, weeks, rallies, establishment of peasant schools in the wake of depression, formation of **AIKS**, emergence of socialistic ideology, 1937 elections and the formation of Congress Ministry. And the failure of the Congress Ministry to solve the lasting demands of peasants created material base for the **anti-zamindari** combined with anti-colonial agitation **in** Andhra. Gone were the days when peasants would simply bemoan their plight and fall prostrate before lords for a few tardy showers of favours. They were never satisfied with paltry reforms introduced by the Congress Ministry. The peasant **in** 1938 was a **well-organised** political personality. He revolted when the Zamindar resorted to increased oppression **in** the wake of debt and Zamindari reform bills. He took political support of both Congress and Communists in his fight against Zamindars. The peasant associations created a sense of **class-consciousness**, an awareness of unity of peasant interests on a national scale.

Infact, the achievements of Congress Ministry, though not radical, did not come anywhere near the constantly rising expectations of the peasants in the wake of Communist **propaganda**. However one has to accept the fact that if the peasants waged the most powerful and sustained **anti-zamindari** campaigns in **Kalipatnam**, Munagala, Chalapalli and other

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estates during the Congress regime, apart from other factors discussed above, it was basically because there was Congress at the helm of affairs. Congress in the office was taken advantage of by the peasants and they realised that conditions were favourable for putting forth their demands and consequently organised themselves well.¹¹⁹

The Socialists stood behind them and lent them their support. **With** this new accession of strength the peasants became sufficiently vocal and aggressive in their demands. The growing strength of the peasants and the partiality of the Congress government for them caused panic in the ranks of the Zamindars who resorted to unprecedented repression in their hurry to make hay when the day was hot thus creating a situation where peasants came **into** direct conflict against their masters.

According to the *New Age*, 'the most significant development of the last five months of Congress ministries is the rising tempo of the mass struggles demanding fulfilment of Congress programme. The biggest achievement of the left during the two years has been the creation of an independent organisation based upon Zamindari tenants'.¹²⁰ Thus it is clear that the **anti-zamindari** struggles gained momentum during Congress regime because the Congress failed to fulfill its agrarian programme on which they entered the office. It was also a fact that these struggles were launched only during Congress ministry period because the peasants were of the **impression** that no action will be taken against them **by** the police when the Congress was in power, **in** as much as the latter now were the servants of the people.¹²¹ This study explains why peasants resorted to direct action during 1938-39 against century's old Zamindari system.

The **anti-zamindari** struggles should be viewed within this background to understand why the Zamindari agitation moved rather towards the militant path. The peasants organised themselves efficiently. They started volunteer camps and adopted matchless technique of land Satyagraha where the peasants, their womenfolk supported by Communists and local Congressmen, resisted eviction **from** their lands by **baliffs** of civil courts, Zamindars aided by armed police and goondas, and bravely faced the **lattis**, bullets and imprisonment in their heroic struggle against Zamindari aggression and terrorism.

At **Kalipatnam**, a Zamindari village of Narsapur taluk in the West Godavari a dispute between a Zamindar and his tenants which had been smouldering for some time, flared up on 7th and 8th

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March of 1938. It consisted of about 7,500 acres of land, of which about 3,500 acres of land was covered by forest and **the** rest of 4,000 acres was old waste and sandy tract, surrounded by salt creek. As **it** lay about 2 **k.m. from** the sea, during **rainly** season and for **every** new moon and full moon, sea water covered the whole area. The villagers numbering 3,500

resorted to catch **fish** during **this** period. They belong to **Agnikula, Kshatriya, Telaga,** and **Setti Baliya** castes. Every **family** had its own exclusive plot of land for fishing. The annual value of the fish caught amounted to 30,000 to 40,000 rupees. The fish was ordinarily sold to the local merchants at Narsapur and **sometimes** exported to Rangoon and other places. ¹²⁴ This was the chief means of livelihood for all the villagers from times immemorial. In addition to fishing rights, **the** villagers were also **enjoying** grazing and forest produce **without** paying anything to the Zamindar.

The peasants of this village were aware of the peasant movement growing in Andhra. West Godavari district peasant association was formed in 1923 by Dandu Narayana **Raju**. Peasant institute of this district through its classes also contributed ¹²⁵

in enhancing the consciousness of this villagers. The **famous** Andhra peasant march which travelled through this area, and the **Prakasam** Committee enquiry created a sense of confidence among the peasants ¹²⁶ to withstand the onslaught of the Zamindari oppression. That is why when the Zamindar attempted to occupy their lands **in** 1938 these peasants raised the banner of revolt.

This village was an **agraharam** granted **in** 1772 by **Kalidindi Tirupati Raju**, the Zamindar of Mogalturru for the support of a choultry and as such, it was a charitable endowment. The trustee was Kandregula Srinivasa Jagannadha Rao of Rajahmundry, the trustee property amounting to nearly 900 acres of land in this village. The rest of the land belong to the government. On or about 15.1.1813 the Governor of Madras issued, that if the Zamindar of **Kalipatnam** failed the charity, the land would be reverted to the East India Company. ¹²⁷ By manipulations and **manouevering**, the Zamindar not only continued to enjoy the land as his property, but also acquired 7,500 acres under his control by 1902 which was only 900 in 1772.

The trustee, i.e. the Zamindar of Kalipatnam tried several times to get sanction for construction of an irrigation project in this village. The government refused to grant permission for

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the same as it would benefit only Zamindar. So the Zamindar, induced the villagers in the year 1925, to make petition to the government for grant of water supply for cultivation in Kalipatnam. The agreement entered into by the Zamindar and the peasants was that the latter should cultivate the land, give up their fishing rights, rights in the village waste and also to clear up the village forest.¹²⁹ It was also agreed that the peasants should be granted pattas for the lands in their possession, which was nearly one fifth of total 4,000 acres and that each ryot would pay a stipulated sum of money to the Zamindar as a rent in return for this service.¹³⁰

The government granted the project in 1934, following the peasants' petition and also an appeal by the Zamindar to the labour commission in 1928 stating that if the project was constructed he would hand over the possession of 800 acres to the peasants.¹³¹ The construction of the project was completed by 1938. Meanwhile the Zamindar got the forest area cleared by the peasants according to the terms of agreements. After fulfilling his object, the Zamindar started evicting the peasants from their lands which were in their possession from times immemorial and were used for catching fish. He started selling the lands to the neighbouring villagers. He Justified this act by saying that he spent Rs.1,40,000 for the construction of the project. Infact, he recovered Rs.60,000 by selling the forest and Rs.2,00,000 by selling away 2,000 acres of the dispensable land. Beside he collected Rs.12,000 by rents, while paying a nominal rent of Rs.50 towards peshkush.¹³²

The grievance of the tenants was that in consequence of the completion of an irrigation project a lot of waste inam land was being brought under cultivation and sold by the Zamindar to outsiders.¹³³ Their fear was that they would lose the

livelihood they had been earning from systematic fishing and
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collection of fuel in these lands. This grievance was taken up by the left oriented Congressmen from outside and under their leadership the villagers started protesting the betraying activities of the Zamindar.

In July 1938, the District Peasant Association and District Congress Socialist Party, the **Narsapuram** and Bhimavaram Taluk Congress Committee announced their sympathy and support to the **Kalipatnam** peasants. They Jointly led a procession of 600 peasants of Kalipatnam to the Narsapur sub-collector under the leadership of Gottukukkala Venkanna, M.L.A., **Uddaraju Ramam**, **Uddaraju Suraparaju**, President and Secretary of the Taluk Congress Committee respectively and **Bhupati raju** and **Lakshminarayana Raju**, both leaders of District Peasant Association with national flags and peasant songs and submitted a memo to the sub-collector. A copy of the memo was also sent to the Congress

135 ministry. Earlier, a fact finding team consisting of Sunku Apparao, **Kruttiventi** Venkateshwarao and Gottukukkula Venkatarama **Raju** visited Kalipatnam and prepared a detailed report on tenant grievances and submitted it to the Narsapur Taluk Congress
136 Committee.

Meanwhile, the Zamindar intensified harassment by implicating a number of peasants in false cases, and impounding their cattle. He also filed a petition before the police to the effect that the villagers were forcibly cultivating his lands. The police started proceeding under section 144 and 107 against 37 persons who took active lead in the protest movement. The peasants were banned from entering the lands for fishing. After the termination of the ban period after two months, the Zamindar successfully prevailed upon the Tahsildar of Narsapur, to issue injunction orders against the villagers prohibiting them from entering the area until the civil suit which was instituted against some of them was settled. 137 He also started reporting to Revenue Board and Government through letters and telegrams to take action on peasants.

The ban remained, the Zamindar renewed selling, by ejecting the peasants from the lands. For this police help was sought and as a result a batch of 80 Reserve Police was encamped. Police tried to forcibly take thumb impression on white sheets from illiterate peasants so as to implicate the leaders in court cases. The police issued summons to Alluri Satyanarayana, Jonnalagadda Ramalingayya, executive member of the provincial CSP, who was sent to Kalipatnam by CSP in 1938¹³⁹ and K.Bangaraju, Secretary, Taluk Peasant Association under section 107 for educating the peasants of their rights.¹⁴⁰

At the same time the urban oriented and pro-zamindari section within the Congress voiced its resentment against the Kalipatnam peasant struggle. The president of Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, Bhogaraju Pattabhi Seetharamayya reported to Gandhi that the movement was launched arbitrarily and was aimed at confiscating private property and that it was against the Congress principle of class-harmony.¹⁴¹ He refused to visit Kalipatnam for it would boost the morale of the peasantry if he visit that village.¹⁴² Gandhiji basing upon Pattabhi's report commented that this movement was unjustified and warned Rajaji ministry to take immediate action on Congress members who were encouraging this struggle, if the Congress Committee failed to take disciplinary action.¹⁴³

But the local Congress Committee and Congress Socialists decried the attempts of Pattabhi to scuttle the movement. The Narsapur Congress Committee met at Palakollu on 12.10.38 and defended its action which it felt was in accordance with Congress principle of peasant welfare and non-violence.¹⁴⁴

The volunteer camp (sibiram) which was started in Kalipatnam to direct the movement became active by the end of 1938. It toured in various villages surrounding Kalipatnam and explained the exploitation of the Zamindar. Everyday meetings and rallies were conducted in the villages. The Kalipatnam meeting which was held on 12.8.1938 was attended by over 2000

peasants. They pledged to protect their traditional rights and withstand the Zamindars threat till they achieve their demands. ¹⁴⁵

But the Zamindar, taking advantage of the stand assumed by the Congress **highcommand**, continued his plans unabatedly by-passing the peasant protest movement. He persuaded the local administration to **impose** 144 section once again and **it came into** effect on 11.2.39. The Zamindar took the opportunity to put land for sale and fixed 8th March, 1939 for surveying and allotment of lands to the purchasers. That was the last straw. After nine months of petitions and **memos**, the peasant association decided to resort to direct action started sathyagraha from 7.3.39 itself, which continued for days and came to an end on 10.3.39.

On 7th hundreds of peasants entered the lands, which the Zamindar proposed to sell, under the leadership of Sunku Apparao and **Bhupatiraju Lakshminarasimharaju**. About 40 peasants were arrested for tresspassing the Zamindari lands. On 8th, about 1000 **peasantmen** and women again stepped into the field with **tri-colour** flag and offered Satyagraha. The police resorted to brutal repression wounding several **persons**. Even pregnant women were beaten. According to a witness submitted **in** the court regarding police brutality, 'the conduct of police did not differ in any manner even in Congress rule. Their treatment of children, women, and old peasants is gruesome. In order to satisfy the Zamindar they are behaving like this'. ¹⁴⁶

On 9th 400 peasants, led by **Uddamaraju** Manikyamba and Alluri **Annapurnamma**, both members of CSP offered sathyagraha and fifty of them were arrested. On 10th the same procedure was **repeated**. All the arrested were sentenced to six months rigorous imprisonment after a mockery trial, which lasted for only thirty minutes.

There was **tremendous** response and support to the **Kalipatnam** struggle from various parts of Andhra . Peasant associations,

Congress Committees, Congress Socialist Party units expressed their sympathy to the peasants cause. On 25.3.39 'Kalipatnam Peasant Day' was observed throughout Andhra. **Kommareddy Sathyanarayana** Murthy, who was the President of Andhra Provincial Peasnt Association extended the Association's full-fledged support to the movement. ¹⁴⁰

Meetings were held in several villages of Andhra supporting the peasants cause and condemning the police atrocities. **AIKS** President **Swamy sahananda** Saraswati, General Secretary **N.G.Ranga**, Joint Secretaries **Indulal Yagnik**, **B.P.L.Bedum A.Prasad** Sinha Justified the struggle, and sent message from Tripura on 12th March 1939 to this effect. They also warned the Madras government for becoming allies of the Zamindar and trying to

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suppress the peasant movement. The West Godavari Congress Committee consisting of **Dandu Narayanaraju**, **Muduganti Jaggannasastry**, **T.Perraju**, and **K.Suryanarayana** prepared a report alleging the Zamindar for betraying the peasants. Congress **M.L.As** from this district **Dandu Narayanaraju** and **Gottumukkala Venkanna** submitted a memorandum seperately to the government ¹⁵¹ stating that the right on lands belong to Kalipatnam peasants.

Thus facing pressures both from within and outside the Congress government decided to take the situation into its hands. The Prime Minister who was at Tripura attending Congress session sent a telegram to the Kalipatnam **sibiram** requesting to suspend sathyagraha and that the government would solve the problem amicably. Accordingly the sathyagraha was withdrawn on 11th of

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March. But the attitude of the Government and the Pradesh Congress Committee was lukewarm towards the problems of the peasantry. Neither **Patabhi** nor **Rajaji** visited the area.

However, **Prakasam** visited Kalipatnam on 13.3.1939 and Justified the peasnts demands which included the release of all

arrested and convicted, withdrawal of all cases, immediate action against police, withdrawal of section 144 and restoration of the ¹⁵³ dispossessed and waste lands formerly held by the peasants. Soon all the arrested were released and the cases in connection with the Kalipatnam struggle were withdrawn. ¹⁵⁴ However no action was taken against erring police personal. The government also ordered that the Collector, assisted by one representative each of the Zamindar and the villagers to hold an enquiry into the rights of the villagers with respect to the land out of which dispute has risen. ¹⁵⁵ Finally, an agreement was reached between the peasant and the Zamindar. Accordingly the Zamindar consented to give 250 acres of land to the peasants, agreed to leave some forest for pasture and firewood and that the Collector would arrange necessary financial assistance to the peasants through their cooperative society. Though the peasants could not get all the 800 acres as promised originally by the Zamindar, yet this achievement was no small victory in the given situation where the zamindar was considered all-mighty.

On the other hand the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee which was bitterly opposing the peasant movement and the participation of local Congressmen in the movement as it assumed that such movement would weaken the Congress Ministry passed a resolution that no Congressman could offer sathyagraha without prior permission of Congress Committee in future.

It also empowered its Secretary, to take disciplinary action against those who participated in the movement and issued notice to 14 West Godavari District Congressmen with socialist leanings like Uddaraju Ramam, A.S.Narasimharaju, Sunkara Apparao etc., for participating without permission. ¹⁵⁶ Many Congressmen expressed their strong disapproval of this step. Uddaraju Ramam, reacting sharply to the threat of disciplinary action against him by Congress Committee, Justified his participation in the sathyagraha as a Congressman, for, he argued, 'resolutions setting forth the kisan and labour programme of Congress had been passed both at

Faizpur session of the Congress and at the working committee meeting at Wardha **in** February 1937 and when a struggle takes place between the peasants... who desire that the **programme** should be implemented and Zamindars who want to oppose it tooth and nail, **it** is the duty of the subordinate Congress Committees and individual Congressmen to take active part **in** such struggles and support the programme of the Congress. It **is** only by doing so that the peasants and labourers can be induced to come forward to strengthen the cause of Congress. The real fight for independence consists in such struggles between the Zamindars and capitalists on one side and peasants and labourers on the other. Hence, **it** is that every Congressman treats as precious his right to participate in such **struggles**'.¹⁵⁷

Reacting similarly to the Congress Committee's action, **Kommareddy** Sathyanarayana Murthy and P.Sundarayya, President of Andhra Provincial Peasant Association and Secretary of Andhra Provincial Congress socialist Party respectively, issued a **joint** statement on 29.3.1939 asserting their right to support peasant struggles and stated, 'we do consult and take the advice of the Provincial Congress Committee but we do not bind ourselves to seek the permission of the Committee to start sathyagraha'.¹⁵⁸

The Andhra Provincial Peasant Association met at Vijayawada on 5.7.39 and urged the Congress leaders to withdraw the
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resolution. Processions and meetings were organised to oppose the resolution. Thus the **Kalipatnam** struggle became a stage for the show down between Congress leadership and Communist peasant leaders. However, these differences did not deter the peasants from launching more powerful struggles in later years. This **struggle** also broadened the social base of **anti-imperial** struggle. Though the demand for Zamindari abolition was not raised during this movement, **it** had all ingredients of posing a threat to the existence of Zamindari system.

Struggles against Munagala Zamindar presents another powerful example to the above pattern. Unlike **Kalipatnam** peasants' struggle the Munagala struggle posed direct challenge to the very structure of Zamindari system.

Munagala estate comprising 110 sq. miles, had **23** major villages and 19 minor villages with a revenue of **Rs. 1,30,000** by 1930.¹⁶¹ Its population was 20,000 as per 1931 Census.¹⁶² It formed part of Krishna district surrounded by **Telengana's** Nalgonda district.¹⁶³ The Zamindar of this estate from 1900 to 1948, i.e. till its abolition was Nayani Venkatarangarao.¹⁶⁴ He was a Congress sympathiser throughout and developed intimate relations with many Congress stalwarts of the day.¹⁶⁵ Another positive aspect of this Zamindar was that he was a great patron of literature and Telugu language.¹⁶⁶ He appointed **Komara Ju** Venkatalaxamanarao, an exponent of Telugu literature as his Diwan.

The Zamindar was active in politics and involved in freedom movement since his assumption of the Zamindari.¹⁶⁷ But his love for literature or his urge for freedom did not deter him from fleecing his estate peasants with exorbitant rents and forced labour. The legal battles in which he was involved for nearly forty years from 1890 to 1931 with his relatives regarding

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succession issue drained his treasury. The burden of filling his coffers fell upon his tenants. Moverover, as the estate was adjacent to the Nizam territories the novel methods of

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exploitation, like vetti, were adopted. The acute grievances of the peasantry got accumulated during depression period. It was also a period which witnessed the growth of organised peasant movement in the Andhra area in the wake of non-cooperation movement and following the activities of educated persons, like N.G.Ranga from peasant families.

In this background, Munagala **Zamin** Ryot Association (MZRA) was formed by leading peasant families of Munagala in 1930 to fight against the atrocities of the Zamindar.¹⁷⁰ **Immadi** Papaiah,

President of MZRA, Velidanda Rangarao, Kodati Venkatanarasimha Rao, Kollu Achayya, Y.Ranga Reddy, Y.Lakshmareddy, Akkiraju Gopalarao, Kollu Venkayya, Sunkara Pichayya, Golli Konayya, Sunkara Moggayya, Kanneboina Venkayya, etc., took active role in organising this first association.¹⁷¹ B.Vishwanath Das, M.L.A of Madras Assembly and who was leading anti-zamindar struggle against Kallikota Zamindar in Ganjam district presided the inaugural session of MZRA.¹⁷² T.Prakasam sent his message¹⁷³ encouraging the organisation on this occassion.

However, this first ever organised anti-zamindari activity did not question the rationality of the zamindari system but established itself to fight for its rights. The zamaindar was not prepared nor was too meek to submit. During civil-disobdience, taking support from the Madras Government, he crushed the peasant movement on the pretext that the peasants were anti-imperial.¹⁷⁴

Despite being a Congress sympathyser, he suppressed the infant peasant organisation labelling it as an outfit of Congress, to protect his citadel. The main target of his attack were the organisers of MZRA. many peasants were beaten, many more were evicted from their lands, some were banished from the estate and some others were socially boycotted.¹⁷⁵ One Kollu Ramayya, owner of 30 acres was forced to sign an agreement that he would never Join any peasant organisation in future, failing¹⁷⁶

which his 30 acres would be taken over by the Zamindar. Collective fines were imposed on some other peasants. Exit and entry points of a number of peasant houses were sealed with thrones until the fines were collected.¹⁷⁷ Immadi Papayya, who was the President of this first MZRA was one of the worst victims of Zamindar's fury. His 18 acres of land was appropriated by the Zamindar. Gelli Konayya, the General Secretary of the association too lost his land to Zamindar's aggression. False cases were filed against several people in civil and criminal courts.¹⁷⁸

This was the fate of the first peasant **association** and **this** type of atmosphere prevailed till late Thirties. The experience
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of N.V.Naidu, the founder of **Zamin Ryot**, during **his** fact **finding** mission in Munagala estate bears testimony to the **kind** of situation existing in **Munagala**. He visited Munagala on 22nd, 23rd and 24th of September, 1933 to gain first hand information
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of the conditions for the benefit of publishing **in** his paper.

During his stay **in** the region hotels and lodges were ordered not to provide him food and accommodation. With the severe repression going on peasants were afraid even to talk to Naidu.
181 **Immadi** Papayya, once President of **MZRA**, refused to provide shelter and even to talk with Naidu, following threatening calls from Zamindar.
182 Finally, Naidu was able to take stock of the situation by talking to peasants only during
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midnight short briefings. Infact, an attempt was made by
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Zamindar's men to manhandle Naidu for talking to the peasants.

However, the peasants did not lose heart over the aborted attempt of having a union. The events occurring around their estate was enthusing the peasants. The peasants marches, rallies, tours of leaders, press publicity, peasant schools and mobilising techniques kept the **tempor** of the estate's tenants alive. The elections to Madras Presidency Assembly in 1937 aroused their hopes and aspirations.

Though Congress Provincial leaders did not campaign in Munagala for its candidate, as per the agreement reached between
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them and the Zamindar, local leaders and Congress volunteers and members of district CSP toured length and breadth of the estate and gave wide publicity of Congress election manifesto which assured the peasants the needed protection from Zamindars. The Congress candidate **Katragadda Venkata Narayana's** victory in the elections boosted the morale of the peasantry. Another effect of this elections was that Socialists and other peasant-minded Congress leaders came **into** direct contact with the peasants of **Munagla** and they also came to learn the situation prevailing there. By this time local Congress organisations came under the **influence** of Communists.
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Soon after elections, Chandra Rajeswar Rao and Vellanki Vishveswar Rao toured the estate secretly on behalf of District CSP and collected first hand Information about the exploitative machinery and also organised meetings to educate the peasants to fight against zamindari oppression.¹⁸⁷ At many meetings, people ^{1 DO} did not attend fearing reprisal from Zamindar. On 5.4.38, at a meeting held in Siripuram, a village in the estate they persuaded the peasants to pass resolution urging the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee to appoint a committee to go into the wretched conditions of Munagala peasants and postponement of collection of rent arrears for one year. After returning to Vijayawada from their tour, these two leaders requested K.Venkata Narayanarao to tour Munagala personally to create confidence ¹⁹⁰ among peasants to fight against forced labour.

On 18.4.38, K.VenkataNarayanarao, M.L.A, along with Kamineni Venkatapapayya and Repala B.Sastry, District Congress Committee Secretary, toured Munagala. Pamphlets were distributed informing their visit, ten days before.¹⁹¹ They visited Munagala, Taduvai, Repala, Karivirala, Siripuram, Ramapuram, Nadigudem and other villages extensively and advocated that Zamindar had no right whatsoever to force peasants to work free of cost in his fields and urged peasants the same immediately. The speech from an M.L.A had an electrifying effect upon the peasants and very soon this practice of forced labour was stopped.¹⁹³

The M.L.A submitted his report to West Krishna District Congress Committee and requested it to constitute a special enquiry committee to probe the Munagala estate people's conditions.¹⁹⁴ Subsequently, a Committee was formed on 24.6.38 with Kakani Venkataratnam as Convenor and Peta Bapayya, Anne Anjayya, Venigalla Venkataratnam, Nanduri Prasada Rao and Anumala Rama Govinda sarma as members. Meanwhile, N.G.Ranga and Indulal Yagnik toured Munagala in capacity as members of AIKS and floated

the Zamindari abolition campaign vigorously and waged scathing attacks against Zamindari system. They also propogated the happy life of U.S.S.R peasant, that the peasant in Russia was the ruler ¹⁹⁵ and that there was not even a trace of peasant exploitation.

- The **Kakani** Committee toured Munagala on 23rd, 24th and 25th of July, 1938 and prepared a detailed report supporting the earlier reports exposing Zamindar's atrocities. ¹⁹⁶ However, **pandomonium** prevailed when the report came for voting at the West Krishna District Congress Committee meeting held at **Konakanchi** on 7.8.38 between **pro-zamindari** Congress leaders like, Ayyadevara **Kaleswara** Rao Pantulu and **Marupilla Chitti** and Congress Socialists. Finally the report was accepted by a majority vote. ¹⁹⁷

The appointment of **Prakasam** Committee at the Presidency level, further enhanced the confidence of the peasants that they can challenge the Zamindar. However, they were not prepared yet, to give witness to the Committee when it visited Munagala following threats from Zamindar, but three of the peasants followed the Committee to Madras secretly and represented ¹⁹⁸ Munagala peasantry before the committee.

The West Krishna District Congress Committee and Andhra Provincial Peasant Association decided to re-organise the defunct MZRA, and made necessary arrangements. Peasant leaders Chalasani Vasudevarao, **Kamineni Venkatappayya** and **Joshabhatla Sathyanarayana** campaigned for the re-building of MZRA. **Nanduri Prasada Rao**, **Moturi Paranthamayya** and **Vemulapalli Anjaneyulu** were deputed by District CSP to recruit members to the MZRA. Peasants of all most all the villages of estate responded enthusiastically and in 1838 3,000 out of 20,000 population Joined Congress and 4,000 Joined **MZRA**. ¹⁹⁹

The MZRA was affiliated to Krishna District Peasant Association on 24.12.38. ²⁰⁰ The Congress Sub-Committee's report was published in good number and circulated widely in the estate.

Apart from peasant association, youth committees were also established. Volunteer force was created to notice the activities of Zamindar. In Munagala, **MZRA** office was started. **Peasant-labour** friendship and co-operation was prominently preached. By the end of the year, forced labour and paying of fines to Zamindar was stopped. Fear of Zamindar servants was eliminated from peasant heart. The song 'we don't want association with these Zamindars' was on every peasant's lip.²⁰¹ They opposed illegal payments, and even started enjoying their traditional rights over trees. They stopped from going to **zamindar** seeking his help in solving their disputes and also stopped heeding to Zamindar's orders for boycotting socially their fellow-peasants.²⁰² In every village peasant associations were formed.²⁰²

The Zamindar also intensified harassing the peasantry by implicating them in false cases and forcibly stopping **demonstrations**. He rejected all appeals for postponement of rent collections. The estate employees entered peasant houses and forcibly took ornaments against rents. The families of office bearers of **MZRA** came under special attack.²⁰⁴ But this did not deter the peasant defiant mood, unlike in early Thirties.

A classical **example** of this sort of attitude happened in Munagala on Deepavali day in 1938. On every Deepavali the Zamindar used to perform special prayers to his family's deity **Laxminarasimhaswamy**, whose temple was located in Repalle village of the estate. As usual, the barbers of that village went to the temple on Deepavali day in 1938 to lit torches. But the estate employees refused to accept their services as the barbers were the members of **MZRA** and chased them out of the temple. Seeing this the dhobis who were the traditional carriers of God's vehicle themselves refused to do their duty and walked out of the temple premises and no barber or **dhobi** in the entire estate was ready to perform this work and thus the two-day religious procession came to a stand-still in that year.

However, the people of the estate decided to celebrate **Deepavali** in a variety way. They took **Nanduri** Prasada Rao, the representative of West Godavari District Congress Committee to **Repalle** and organised a mammoth procession keeping portraits of Gandhi, Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and N.G.Ranga on bullock
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carts. From now onwards direct conflict between the Zamindar and the tenants started. Slogans like 'abolition of Zamindari system', 'downwith police atrocities' and '**MZRA zindabad**' rented the air. Under such conditions, a chance came to MZRA to test its strength for the final showdown and that occurred in kalakova village.

Under every irrigation tank. the Zamindar generally possessed certain amount of acres for his own cultivation, and entire cultivation activities were performed by his tenants free of cost. But this forced labour was stopped by 1938 and now the Zamindar himself was forced to hire labour to do agricultural operations and he did the same to work in his fields situated in Kalakova village. The estate employees hired 72 agricultural labourers to harvest 22 acres of paddy crop promising to pay 40 pots of grain per acre as was paid by estate peasants. The labourers agreed to do the job and completed their task in 14 days and walked down to **Nadigudem**, the Zamindar's palace for receiving their payment". But the estate employees paid only 30 pots of grain per acre and that too was old and soiled grain. The labourers refused to take the grain and marched towards MZRA and sought help. Learning this, the peasant leaders **Nanduri** Prasada Rao and **Nallapati Venktrama** Narasayya led the labourers to Zamindar's palace and demanded in vain to see the Zamindar himself. Consequently, on Prasad Rao's advice, **Nallapati** organised sathyagraha in front of the palace with 500 peasants and labourers on the first and with 1000 and 3000 people on the following two days.²⁰⁶

As usual, the Zamindar tried his methods to suppress this agitation. He paraded his henchmen before sathyagrahls,

threatened to **kill** Prasada Rao and others. He also spread rumours that Congress government and leaders have compromised with him. But the peasants continued their agitation. They surrounded the palace and resorted to social boycott and left Zamindar and his employees with no **daily** services. Potters carrying water to the police quarters struck work. Thus Zamindar, being helpless complained to the Government that peasants were looting his palace and immediately, the District Collector, Bhaskar Rao, Congress leaders Bulusu **Sambamurthy** and Ayyadevara **Kaleshwara** Rao rushed to the estate with three lorry loads of police force on **24.12.38**.²⁰⁷

Kaleshwara Rao tried to persuade **unsuccessfully** peasants and labourers to suspend the agitation as it was not led by Congress Party and to come to terms with the Zamindar.²⁰⁸ Then Collector enquired and finding no fault with agitating people, he ordered the estate employees to pay 40 pots of good grain per acre as was agreed originally.²⁰⁹

This victory over Zamindar gave credibility to **MZRA** and much needed boost to the estate peasants. The peasants decision to stop payment of rent, until their demand for reduction of rents to one sixth of the net income was implemented. They also demanded for restoration of lands encroached by Zamindar and postponement of rent collection for one **year**. The no-rent campaign resulted in the non-payment of a single **paise** of the total **1,20,000** rupees was collected by the Zamindar.²¹⁰

Realising the intensity of the situation, Zamindar and his friends in the Congress decided to come to terms with the **peasants**.²¹² The General Secretary of Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, **Gottipati** Brahmayya was appointed as arbitrator by the two parties.²¹³ After prolonged negotiations, both the groups came to an agreement on 10.1.1939 and signed on the agreement popularly known as '**Brahmayya Award**'.²¹⁴ On Zamindar's side, **his** son **Kumararaja** Ramakrishna Reddy and on behalf of **MZRA** **Velidenda** Rangarao, **Kodati** Venkata Narasimharao, Nanduri Prasada Rao,

Nallapati Venkata Ramanarasayya, Uppala Ramayya and **Kandula Ramulu** signed.²¹⁵ The subsistence of the agreement was that the Zamindar agreed to return all the confiscated lands, to recognise peasants rights over trees, to survey the lands in the estate, not to resort to forced labour and illegal exactions. Peasants too agreed to pay all rent dues and give up social boycott campaign.²¹⁶

The hitch developed regarding the implementation of the peace accord.²¹⁷ Both sides started allegations that the other side had not kept to the agreement. Peasants started demanding the implementation of the award. The Zamindar demanded the expulsion of **V. Hanumantharao** and **Maturi Paranthamayya** from estate on the pretext that they were sabotaging the accord.²¹⁸ He also demanded the peasants to pay rents first before he could implement the accord. Moreover, he reduced the remission amount from 0-4-0 per rupee to 0-2-0, contrary to his promise. To break this stalemate, **Brahmayya** deputed **Yemeni Subramanyam** to implement the accord, along with Krishna District Peasant Association President **Kamineni Venkatappya**.²¹⁹ Again both the parties agreed to this negotiation. But, **Y. Subramaniam's** mission failed as both the parties struck to their guns.²²⁰ Zamindar **insisted** that he would not give any remission until peasants pay their due rents. Finally the mission declared that 'it did not mind if the agreement was taken to be at an end', and **Brahmayya**²²¹

himself that his arbitration has failed. This was on 29th May, 1939.

Even earlier, the peasant leaders expecting that nothing substantial would emerge from **complacment**, started organising the peasants. On 26.2.39, **Katragadda Venkatanarayanarao**, **Kamineni Venkatappyya**, and other leaders visited **Nadigudem** and toured various villages in the estate urging people to be cautious and awaken till the award was implemented. On 23.4.39, the **AIKS** Vice-President **P. Syamasundara Rao**, **Peta Bapayya**, **P. Subba**

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Rao Reddy, **Sunkara** Suryanarayana Rao also visited Munagala and kept up the momentum among the peasantry. Nearly 3,000 peasants attended that day's meeting, in which **P.Syamasundara** Rao spoke that peasants would resort to direct action if the award was not implemented.²²²

The MZRA **members** divided themselves into batches and campaigned vigorously in the estate for the **implementation** of the award. They also realised that only direct action would **fulfill their** object. Excepting that the peace attempts would fall, MZRA passed a resolution on April 30, 1939, putting forth certain demands like immediate withdrawal of criminal cases implicated upon **peasants, remission** for destroyed crops and warned the Zamindar that if these demands were not implemented they²²³ would resort to direct sathyagraha. A sathyagraha committee was formed with Nanduri Prasada Rao as President to organise **anti-zamindari** struggle. This committee in turn constituted several sub-committees one each for every village and trained the villagers of performing sathyagraha. About 1100 volunteers were trained in these camps.

A side issue that cropped up in these circumstances was the occupation of a elementary school in **Ramapuram** by the MZRA. This school in fact was illegally occupied by the Zamindar in the early Thirties. Now the MZRA, **re-occupied** the school to show its **assertiveness** to the Zamindar.²²⁴ Zamindar who was looking for a pretext to abort the **Brahmayya** Award, found this issue convenient and walked out of the negotiations that were conducted by **Yerneni Subramaniam**, thus finally ending the life of the award. So, on May 29th, **Brahmayya** declared that his arbitration had failed.

The peasants after occupying the school building hoisted Congress flag and red flag atop and started peasant school. The Zamindar once again complained to the police. Already several peasants, who were implicated in false cases were walking up and down to the courts, which were in Jaggayyapet or Nandigama, 24 and 40 miles away respectively from Munagala.²²⁵ Now the Bezwada

sub-Collector imposed 144 section in Ramapuram and cases were filed on Nandurl Prasada Rao and others.²²⁶

Under such conditions, MZRA decided to launch sathyagraha from June 2nd, 1939, which took the form of systematic

trespassing into estate lands. On June 2nd, Uppla Ramayya led a team of eight people with ploughs and entered Immadi Papayya's land, which was forcibly taken by Zamindar in 1930. As soon as they entered, police arrested them. On 3rd, Nandurl Prasada Rao, Moturi Paranthamayya, Vemulapalli Anjaneyulu, Joshyabhatulla Sathyanraryana, Nallapati Venkata Ramanarasayya and others entered the Zamindar's land only to be arrested by the police.

On 4th June, a crowd of about 300 persons obstructed the removal of ploughs and bulls used in the commission of the trespass, while another crowd of about 500 were present at the site. The district Superintendent of Police and Joint Magistrate were present with a section of the armed Reserve Police. When the police attempted to remove the third day's sathyagrahees and implements the crowd rushed at the escort and obstructed their way. Brutal lathicharge was followed resulting severe injuries to a number of men and women. This type of sathyagraha continued unabatedly. On the other hand, social boycott was carried by the estate peasants and other craftsmen against the Zamindar. Dhobis, barbers, potters, and various other groups stayed away from the palace. Zamindar tried to put a brave face by hiring labour from neighbouring Nizam territory. But owing to local pressure they too stopped coming to the palace.²²⁹

Rents were not paid and the Zamindar tried to confiscate peasants lands and property in lieu of rents, but was resisted effectively by the estate public. Men, women, children participated enthusiastically and confidently in this struggle. Singing peasant songs and denouncing Zamindari system, children marched up and down in Munagala streets.²³⁰

Such type of social boycott and sathyagraha on Papayya's land continued and began to grow strong as days passed despite the arrest of **important** leaders. Moreover, massive demonstrations were led outside Munagala, throughout Andhra **in** support of these peasants. On 11th June, 'Munagala Day' was observed **in** the Andhra region. marches, rallies, meetings were organised supporting peasants cause and denouncing police **lathicharge**. **Kalipatnam** peasants were in forefront **in** observing the 'day'.²³¹ N.G.Ranga and other central leaders too criticised the police atrocities and the **Congress'** government's attitude towards peasants problems.²³²

Several Congress Committees and Congress M.L.As too urged the government to solve the problem amicably and not to resort to oppressive measures.²³³ **Navasakti**, **Vahini** and **Zamin Ryot** papers published a series of articles and gave wide publicity to²³⁴ peasants cause and made a scathing attack on police behaviour, though government reports suggested that these papers were distorting the facts and making wild allegations against²³⁵ police. But police reports themselves pointed out that firm action was taken by them to restore law and order.²³⁶

Thus in the wake of intensive pressure, Congress Government deputed the Revenue Minister **T.Prakasam** to sort out the problem. He visited Munagala on 18th, June, 1939 and after preliminary enquiries requested the MZRA to suspend the agitation and promised to solve the problem and subsequently MZRA and Andhra Provincial Peasant Association suspended the movement after 17 days of agitation on 18.6.1939.²³⁷ They now entered into negotiations for a settlement of the disputes through an arbitrator. All the arrested sathyagrahees except **Nanduri Prasada Rao**, **Moturi Paranthamayya**, **Vemulapalli Anjaneyulu** and **Joṣhyabhatla** sathyanarayana were released soon after the suspension of the movement.²³⁹ These four were compelled to serve the full term of 11 months **in** prison as the **government** felt that they were communists.

The arbitrator was Yemeni **subramanyam**. After a hard **persuasion**, he made Zamindar to agree to the implementation of **Brahmayya** Award and issued a proclamation to this effect, on 6.11.39.²⁴⁰ But Zamindar did not keep his word, regarding the implementation and the MZRA tried to renew the agitation, but following the resignation of Congress Ministry in October, it **did** not launch the same, as the British **Raj** returned to rule directly.

Though on the face of it, peasants were the losers in this round of struggle, on the whole they posed a serious challenge to the Zamindar and Zamindari system. They were able to recover **Immadi Papayya's** land by sathyagraha and negotiated the release of the arrested sathyagrahees. The practice of forced labour was put to an end. It also exposed that the sympathies of the Congress Government lay with the Zamindar. Like **Kalipatnam**, this agitation also witnessed the acute differences that were cropping up between congress leadership and Communists.

Apart from these two explicit outbursts, there were several other movements challenging Zamindars authority in various estates indicating the growing assertiveness among the peasantry.

In Challapalli estate, the Zamindar **Sivarama** Prasad who succeeded **Ankineedu** Prasad in 1929 was in no way different from other Zamindars of the period in terms of exploitation of the peasantry. The Divi Taluka Zamindari Peasant Association which was formed in 1930 raised its voice against Zamindari encroachments, evictions, illegal **extractions** and litigations. Its initial leaders were Gorrepati **Venkatasubbayya**, Chandra Subbayya, kavuri Kodandaramayya and Kodali **Anjaneyulu**.²⁴¹

They led a movement against the estate's Diwan **Jampala Venkatesam** and succeeded in forcing the Zamindar to remove him from that post. This Jampala was recruited as Diwan in 1930 by the Zamindar. He was famous as the most successful bureaucrat of the times, for ruthlessly suppressing the Pedanandipadu peasant movement in early 1920s.²⁴² The Zamindar who was active in

politics, entrusted the administration to Jampala, who in turn brought vast tracts of communal land under the estate and resorted to litigation whenever peasants objected his measures.²⁴³ Several newspapers exposed the conditions of the **zamin-ryot**. Petitions were submitted to the District **administration**. Prominent Congress leaders intervened on behalf of the peasants and finally persuaded the Zamindar to remove ²⁴⁴

Jampala from Diwangiri in 1934. By late Thirties, this opposition to Zamindari employees was directed against Zamindar himself. The activities of the peasant association, under the leadership of N.G.Ranga, Gottipati Brahmayya, **Baddepudi Venkatanarayana**, **Kolli Venkatadri** gradually radicalised the thinking of the peasant vis-a-vis the Zamindar.

In 1937 the peasants of this estate vehemently opposed the imposition of '**najarana**' by the Zamindar. They organised a series of meetings and took rallies and after a non-violent active agitation they succeeded in forcing the Zamindar to ²⁴⁵ withdraw the orders.

In September 1937, the Zamindar sold 1400 acres of **banjar** lands in Challapalli, **Mangalapuram**, **Nukalavaripalem** and other villages. The peasants tried to halt the sales by rallies and marches. They also petitioned to **Prakasam Pantulu** but could not prevent the Zamindar from selling the lands.²⁴⁶ But the resolve to fight against the Zamindari exploitation continued. The victory over the najarana issue strengthened the confidence of the peasants.

In **Muktyala** estate in Krishna district, peasant associations started functioning since 1930.²⁴⁷ The general political atmosphere existing during that period influenced the peasants of **this** estate and they started opposing the Zamindar. In March 1938 they decided to encroach the Zamindar forest lands for grazing. The Zamindar had 3,500 acres of forest lands in **Paddavaram** village in the name of his wife Raja Vasireddy **Kanakavallikamba**. In July 1938 a meeting was held in Muktyala

and was attended by N.G.Ranga, Indulal Yagnik, Chalasani Vasudevarao and other national leaders. Peasant leaders in the estate, Katragadda Narayanarao, Anumula Govinda Sarma, Bandi Tirupatayya and Repala Buchirama Sresti organised the meeting. Soon after the meeting, inspired by the speeches of the leaders, men and women took their cattle into the forests for grazing. The Zamindar brought police and threatened the peasants with dire consequences. Many people were arrested and many more were implicated in false cases. Though the agitation cooled down in the wake of police brutalities, the peasants of this estate did not stop questioning the authority of the Zamindar.

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Gampalagudem estate, in Tiruvur taluk of Krishna district is another example which witnessed the struggle between the Zamindar who wanted to continue his traditional authority and the peasants who started asserting their lost rights very aggressively.

The Zamindar Kotagiri Venkata Krishna Rao was a loyalist of Congress and he was active in the Home Rule Movement, Non-Cooperation Movement and in the civil-disobedience movement of 1930 and he even went to Jail in 1921 for participating in the non-cooperation movement. But as a Zamindar he followed the evil practices along with his fellow zamindars. The peasant leaders who were in the fore-front opposing the Zamindar were assaulted. Peasants who gave witness before the Prakasam Committee were made to lead a difficult life. However, peasants started moving in organised manner and fought against the Zamindar either in legal battles or outside courts. When Murukuntla Venkatappayya was beaten by Zamindari men, for reporting to Press the atrocities committed by the Zamindar, the peasants of the estate took out a large procession to the Zamindar's palace and warned the zamindar.

In 1938, Ponnaluri Radha Krishnamurthy wrote a booklet titled '*Tiruvuri Talukalo Zamindari Durantalu*' (Zamindari atrocities in Tiruvur Taluk) and distributed its copies in the

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estate villages. Many of the peasants of this estate actively participated in anti-zamindar agitation in the Munagala estate. The mood of the peasants in different estates was not different from these estates. The opposition which started in early 1930s against the exploitation of the Zamindars gradually turned against the Zamindari system itself by late thirties. Sudden withdrawal of Congress ministries, outbreak of second world war and imposition of repressive policies in its wake to curb popular movements by the British regime caused an abrupt end to the peasant movements, only to erupt once again after the war was over.

During war period the differences between the Communists and N.G.Ranga (who became the Congress spokesman on peasant problems) became more open and competition began for the control over peasant associations. The conflict was more evident in Andhra. Infact by 1939 peasant movement in Andhra achieved a

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stature and stability. Peasant associations were formed at district, taluk and village level with Andhra Provincial Peasant Association working as the apex body, and as a matter of fact this body and its affiliated wings were under the control of Communists while N.G.Ranga was busy with his activities at the national level. The Congress as such did not allow itself to deal with peasants seperately. Thus the battle for control over these sections witnessed between the Comunists and N.G.Ranga and his followers, where both these groups were operating within the Congress.

In the initial years of the war, the Government crackdwn on Communists was more sevre, as they opposed the war efforts of te British tooth and nail claiming it as imperial war. Main purpose of their activities was to prevent the people from contributing to war funds, from enlisting in the army, and from serving on war committees which were set up by the government 250 for carrying on pro-war and pro-British propoganda. Their anti-war speeches, posters, leaflets and unauthorised news-sheets provoked the government to take stern 251 measures to curb the Commonust activities.

The axe fell on peasant associations too. Police opened fire killing five persons in Mandasa estate when peasants defied forest rules in April, 1940.²⁵² Earlier, the AIKS which was held at Palasa in Vishapatnam district on March 26 and 27 passed resolutions to wage anti-zamindari, anti-government, anti-war agitations. The government took serious note of the conference and issued orders forbidding several leaders including N.G.Ranga from attending the meeting. N.G.Ranga refused to obey the order and he was consequently prosecuted and sentenced to imprisonment.²⁵³ Several peasant leaders were arrested. Among them the most important were Laxminarayanaraju, Sathanarayana Dasu, Prasada Rao and suryanarayanaraju.²⁵⁴ Several others went under-ground, including Vasudevarao, J. Ramalingayya, and Mukkamala Nagabhushanam.²⁵⁵ However, during these critical days the United Front strategy witnessed breaches.

The CPI in its October 1939 meeting resolved to capture power and to transform the imperialist war into a war of national liberation.²⁵⁶ N.G.Ranga sensing the trouble hardened his hold over Andhra Provincial Peasant Association.²⁵⁷ The Peasant Association became the plaything and war front between the rival groups. By this time CPI permeated the CSP and when in 1940 when Communists were expelled from CSP the whole of CSP of Andhra went under CPI.²⁵⁸ The struggle between the Communists and Rangaites for control for AIKS was the last straw.

This came at Palasa AIKS Conference where both the groups tried to capture a majority at the annual election of the office-bearers. N.G.Ranga and pro-Congress peasant leaders succeeded in getting the majority.²⁵⁹ Thus the differences which were in existence since mid-thirties got sharpened.

In fact the United Front strategy itself was an opportunistic strategy of the Communists who were in early Thirties banned by the government. In order to continue their work they joined hands with the Congress. The differences in ideology and personality conflicts continued despite the birth of United Front. This was

evident as both the groups organised rival political schools during 1937-39. The Communists attitude of splitting up peasantry **into** rich, middle, poor peasants and agricultural labourers was not to the satisfaction of N.G.Ranga and followers. To put in **Ranga's** words, '**this** too contributed to the eventual break-down of the United Front **in** the **Kisan** movement'. ²⁶⁰

Moreover **Ranga's** criticism of Marxist dogma of proletariat dictatorship and Communist subscription to the same remained underneath throughout the United Front years. Added to this the change in Communists attitude towards war ended the United Front on the peasant platform. Germany's attack on Russia brought **this** change. Now the war ceased to be an **imperialist** war from their point of view and it became a people's war, 'which must be supported **unconditionally**'. With CPI being in majority **in** ²⁶²

AIKS by 1942 it passed resolution to this **effect**. Thus the working committee of Andhra Provincial Peasant Association where pro-Congress and **pro-Rangaites** were in majority met at Nidubrolu on 7th November 1942 and decided to secede from the 'Communist controlled **AIKS**'. It condemned the 'anti-national and reactionary and retrograde decisions' of Central **Kisan** Council that met at Bombay **in** October, 1942 favouring Pakistan, Joining the provincial ministries and pleading for whole hearted co-operation with **government**'. In contrast to **CPI's** call to peasants not to support **Gandhiji's** prospective movement (quit India), the meeting welcomed Gandhi's quit India slogan.

Thus the break-away group of **AIKS** changed its name to 'All India **Kisan Congress**' in November, 1942 which clearly indicated **its** close alliance with and affinity to the Congress. ²⁶⁴ Its main objective was achieving first national liberation and then, social revolution led by the peasantry. As opposed to the CPI thesis of a proletarian revolution to be achieved under the proletarian leadership and through proletarian dictatorship, the **Kisan Congress** advocated **in** the need for achieving an agrarian revolution under the leadership of the agrarian masses. It also accused the CPI of playing malignant game of keeping the

peasants under check 'by all means, fair or foul, until the industrial proletariat grows in numbers, organisation, consciousness and capacity to sacrifice'.²⁶⁶

On the other hand, Rangaites also tried to restrict entry into the Andhra Provincial Peasant Association only to pro-Congress peasants and exclude Communist supporters. Following the removal of ban on CPI in June 1942, i.e. Just before the split of AIKS, Communists launched a massive membership drive into Peasant Association, which was not the taste of Rangaites. The Rangaites who were in the saddle of Andhra Provincial Peasant Association, during the initial years of war, now refused to issue membership forms to the respective district peasant associations where Communists were in control.

The communists appealed to the central AIKS office, which in turn granted permission to the district association to publish membership forms on their own, without the interference of Andhra Provincial Peasant Association. Under such circumstances, the Working Committee of the Andhra Provincial Peasant Association not only seceded from AIKS but also abolished Andhra Provincial Peasant Association by saying that there was no need for a separate peasant association when the country was facing unprecedented situation in the wake of war and appointed Nellore Venkataramanaidu as Provincial Agent.²⁶⁷ It also declared that red flags should not be hoisted during peasant meetings. But these deliberations were not approved by the district peasant associations where Communists were in control.

The Andhra Provincial Peasant Association which was claimed to be dissolved by N.G.Ranga and his followers, met at Vijayawada and appointed AIKS General Secretary Chalasani Vasudeva Rao as Provincial Peasant Association Organiser to re-organise peasant associations and by December, 1942 the Peasant Association recruited 1,10,000 members to its organisation and elected Kadiala Gopal Rao as President and Nanduri Prasad Rao as General Secretary for 1943-44.²⁶⁸

From now onwards there existed two peasant associations in Andhra as at National level. The Communist controlled **AIKS** at national level and its provincial wing Andhra Provincial Peasant Association and N.G.Ranga and pro-Congress controlled **AIKS** and **its** Provincial wing Andhra Provincial **Kisan** Congress (APKC). By this time N.G.Ranga was firm in the saddle of Andhra Provincial Congress leadership. The main reason, apart from **ideological** differences, for **Ranga's** divisive activities would have been **his** fear of defeat **in** the organisational election of APPA. Though N.G.Ranga was responsible for the formation of peasant associations, and raising the consciousness of peasants in Andhra, his interests lay more at the national level. Moreover the Congress was not **particular** about the peasant segment. Thus the field was left wide-open for the Communists since mid-thirties and in the garb of United-Front they penetrated **into** the peasant mass and with their mass-activities especially during the Congress ministry period and by directly leading **anti-zamindari** struggles, in Munagala, **Kalipatnam**, Challapalli and other estates, they developed intimate relationship with local cadres and strengthened their membership and that explains why when the CSP expelled Communists from its party, ²⁶⁹ entire CSP unit of Andhra became CPI unit in 1940.

At Palasa conference of **AIKS** also majority of APPA members favoured and voted for Communists members **in** the organisational elections. Rangaites who were already feeling restless owing to the growing strength of communists in the APPA naturally got upset with the lifting of ban on CPI. ²⁷⁰ N.G.Ranga wanted to curtail the influence of the Communists and continue his hold over peasant association and avoid defeat at the APPA organisational elections. This explains the reasons behind **Ranga's** attitude towards APPA in 1942. But Rangas's action **did** not deter Communists hold over peasant associations.

The organisational and mobilising techniques, though **initiated** and adopted first by N.G.Ranga in the early Thirties, Communists implemented the same in Forties. As the government repression was severe they could not launch any agitations as

during the Congress regime, but in the circumstances when British government was waging people's war, in Communist perception, the Communist cadres organised several constructive programmes which helped both the peasants and the government.

They took advantage of food crisis during war period and concentrated all their energies in this regard. Due to lack of rainfall in several provinces, and also ineffective and inefficient measures and indifferences of the **gouvernement**, food grains became scarce in the open market. Hoarders and profiteers trading in black market ruled the roost.²⁷¹ The Communists led 'hunger-marchers' to the divisional officers in various districts
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of Andhra for rice. They also demanded not to stop the import of rice from Burma. Due to war needs rice from Krishna district was exported to Bombay four times the normal in 1940 thus leading to increase of price in local markets.²⁷³ Taking advantage of this situation the Communists organised several meetings throughout the province with **anti-zamindari** and anti-government slogans. However the government did not take seriously of this activities and rubbed them as 'annual events without attributing any particular **significance**'.
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But one significant aspect which was taken into consideration by the Communists during the war period was their 'Grow More Food' - campaign under which the APPA brought lakhs of acres of government waste lands for cultivation and handed them over to the agricultural labour.²⁷⁵ Irrigation was another major **issue** taken up by the Communist party's peasant cadres during this period. They undertook the repair of the main canal of the Krishna Delta in Krishna district when the contractor surrendered the contract fearing that he could not finish the work in the **stipulated** time and for the scheduled rates. This main canal supplied to more than 6 lakhs of **irrigated** area. Under such circumstances the APPA undertook to complete the repairs in stipulated time and the contract for **itself**. It gave a call for peasants to come and work on the canal repair and hundreds responded and worked for about a month in hot summer. Communal

kitchens were run, and cultural squads entertained them during work and in the nights. The repair work was completed in record time **much** to the **astonishment** of the professional contractors. Many peasants came down to the working spot from various parts of Andhra to work. The work was **mainly** directed by the Communists.²⁷⁶

The CPI controlled APA also took leading role in organising relief camps and also participated in government relief camps during the Bengal, Rayalaseema and northern districts famines during this period. Its **members** were sent to these regions for undertaking relief work.²⁷⁷ This not only resulted in spreading the peasant movement to these areas but also converted many of **Ranga's** followers into Communist camp.²⁷⁸

The grow more food campaign also had the blessings of the government, which in fact was the initiator of the campaign to strengthen food supplies for its war needs. It gave several concessions for the cultivation of **pormboke** and other lands at²⁷⁹

their disposal. **Mukkamala** Nagabhushanam, a Communist who was the President of Krishna District Peasant Association in 1942 launched campaign as per the programme of the APPA to bring all waste lands in Zamindari areas under cultivation. The work of the local peasant associations was to prepare a list of all waste lands and sent it to the Collector requesting him to grant such lands to the poor peasants and agricultural labourers. It was also expected to give **petitions** to the Zamindars and then urge Collectors to bring pressure on the Zamindars. However caution was taken to prevent peasants from forcibly occupying waste lands²⁸⁰

if either Zamindar or government did not give permission. They also demanded the government for suitable seeds, subsidised fertilisers, loans through co-operative societies and banks, drainage facilities, transport facilities for carrying agricultural produce, remunerative procurement prices etc.²⁸¹

ANTI-ZAMINDARI STRUGGLES

It also succeeded in many of its efforts. To cite a few examples APPA triumphed in making the government to postpone the collection of nazarana worth 30 lakhs rupees in Krishna district alone for the year 1942. For this it had to send nearly 250 petitions to the government.²⁸² On the other hand the Communist Party's paper *Prajasakti* continued its attack bitterly against the Zamindari system and the exploitation being carried on by the Zamindars.²⁸³

A demand was made by the APPA to amend the Madras Estate Land Act in order to bring the waste lands under cultivation even in Zamindari estates. Zamindars were refusing to hand over the waste lands to the peasants fearing that the latter would get occupancy rights over them once the lands were granted. Neither were they prepared to cultivate waste lands on their own. So APPA met in March, 1943 and urged the government and Zamindars to be patriotic in giving the waste lands to peasants as it would help fight the famine conditions.²⁸⁴

Accordingly the government in early 1944 brought a temporary amendment act to Madras Estate Land Act as it was considered at the time of utmost importance to increase the production of food crops in the Presidency in every possible way. Thus it enacted²⁸⁵ the Madras Estate Land (Temporary Amendment) Act, on 17.1.44.

The Act provided that a land-holder may admit a person to temporary possession of land in his estate which was not already in the possession of a peasant or tenant, at any time during the continuance of the world war and for one year thereafter. It also stated that the persons so admitted would be entitled to be in possession of the land only for such period being less than three or more than five years as may be agreed upon between him and the landholder. The Act however did not bind the Zamindar to give his lands compulsorily. Moreover, the peasant in this case was exempted from paying rent for cultivating such lands while such compulsion and exemption was granted regarding government waste lands. Thus the greatest defect of the Act was its

bargaining nature. It defined a right in favour of peasant and **immediately** searched for counter-favour to the Zamindar. However, despite defects, several tracts of waste lands were brought under the hold of poor peasants and **agricultural** labourers thus enhancing the prestige of APPA. These people remained behind Communists in later years to fight for and **get** permanent occupancy right over these lands.

Apart from these type of agitations, APPA also held **its** usual peasant day, marches, rallies and meetings regularly. The Andhra Peasant Day of 1943 was observed on 1st September throughout Andhra. On that day almost all the Communist controlled peasant associations celebrated it as a festival. Streets were decorated with mango leaf garlands. Houses were cleaned and white-washed. Processions were taken and bullock carts were drawn exhibiting on them the figures of Japan and Germany and **criticising** these countries for the imperial war. Sport competitions and science exhibitions were held to celebrate the day. 286

In **Pittapuram** estate in East Godavari district the peasant association constructed bridges on two sides of river Godavari to avoid flood water coming into the surrounding villages in 1943. It diverted the money belonging to the estate for **this** purpose when the Zamindar refused to construct. The peasants also protested the **imposition** of illegal rents by the Gollaprolu Zamindar in the same district but could not succeed in making the 287

Zamindar to withdraw the same.

In Tiruvur Taluk, the Mailavaram Zamindar sold 100 acres of communal land which was used for grazing by peasants for 2,700 rupees in 1941. The peasants started agitating for grazing right under the direction of **Tiruvuru** taluk peasant association. When the individual peasants could not bear the cost of litigation, the peasant association launched campaign and collected one thousand rupees for court expenses and appointed a committee to look into the matter. It curtailed the Zamindar's attempts to divide the peasants and finally by an appeal, **it** obtained an

Injunction order which **permitted** the peasants to graze their cattle **in** 40 acres. Criminal cases implicated on peasants by the Zamindar were also removed. These victories resulted **in** strengthening the APPA both quantitatively and **qualitatively**.²⁸⁸

By 1943, primary **membership** of APPA slightly increased while **AIKS** membership came down by fifty percent. At Bhanka session APPA members were **55,560** out of total 2,85,000 **AIKS members**.²⁸⁹ As a government note put **it**, 'the Communists' source of strength lies not so much in their **inexhaustible** energy in churning out propaganda and rank opportunism of their policies but the ability of party workers to identify themselves completely **with** the classes whose cause they profess to uphold. Their acceptance of a frugal, even squalid, standard of living **is** the counterpart of the congress approach to the masses based on Gandhi's mysticism²⁹⁰ and the homely appeal of khaddar and the spinning wheel'.

The APPA also involved itself in several constructive programmes. It was responsible for the opening of 30 co-operative stores in Krishna district. It forced the merchants to sell essential commodities at control rates and kept an eagle eye on hoarders. The peasant volunteers themselves took the charge of distribution of kerosene and other goods at several places. They also fought against the **imposition** of collective fines on villages by the government for participating **in** the quit-India movement. In several **instances**, when peasants and agricultural labourers got **involved** in wage disputes, APPA²⁹¹

intervened and solved these disputes amicably.

The demands raised by APPA at its meeting in Bezwada on 20th March, 1943 covers **issues** regarding all sections of the peasantry. To solve the food crisis facing the country it advocated for control rates of food grains, stock food grains **in** government godowns, remunerative prices for agricultural products, opening of more public distributive shops, adequate wages for agricultural labourers, adopt rationing, declare **maratorium**, rent remission, and provide debt financing, construction of irrigation projects in Rayalaseema, to **divert**

more quantity of rice being exported from Delta areas to Rayalaseema region and to procure agricultural produce from peasants directly by the government through food committees and
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send them to needy areas. The meeting also instructed its **members** to campaign for the implementation of this proposals. It directed **its** local leaders to open peasant **association** offices **in** every taluk of Andhra, to prepare syllabus for the district **and** taluk association **members** and open provincial peasant
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institute. It strongly demanded for more powers to the village Panchayats. To make village Panchayats more efficiently and effectively, it advocated for adult suffrage, compulsory education at government cost, supervision of public accounts,
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opening of village libraries and purchase of radios. The resolutions passed and compiled in the **CPI's** Central Plenum Report of Febraury 1943, were no different from these issues raised by the APPA session exhibiting that APPA was nothing but the carbon copy of CPI.

The APPA strongly denounced the quit-India movement on the ground that **it** would not only weaken the peoples war being waged by the British Government but also would lead Indians into starvation deaths. The Communist peasant leaders bitterly accused the Congress agitational programme as they felt that Andhra during 1942-43 was facing severe famine conditions. They, instead, wanted Congress and peasants to contribute for producing more food for starving masses. They advocated that providing food for famine-stricken people was real patriotism. **Ranga's** attitude opposing rationing and controlling attracted scathing criticism from the communists.²⁹⁵ A remark was made against congress **leaders**, stating that facing bullets bravely in freedom
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struggle was equal to providing food to one agriucultural labourer. However, the Communists and APPA despite criticising Congress, did not really wanted to break away form the Congress fearing loss of faith among the public. In all its meetings during war period **it** passed resolutions against arrests of national leaders and claimed themselves as sons of
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Congress.

A proof of **Communists** hold over peasant masses can be had from the holding of 8th **AIKS** general congress at Vijayawada on 14th and 15th March 1944 by APPA. Nearly 4000 volunteers helped **in** organising the meeting, under the **leadership** of P.Sundarayya. Nearly one lakh people **participated** in the congress meetings and procession of which around 25,000 were women. The **magnitude** of the participation was compared only to Congress processions and Meetings.

Health dispensaries were arranged in which nearly 5000 people were treated. Bengal Provincial Peasant **Association** exhibited photos featuring famine conditions in that province. Cattle exhibition was organised for the first time by AIKS and awards were given to healthy cattle. Science exhibition was held to educate people regarding health and development of agriculture. Patriotic songs were sung. Traditional types of entertainment like Burrakatha, **Bhajana**, and street plays were organised. The theme of the speeches made at the **meeting** contained not only about peasant problems and demands but also for the release of the Congress leaders from jails. The organisers were very eager to show their sympathy for Congress. **P.C.Joshi**, in his speech went to the extent of saying that Communists were none other than congress people of 1930 and that they following Gandhi's principle regarding quit-India movement (i.e. of not to indulge in sabotage activities) and **if** only Communists and **Congressites** Join together no power on earth would face their challenge, and that CPI was like brother to the

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Congress.

Elaborate arrangements to provide food for the participants were made. Seventy five thousand rupees was given as donations to the AIKS by the peasants from over 2000 villages in two weeks. The resolutions passed at the meeting include condolence messages regarding the death of Kasturi Bai Gandhi, and people who died while working in famine camps. Resolutions praising Soviet people, Red Army and Stalin for resisting German aggression were also passed. The meeting demanded for the release of political

prisoners, to take strict measures over hoarders and
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black-marketers and appealed peasants to grow more food. It appealed the peasants to **Join AIKS** for it was working for the **welfare** of the peasant masses. It claimed to have forced the Madras Government to grant **12,000** acres of waste land **in 1943 alone** to poor peasants, to issue loans upto Rs. 25 lakhs **for** fertilisers, and succeeded **in** avoiding conflicts between peasants **and** agricultural labourers.

The success of the AIKS meeting was mainly because of massive campaign conducted by APPA. In West Godavari district alone 31 groups of volunteers toured 226 villages and met 3 lakhs people urging them to attend the meeting. Three hundred volunteers and eight hundred rupees were sent by district peasants association.³⁰¹

Bitter criticism was **inflicted** on N.G.Ranga and his colleagues accusing them for causing divisions in the peasant movement. In **Ranga's** words, 'the Bezwada (1944) session was huge propaganda offensive against us,... all their energies were concentrated to congregate people **in** those **melas** and poison their minds against us'.³⁰² The session was a success despite

³⁰³
government's attempts to discourage it. The membership of APPA was further strengthened with 1,68,000 members in 1945 as against 1,01,000 in 1944.³⁰⁴ According to the Organisational Report of 1944 published by AIKS, 'the result for undertaking irrigation and drainage channels in East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts and for holding AIKS session in Bezwada **is** that peasants consciousness and their organised strength increased, they developed their initiative, improved organisational sense, increased unity between the party and various section of the people, greatly popularised peasant associations, brought greater respect for peasant associations in official circles and opposition to associations was disarmed apart from the economic benefits accruing from the increased acreage under wet cultivation and increased yield of **crops**'.³⁰⁵

N.G.Ranga and his followers, on the other hand were advocating against price controls regarding agricultural produce and accused APPA for demanding price controls as it would help only the interests of urban proletariat. The Peasant Group of M.L.As pressed for State action to fix minimum level of prices as they declined due to the loss of export markets. Soon after his release in March 1942, N.G.Ranga advocated grow more food campaign and the policy of remunerative prices which APPA also adopted. He also advocated not only the fixation and enforcement of minimum wages but also the regulation of wages in relation to prices of agricultural labour. He also tried to persuade both the peasants and workers to pay and accept agricultural wages in kind, so that both may be independent of the rising spiral of
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prices. In March, 1945, he found the Federation of Rural Peoples' Organisations in Delhi for rural population (peasants, artisans, tradesmen etc.,) to serve as the forum for all mass organisations of different classes of rural peoples, irrespective of their political allegiance.³⁰⁷ After his talks with Gandhi on 29th October and 28th November 1944 he associated his faction of peasant association with the name All India Kisan Congress to Indian National Congress, 'so that there can never be any unhealthy rivalry between these two great organisations'.³⁰⁸

He challenged the Communists on behalf of Congress against the 'people's war' theory as advocated by the Communists from every political and peasant platform in Andhra and elsewhere. He, along with Congressmen formed the Congress Asemblies, since Congress Committees had been declared illegal and carried anti-communist political propaganda apart from Congress constructive work.³⁰⁹ He organised Kisan Congress session in Govada to rival the Vijayawada session of 1944 by Communists where he criticised Communist activities as anti-patriotic and demanded for remunerative prices and for the removal of the controls.³¹⁰

The war period also witnessed a literary war-fare between these two peasant groups. Communists produced literature and tried to familiarise the soviet and Communist slogans to Andhra political arena. In a scathing attack, **Nanduri** Prasada Rao published a book entitled, *Rangagari Rajakiyaalu* (Ranga's Politics) accusing N.G.Ranga of playing opportunistic politics and **betraying** peasant movement in Andhra.³¹¹ To counteract their propaganda, Sivayya, **follower** of N.G.Ranga published a Telugu novel *Comrade Mangamma*, criticising communism, and the life style of some communist leaders.³¹² Ranga wrote *Revolutionary Peasants, Kisans and Communists, Colonial and Cloured Peoples* and *Credo of World Peasantry* between 1947 and 57 in which he made a systematic and critical study of Marxism.

From 1945 the rift between Congressmen and Communists grew wider while the peasants led by Ranga came closer to the congress. However Communists tried their best to remain within the Congress and use its prestige for promoting their strength.³¹³ But by November 1945 the Communists were **completely** excluded from all congress bodies. Clashes broke out between the Communist controlled APPA and Ranga's **APKC** and some of them took a violent turn creating problems of law and order. An interesting incident, worth mentioning in this connection was reported from a village where a letter purporting to have been written by a Congressman for the hand of a Communist girl enraged her father who called for a panchayat at which both parties arrived armed with sticks and spears and the police had to intervene to restore calm.³¹⁴ The Fortnightly Reports issued by the Government in 1945 made frequent references of such clashes and also the conferences held by the two groups in several parts of Andhra **accusing** each other and promoting their respective organisations.

On the whole, during the war period, APPA was active both in preaching and practicing what it preached. Organisationally

It was strong and its membership too increased while Ranga's peasant body remained weak and no special drive was taken to recruit members afresh. Ranga restricted his activities only to speeches and he was more eager to embrace Congress rather than organising the movement. As he completely endorsed Congress quit-India resolution and earlier adopted anti-war policy he was in Jail from 1940 March to 1944 November except for a brief period in 1942. This also weakened his position in organisational politics of APPA and after he became President of Andhra Provincial Congress Committee in 1946 he remained aloof from thick and thin of peasant politics and moreover he concentrated rather in 'combating the manace of Communist propaganda' utilising Congress resources in men and influence. ³¹⁵

On the other hand APPA with its constructive programme of working on Grow More Campaign, procurement, rationing, reasonable prices, essential commodities, anti-hoarding, relief and rehabilitation and repairing irrigational tanks increased its organisational strength. Adding to this lifting of ban on CPI following its pro-war attitude coinciding with the imposition of ban on Congress gave APPA free-hand in its activities. Though pro-British attitude during quit-India movement alienated mass of peasantry from its hold yet its constructive programme brought a number of peasant youth under its fold. Moreover its vociferous condemnation of the arrest of Gandhi and the Working Committee members and persistent demand of their release and its frequent appeals to congress to work with Communists in relief and rehabilitation works healed the damage to some extent caused by APPA's pro-British attitude. Regarding Grow More Campaign, the methods advocated by APPA were not severe such that they did not cut across or interfere with the government's policy in the matter as a whole which made the government to look sympathetically towards APPA. Thus APPA's pro-war propaganda was almost invariably been interlinked with attack on bureaucratic inefficiency on the other hand condemning N.G.Ranga and other pro-congress leaders. Thus with its two pronged strategy APPA

could muster **strength** to some extent during war period **and by**

1946 it came open with its criticism of Congress which **was hesitating** to do so earlier. The Government of India too **felt satisfied with** the behaviour of CPI during war period **for it Justified the** policy enunciated by the Government on 8th June, **1942, 'namely of allowing freedom** of action to the adherents **of any party in India** prepared to help the prosecution of war **and to form a** make weight to the defeatist tactics of the **Congress'**.³¹⁶

The results of 1946 provincial elections, however, proved otherwise. The general belief that **CPI's APPA** was at the **helm of peasant** affairs was shattered in that elections, despite the fact that organisationally it was strong and **disclined** following its constructive work done during war period.

On 21st August **1945**, the Viceroy announced that the elections to the Central and Provincial Legislatures would be held in March, 1946.³¹⁷ Though the announcement was **quite** comprehensive the Congress was not satisfied with it as it contained no mention of independence. The CPI's attitude towards elections too remained uncertain. But both organisations decided on contesting the elections. Even before Congress expelled Communists from its organisation the Communists started preparing their own electoral rolls, without however, giving up their attempts to come to terms with the Congress.³¹⁸ Once the general announcement of expulsion of CPI³¹⁹ from Congress came out Communists set up their own candidates. Its **manifesto** declared 'to destroy parasitical Zamindars, usurious money-lenders and crafty banian of the villages and liberate **the** peasants, abolition of **land-lordism**, nationalisation of land, redistribution of land to **madke** the uneconomic holdings of **the** poor peasants into consolidated economic holdings and **to make large-scale** co-operative farming possible'.³²⁰

The Congress promised to abolish Zamindari system on **payment** of compensation. However it made independence the main issue in **321** the election campaign. It promised to provide the people with the five fundamental needs food, clothing, shelter, education and medical **help. 322.**

Elections to the Central Legislative Assembly were held in December, 1945, and some of the Congress candidates from Andhra namely, N.G.Ranga from Guntur and Nellore rural constituency, Ganga **Raju** from East Godavari , West Godavari cum Krishna rural **constituency** and **M.Ananthasaynam** Aiyangar from madras Ceded Districts and Chittoor rural constituency were elected **323** unopposed. Even in other constituencies Congress won with comfortable majority.

Provincial elections were held in March, 1946. There were several disturbances between CPI and Congress. The Justice Party **324**

did not contest the elections. Several Zamindars sought for Congress ticket of whom ~~Mada~~ **Madhava** raja of Pittapuram was prominent. But he was denied the ticket. Some other Zamindars undertook the pledge of obliging the policies of Congress and came forward to support Congress candidates **325** Vuyuru Zamindar fought the elections on Congress ticket.

The Congress won 165 out of a total 215 seats (elections were held only in 214) **in** the Madras Legislative Assembly. Muslim League won 29 (out of 29 muslim seats), Communists won 2 seats (only **in** labour constituencies), Europeans got 7 Nationalist Party one and Independents secured 11 seats. **327**

The Congress success in the elections can be attributed to the fact that peasants **in** general had faith **in** that Party. Congress was perceived by the peasant as a vehicle to achieve **independence** and end their **miseries**, thanks to the effective propaganda carried on by the Congress Party right from its inception, more so during Gandhian era. It should also be remembered that **APPA's influence** grew only when Congress leaders were in prison and that APPA was only a Communist controlled body and not a direct wing of CPI **till** early 1940s. **CPI's** pro-war attitude was also largely resented by the Andhra public. Moreover, the Communists right from the beginning of their activities, never considered themselves, atleast in public, as rivals to Congress. **Till** their expulsion from the Congress, Communists were considered by the masses as part of Congress. Only after the expulsion move, the clear division was recognised by the people. Many among the voting population being **substantial** peasants, they might have opted Congress rather than CPI, which they might have **percieved** as a threat to their right in private property.

Thus the peasants perception of Congress as the leader of freedom struggle; their belief that Congress alone would solve their problems, and their fear of CPI as a destroyer of rights in private property might have contributed for the success of Congress in the elections. On the other hand, lack of **independent** stature of CPI in the Thirties and Forties; its subordinate position to Congress **till** its expulsion; absence of tag as the leader of freedom struggle compounded by its pro-war policy during quit-India movement might have diminished its chances **in** electoral propects. Though **CPI's** intervention acted as catalyst **in** the **anti-zamindari** struggles, during the Congress Ministry period, the struggles were actually not launched against Congress but only against Zamindars. Even in these struggles local Congressmen led and participated on par with the Communists. The Communists during this period were neither

recognised by the peasants as a separate group nor their ideology realised distinctly. Throughout these struggles, as has been noticed, the peasants looked only for Congress help, which was in the seat of power. So there was no reason for the peasant to vote against Congress in 1946 elections which he considered as panacea for his problems.

After the elections a Congress ministry was **formed in** Madras with **T.Prakasam** Pantulu as Chief Minister.³²⁸ He was replaced by ³⁵⁹

Omanduri Ramaswamy Reddlar in March 1947. Later on **Kumaraswami** Swamy **Raja** took over as ³³⁶Chief Minister due to internal dissensions within the Party. Notwithstanding with the changes in leadership, the policy of Congress towards the peasants remained constant.

Though the Congress came to power promising, apart from other things, Zamindari abolition, it did not take steps in that direction soon after assuming office. However, in the Assembly debates, peasant question emerged as an important agenda. Commenting on 1946 budget several members, including Congressmen, Socialists and Communists urged for abolition of Zamindari **system**. The most ferocious among these **members** were **A.Kameshwara** Rao, **Pillalamarri** Venkateswvarlu and Kala Venkata Rao. **A.Kameswara** Rao pleaded with the government to take over Zamindars' lands without any compensation.³³¹ **P.Venkateswarlu** urged the government to act fast as the Zamindars were already **transferring** their lands to their friends and relatives, fearing that the government might nationalise their lands. He argued that in Andhra 88 lakhs of acres, or about 23% of the farmlands were held by the Zamindars and that they were paying only 47 lakh rupees to the government while collecting nearly **Rs. 900** lakhs from the peasants and the government in turn was spending **Rs. 42** lakhs on the maintenance of law and civil administration in the Zamindar areas, thus appropriating a gain of only **Rs. 5** lakhs.³³²

The stand of the government on this issue was that of sympathy for both the peasants and Zamindars. Neither it favoured nationalisation of lands as it believed that peasant proprietorship would be the best both for peasants and agriculture nor abolition of Zamindar without compensation. However, **K.R.Karanth**, Revenue Minister in **Prakasam** Ministry, assured the Assembly that there would be no major problem in abolishing the Zamindaris, because most of the Zamindars whom he had met had themselves asked for the government-take-over of their lands with compensation.³³³ The government also pointed out that though it had decided in principle to abolish the Zamindari system, it could not accomplish this reform at that time, because it required the assent of the Secretary of State for India. K.R.Karanth said that his government was fully aware of the 'awful condition of the peasantry' in the Zamindari areas on account of the **exorbitant** rate of rent and also testified that 'everywhere in the Zamindari areas there is a war going on between the Zamindars on the one hand and the ryots on the other'.³³⁴

On the other hand, **pro-zamindari** members thundered against the contemplated reform as it indicated 'the spirit of the times, a spirit of lawlessness, a spirit of aggrandisement, a spirit of no respect for property'.³³⁵ However, the unrest in the Zamindari estates convinced the Congress Party that abolition of the system had become inevitable, and passed a resolution in both the Houses of the Legislature in January 1947 to that effect.³³⁶

The happenings in the Legislature had an electrifying impact on both the peasants and Zamindars. Besides, the Congress itself had raised the hopes of the masses by promising abolition of Zamindari system in the election manifesto. The peasants started demanding the implementation of the same, while, the Zamindars started evicting the peasants and transferring their lands to their relatives. Moreover, since 1943, due to famine conditions and lack of food supplies, hoarding of food grains became a rich source of enormous profits. This led to monopolise the

cultivated land, which only resulted in extensive eviction of peasants by the **zamindars**. The contemplated land reform also **made** Zamindars to speed up evictions and acquisitions of large tracts of land.

In the estates of Challapalli, **Pamaru**, **Mirzapuram**, Telaprolu, Vuyyur, **Pittapuram**, **Kalavala Palli**, Yeragudem, Peddapuram, Potanur etc., such evictions took place on a vast scale. In the villages of Gazullanka, **Amudalanka**, Potarlanka, Kishkindhapalem, **Pippalakatta**, **Nimmagadda**, Nadakuduru, Velivolu, Purltigadda, etc the Zamindar of Challapalli began large-scale evictions. Such lands were sold to some rich landlords, or assigned to his relatives on **benami** pattas.

In West Godavari district, the Zamindar of **Elamaru**, attempted to evict the peasants of **Kanuru**, Pendyala, etc., villages from their lands to prove that by the time reforms come into operation these lands were his home-farms. The Zamindar of Vuyyur, fraudulently transferred banjar lands and a portion of reserve forest to one of his wives. Similarly, the Telaprolu Zamindar had granted 'go-bhumi' in Telaprolu village to a relative of his estate manager. The Zamindars and **mokhasadars** of Potunuru, Kalavalapalli, Peddapuram, **Gampalagudem** etc., started using extreme violence to evict peasants from the cultivating lands. Even forests were destroyed in several estates of Nuzvid, Tuni, Tiruvur etc., and were converted by the Zamindars into private lands. In the estates of **Muktyala**, **Pittapuram** etc., water was baled out of tanks and tank-beds leased out to new persons, thus causing damage to irrigated lands. Thus a large scale offensive had been launched by the Zamindars against the tenants.

The peasants resisted these moves to safeguard their rights. Conflicts erupted in all most all the estates between the peasants and Zamindars. Anticipating such developments, the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee, the Provincial **Kisan** Congress, the **Zamin** Ryot Association etc., demanded immediate

abolition of **zamindari** system.³⁴³ Pending this, they urged the government to take over the administration of estates through the District Collectors.

The Government did not take any action and the evictions and conflicts continued. Infact, the evictions became **more** frequent and aggressive on the eve of passing the **Peasants'** Protection Act of 1946 and were not stopped even after passing of the Act. The Act was passed by the **Prakasam ministry** to protect peasants from evictions in the wake of deteriorating law and order situation **in** Zamindari areas following regular clashes between peasants and Zamindars. But this act failed to protect the peasants as local officials were aiding the Zamindars wherever conflicts arose. As a result, in several places criminal prosecutions were launched ³⁴⁴ against peasants and they were arrested.

Gorrepati Venkatasubbayya, President of Andhra Provincial **Kisan Congress (APKC, N.G.Ranga's** peasant association) issued a statement urging government officials to safe-guard the rights of the peasants and said, 'the Zamindars, in order to evict peasants from lands are instituting false criminal cases against them, and are violating the rights of these peasants. Exparte decrees, orders under section 107, 144 etc are daily being issued. This is an **intolerable** situation. As per the Peasants' Protection Act the ryots should not leave the land. It is a great injustice to violate law and injure the rights of the peasants. As per government decisions, the official tour should help the peasants and the help they are now doing to Zamindars is illegal. For the peasants to go to law courts it is difficult. **Waat** is the use of law and the acts if the atrocities of Zamindars are allowed to continue? I call upon all the Congress and Kisan Congress Committees to intervene and render help to the peasants in these critical **times'**.³⁴⁵ But his call went largely unheeded.

Apart from evictions, taking advantage of the pressure on land and of the absence of any other occupation for the peasants the landlords collected abnormal rents. In some areas in the

Krishna and Godavari deltas the rents were as high as 24 bags of paddy per acre or Rs. 800 to 1,000 per acre per annum.³⁴⁶ If the peasants failed to pay the rent, the Zamindars resorted to terrorism and evicted peasants for not paying rents. To cite yet another example, the Zamindar of **Kalavalapalle** with his employees help assaulted brutally the peasants of **Surapuram** causing grievous injuries to fifteen of them and evicted them from the lands.³⁴⁷

Moreover, the inordinate delay in bringing the abolition bill, coupled with statements issued often about the 'rights' of the Zamindars, 'compensation' to be paid to Zamindars, enabled the **zamindars** to put up a **fight** for their rights and prepare for the eventual abolition of the Zamindar system. Infact this delay and appeasement policy pursued by the Minsitry and open assistance given by the bureaucracy to the Zamindars encouraged them to continue their atrocities.

As soon as the Congress Ministry came to power, peasants started demanding the abolition of Zamindari system. When they found the **increased** aggrandisement of the Zamindars, they sent several representations to the government requesting to intervene and stop the Zamindari exploitation. The government tried to stop the exploitation by enacting Peasants' Protection Act of 1946, which infact was half-heartedly **implemented** and had no **impact** on Zamindari aggression. And it was under such conditions the peasants resorted to resistance in self-defence against evictions, illegal collections etc. The APPA was in the lead in all these movements. The APPA which came under direct CPI control in 1942 and which was active during world war through its constructive programmes came **into prominence** during the Congress minsitry in directing **anti-zamindari** struggles. However, all popular organisations like Congress Committees, **N.G.Ranga's APKC** supported APPA in its fight against Zamindari system. They systematically instigated to occupy Zamindars and waste lands and to resist eviction and police intervention. In Kanur and Pendyala villages of West Godavari district, Athukur of

Krishna District and several estates peasants trespassed into Zamindari lands and prevented the purchases of estate lands. ³⁴⁸

Though these agitations were generally **supported** by local Congressmen, the Communists were in the fore-front of agitations and almost all the government records accused them of inciting peasants to occupy Zamindari lands forcibly. The Congress Ministry was put into hard times following these **anti-zamindari** movements and **it** was to separate the anti-imperialist struggle from the **internal** struggles of the society. The Communists wanted to bracket the **anti-zamindari** and the anti-capitalist struggle with the anti-imperialist struggle, whereas the Congress believed that the anti-imperialist struggle should be a national endeavour, while the problems of the small farmers, agrlculrural labourers, should be left to the government of free India to be solved. Thus the activities of the Communists and **its** APPA were not to the taste of the Congress government and thus when the Communist influence among the peasant sections generated tensions and conflicts **in** the estates (it was also the period when **industrial** strikes were gradually becoming **militant** and communists were becoming leading unionists), **Prakasam's** ministry **issued** an ordinance in January 1947, called Maintenance of Public Order Act, assuming special powers to deal with the sitaution. Defending this measure, Prakasam said 'We the members of the Government who are responsible for the peace and order and for the security of person and property have been worried about the situation created by the **communists**'.³⁴⁹ The Communist **propoganda**, he said, 'had resulted in a number of cases of mob violence, arson, looting, murder, **etc**'.³⁵⁰ He further informed the Assembly that his government would soon come out with a bill to replace the present ordinance, giving 'more extensive powers to the police to deal with public disturbances'.³⁵¹

With the special powers, the police swooped on the Communists offices and arrested several Communists all over the Presidency. The first victims were Nanduri Prasada Rao, General Secretary of APRA and **K.Sathyanaarayana**, the editor and publisher

of *Prajasakti*.³⁵² Other prominent persons arrested were **Innaganti** Narayanarao, **Mahidara** Jagan Mohanrao, **Namburi** Srinivasarao from East Godavari district, **Garapati** Satyanarayana, **Uddaraju** Ratnam and Prerepu Mruthyunjayadu from West Godavari district and **P.sundararami** reddy, Chandra **Rajeshwara** Rao, **Vellanki** Vlsveswararao, **Maddukuri** Chandrasekhara Rao, **Chalasani** Vasudevarao, **Mukkamala** Nagabhusanam, Kadiala Gopalarao, **Thammina** **Potharaju**, **Kondepudi** Lakshminarayana and **Thummala** Venkayya from
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Krishna district. All these persons were detained without trial. Infact on the eve of the issuance of the Ordinance, the **situation** in Zamindari areas of Andhra was boiling as the peasants launched struggle against eviction and for reduction of rent.

In Munagala, under the leadership of the local Peasant Association, the tenants were engaged in mass struggle against their Zamindar who, in violation of a compromise made in 1939, was evicting the tenants from lands and encroaching on the communal lands in contravention of the customary right of the
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tenants. The tenants of the Utukuru **estate**, in defence of their rights cut tunga grass to roof their houses and started fishing in the communal tanks which were forcibly taken by the Zamindar earlier. When police raided their houses on complaint and carried away the residents belongings, the villagers stopped the police party on the way and recaptured their articles.

At Tippalakatla village which was in the Zamindari of the Challapalli, the Zamindar unable to grab some 100 acres of very fertile lands of the tenants through civil action resorted to section 144 and the police was brought in, to force the peasants into surrender. But the tenants resisted with determination the high-handed action of the Zamindar. When the Zamindar put 25 acres of communal land to auction none came forward to bid for
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its purchase. Such was the background for the issuance of the Ordinance. However the arrests of police threats did not deter the peasants from continuing their agitations.

The Congress workers in the estates also brought pressure on the government to hasten the abolition. The Andhra Provincial Zamin Ryot Assocalton, the Andhra Provincial Inam Ryots Association, the APKC and Sub-Committee appointed by the APCC (to look into the conditions of the Zamindari peasants) passed a resolution at their Joint meeting in Madras on the 27th and 28th December, 1946, protesting against the failure of the Congress ministry to introduce a bill abolishing the Zamindari system.³⁵⁷

On the night of 13th March 1947, about fifty peasants under APPA entered into the maize fields of the Zamindar of Challapalli, threatened the watchman and took the crop and caused damage to the extent of five hundred rupees. Two days later peasants of Peddaprolu entered the local tank of Challapalli in defiance of an order under section of 144 and fished in the tank. On the night of 17th March about fifty villagers of Gazullanka led by APPA drove their cattle into the Zamindari farm lands and destroyed the crop.³⁵⁸ These conflicts led to police firing in April, 1947, but despite this stringent action, the peasants continued agitating against the Zamindar.³⁵⁹

In the Challapalli estate, peasants not only resisted evictions but occasionally occupied Zamindari lands and parcelled them out among themselves. However, the government took strong measures to put down such activities. The occupation of Zamindari lands increased in other estates during this period, as it seemed to have been inspired by the impression that in view of the impending abolitions of Zamindari system, whoever occupied that Zamindar lands would become their owner.³⁶⁰

The APPA led several hunger marches to revenue authorities demanding abolition of Zamindari system, supply of agricultural implements and other essential articles to the peasants. they also urged the peasants to stop the payment of rents which the peasants obliged immediately. Infact, since the publication of the bill in papers, the peasants stopped paying rents in many estates.³⁶² Papers sympathetic to Zamindars resented peasant

occupation of Zamindari lands and stated that the peasants were engaging in breaking law and order. The *Krishna Pratrika*, in its publication informed that peasants were encroaching many of Zamindari lands in Challapalli estate and a number of villages namely, Nidumolu, Palankipadu, Jonnaladoddi, Ayyanki, Maderu, Chinnaparam, Aviripudi, Vakkalagadda were totally in the hands of peasants. It reported that anarchical conditions were prevailing in the estate.³⁶³

The peasants of Challapalli, issued a statement urging the press not to exaggerate the peasant occupation of Zamindari lands. They further stated that the Zamindar himself was evicting peasants and in Padapudi six acres of communal lands and in Champalem 80 acres were sold by the Zamindar. The Enquiry Committee, appointed by the Government to investigate into Gazullanka firing, found in its enquiry and reported that Gazullanka and its surrounding lankas belonged to Zamindar and that when peasants entered into these lands for Rellugrass, police prevented, then protesting this 300 peasants attacked the police party with deadly weapons and then police fired killing two persons (while press reports say 5 were dead).³⁶⁵ Following this the Government did not take any action against the police or the Zamindar.

However, pending the enactment of Zamindari legislation, to control the peasant-zamindar clashes, the government promulgated an ordinance prohibiting the alienation of Zamindari home farm, private and all communal lands. This too neither soothed the peasants nor prevented the Zamindars from selling the lands. Infact, Zamindars by this time transformed their lands to their near and dear. Challapalli Zamindar sold 75% of waste lands. On the other hand, tresspassing of Zamindari lands and non-paying of rents coupled with cutting of trees and grass by the peasants continued.³⁶⁸

In Munagala too the situation was not different. Since 1939, the peasants of Munagala were agitating for the

Implementation of **Brahmayya** award. Following the resignation of Congress Ministry and situation during second world war, they resorted to sending petitions to the government. On 12.11.40 they submitted a **memorandum** to the Collector C.J.Pal and on 12.8.41 to the new Collector D.Mahantl requesting them to **intervene** for the implementation of the award.³⁶⁹ Despite the administrators efforts the Zamindar did not heed to the peasants demands. They also tried through District Court but the Zamindar succeeded in cancelling the hearing.

So the peasants under MZRA decided to face Zamindar in Panchayat court elections and challenged him the 1942 elections. Till then the courts were under his control. These elections brought forth the much needed enthusiasm and confidence, after 1939 agitation among the peasantry. In all the Panchayats in the estate, namely **Nadigudem, Taduval, Kokkireni and Repala**, the MZRA members became Presidents and Vice-Presidents in that elections.³⁷⁰ Nearly 500 peasants attended the AIKS session of 1944 held at Vijayawada. Peasant institutes were started to educate the peasants. In the provincial elections the peasants of Munagala voted for Communist candidates P.Sundarayya and Katragadda Venkatanarayana though they were defeated as they did not get votes in other segments of **Gannavaram** constituency.³⁷¹

After Congress formed ministry, **T.Prakasam** Panthulu, who as Revenue Minister in 1939 assured justice to Munagala peasants, became Chief Minister in 1946. The APPA President **Nanduri Prasada Rao**, MZRA leaders **Uppala Ramayya, C.Raghunatham** and fifteen other persons led a delegation to Madras seeking **Prakasam's** help to solve peasants problems and abolish Zamindari system. Meanwhile Public Safety Ordinance came into effect and **Nanduri Prasada Rao** and several others were arrested. Taking advantage of this situation the Zamindar sold lands defying Peasant Protection Act. He also started a fictitious Dairy Company and sold lands which he evicted from peasants to that Company for **Rs. 5** lakhs and made his relatives and officials as members of that Company.³⁷²

Thus peasants started once again encroaching Zamindari lands and on May 7th, 1947 they hoisted red flag on Zamindar's palace in **Nadigudem** as a signal of launching the agitation. On the same morning they entered the lands occupied by the Zamindar in several villages and hoisted red flags and occupied the lands. The Zamindar responded to this, by requesting Nizam police apart from urging the District Collector complaining that peasants were looting his property. The police let loose their repressive methods. The peasants demonstrated in front of Nadigudem palace against the police atrocities. Irritated by this, the police opened fire in **Kalukova** on July 17th killing one and injuring three.

On this day, about 600 peasants entered Zamindari lands, defying prohibitory orders and sowed seeds for cultivation. Thus police entered the scene and started chasing the peasants out of the fields. When the peasants questioned the moral authority of the police, they opened fire resulting in one death and three injuries.³⁷³ While APPA and CPI criticised the firing, the Congress accused CPI for instigating the peasants and causing such incidents. **Kakani** Venkatarathnam, the Congress leader issued a statement that 'the Congress accepts police version that people provoked the **police**'. The Zamindar reported to the government that while he implemented 1939 **Brahmayya** award, the peasants tried to subvert the agreement as they were influenced by the Communists, and he stated that 'infact we are waiting eagerly for Zamindari abolition Act, we will atleast have **peace**'.³⁷⁴

To take stock of the situation, **Kala Venkatarao**, who became Revenue Minister replacing in March, 1947 when **O.R.Reddiar** became Chief Minister, came to **Munagala** along with **Brahmayya** and appointed a committee to enquire the police firing under the Chairmanship of **Brahmayya** with **Peta Baapayya**, **Nukala Veeraraghavayya**, **Y.V.Krishna Rao** and **Kunderu sathanarayana**.³⁷⁵ **Kala Venkata Rao** advised the peasants not to

resort to violence.³⁷⁶ The Committee submitted its Report on 10.1.48 to the Government in which it stated that the failure on part of the Zamindar to **implement Brahmayya** had resulted in violent struggles in 1939 and 1947 and that to prevent further escalations in violent activities, the Report recommended the government to **implement** the award immediately, to compensate peasants whatever losses because of non-implementation and appoint a special officier to **implement** the above two **recommendations**. But the government did not adopt any measure and the report was put into cold storage.³⁷⁷ In the later period, this estate became as a refugee camp for the Communist cadres who were waging heroic struggle in neighbouring Telangana against the Nizam and his Deshmukhs because of its proximity to Nalgonda district. Thus the later conflicts between Communists and police in this estate formed part of the Telangana armed struggle and they were not concerned with the **anti-zamindari** struggles regarding Andhra region.

Another example of sustained and organised effort of the tenants defying government and Zamindari power occurred in **Nandigudem** estate of West Godavari district. There the Koya tribal peasants were cultivating the lands in **Buchampeta** and **sanjeevaram** villages paying exorbitant rents to the Zamindars. The **zamindar** anticipating the Zamindar abolition evicted the tenants and started cultivating the lands for himself. But the advent of Congress government and the leadership of Communists provoked them to make a bold attempt and accordingly they entered the lands and forcibly harvested the crop on 18.11.47. On complaint from the Zamindar, the **distrit** administration passed an order attaching the crops on the land and restraining both parties from entering the lands..

The administration favouring the Zamindar contention, sold the crop on 23rd November, 1947. The Koyas, feeling betrayed entered into disputed lands and removed a portion of the paddy crop. The police was alerted and when again on 29th November,

about 500 people entered the lands and started harvesting police opened **fire** and killed five **koyas** apart from injuring several others. Infact the Koyas attempted to this extreme measure **after** failing to awake the police and administration through petitions **informing** the atrocities being committed by the Zamindar. Four sections of the Reserve Police was stationed and gradually brought the situation under control.³⁷⁸

Apart from struggles, APPA organised a **seige** of the Madras
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Legislature by peasants demanding Zamindari abolition. Despite Rent Reduction Act of 1947 (equalling the rents to be paid by the tenants to the taxes paid the peasants **in** the ryotwari areas) peasnats stopped paying rents to the Zamindars and the government itself had decided to collect rent arrears on behalf of the Zamindars.³⁸⁰

Thus, under such circumstances around them, and as Zamindari abolition was principally adopted by the Congress, its election manifesto in December 1946 endorsed the policy, the **memebrs** of Madras Legislative Assembly passed a resolution accepting the **general** principle of the Zamindari abolition.

Kala Venkata Rao, Minister of Land Revenue introduced the bill namely the Madras Estates (Repeal of the **Permanent** Settlement and Conversion into Ryotwari) Bill in the Legislative Assembly on 28.11.1947. As a temporary measure till the abolition was made, the Congress ministry introduced Peasants Protection Act in 1946, and Rent Reduction act in 1947 to placate the aggrieved peasants who were hoping immediate abolition as soon as the Congress formed ministry in 1946.

But these temporary measures **instead** of **soothing** the situation, created much confidence in the peasants and they resorted to much more violent demonstrations to express their resentment against Zamindari system. Finally after long internal deliberations in the Party which was trying to satisfy all

sections **it** was representing, decided to put an end to **this** system and the result was the introduction of Zamindari abolition bill **in** the Assembly on 28.11.1947. As many as forty members participated in the discussion. The bill was submitted to a Joint **Sub-Committee**. This Committee was formed consisting twenty **M.L.As** and 10 **M.L.Cs**, presided by Dr.P.Subbarayan, a well-known Zamindar.³⁸¹ The Joint Sub-Committee submitted its Report on 13.6.48 which recommended that all those **lanka** lands registered **in** the name of Zamindar on or before 1st July, 1939 belonged to him, the compensation to the amount of **Rs.** 18 crores and the pattas issued by the Zamindars on forest lands and occupied lands should be validated.³⁸² This bill after passing **into** act **in** both the Houses received the ascent of the Governor-General on 2.4.1949 and first published **in** the Fort St.George Gazettee on 19.4.1949.³⁸³

The **main** features of this Act were the right of tax collection, hitherto rent, was taken by the Government from Zamindars giving huge **compensation** to the Zamindars and conferring abosolute property rights over land to the tenants. However, the same rights were also given to the Zamindars on hundreds and thousands of acres, called sir (private **lands**)**lands**. But, for the tenant cultivators on these lands no rights were granted.

The provision that Zamindars could acquire seri lands caused several problems. Large-scale evictions took place in the name of seri lands.³⁸⁴ Another loophole in this Act was that the buildings other than those useful for administration purposes would be retained by the Zamindars. Godowns, palaces, farm-houses etc., were acquired by the Zamindars. The compensation amount was also regarded as very high.³⁸⁵

However, despite these **diffects** the measure provided occupancy tenants permanent property rights on land as under ryotwari settlement. The revenue administration came under the government. The land records were made upto date. The high and

mighty attitude of even the petty Zamindari officials became a thing of the past. The peasants got a measure of relief from the feudal oppression, after several peasants, men and women, became victims of Zamindari **zulum** and police repression during 1937-39 and 1946-48.

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13. *Young India*, 30.1.1930.
14. *N.G.Ranga's 88th Anniversary Souvenir*, Guntur, 1987, p.60.
15. Mamidipudi Venkata Rangayya, *Op cit*, vol IV, p.7.
16. See the second chapter 'Mobilisation' in this

work.

17. N.G.Ranga and Swami SahaJananda Saraswathi, *Op cit*, p.17.

18. P.D.Kaushik, *The Congress Ideology and Programme* Bombay, 1970, p.141.

19. M.K.Gandhi's *Economic and Industrial life and relations*, vol.1, pp.LXIV-LXVI.

20. N.G.Ranga, *Agony and Solace*, Nidubrolu, 1974, p.X.

21. Robert Crane, *Op cit*, p.5.

22. *The Indian Annual Register*, 1936, vol.11, p.238.

23. The thirteen demands were as follows:

1. Peasants unions should be **recognised**, 2. minimum wages should be given, 3. rent arrears should be looked as civil debts and evictions should be avoided, 4. rural debts should be abolished, 5. no encroachment on communal lands, 6. co-operative farming should be introduced, 7. irrigation rates to be lowered, 8. interests on debts to be lowered, 9. fixity of tenure with heritable rights to be provided for all tenants, 10. vetti should be abolished, 11. **agriculture income** should be assessed to income tax, 12. uneconomic holdings should be exempted from rent or land tax and 13. rent and revenue should be **substantially** reduced. *The History of Indian National Congress, 1936-37*, pp.96-97.

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40. *Ibid*, p.302.
41. For example, Zamindar of Jayantipuram, Dr. Subbarayan, the Zamindar of Kumaramangalam etc.
42. See earlier chapter on Mobilisation.
43. *Justice*, 21.10.1936.
44. *Under Secretary (Safe) Secret File*, No.981, dt.10.1.1937.
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46. *Fortnightly Reports*, 4.3.1937.
47. Mamidipudi Venkata Rangayya, *Op cit*, vol. IV, p.709.
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74. See earlier chapter on Mobilisation.
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76. N.G.Ranga, Kisan Speaks, *Op cit*, pp.316-17.
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111. *The Communist*, vol.11, No.1, November, Delhi, 1939.

112. Mamidipudi Venkata. Rangayya, *Op cit*, vol. IV, p.667.

113. See the chapter on Mobilisation.

114. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, p.3.

115. K.Damodaran, *Memoirs of Indian Communism*, *New Left Review*, No.93 September-October, 1975, p.37.

116. Through the 1930 Acts local bodies were opened up to a wider franchises. Taxes were increased, over all expenditure of local bodies rose in the 1930s to the level of one third of Madras Government's expenditure and more responsibilities were given to local bodies. Any tax-payer in the municipal area and any registered land owner or tenant in the country-side was qualified for the right to vote. V.Venkat Rao, *A Hundred Years of Local Self-Government and administration in Andhra and Madras States, 1850-1950*, Bombay, 1960, pp.39-40, 86-88, 111 and 251. Also see, N.G.Ranga, *Fight for Freedom*, *Opcit*, p.150.

117. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, pp.4-5.

118. Mamidipudi Venkata Rangayya, the official historian on freedom struggle in Andhra Pradesh mentions that peasant struggles in West Godavari and Krishna districts were noteworthy for their wide-spread, organised and sustained nature.
119. N.S.Venguswamy, *Congress in Office*, Bharath Pub., Bombay, 1940, pp.96-97.
120. *New Age* an English monthly, which started publication in 1934 under the editorship of N.Krishna Ayyar with H.D.Rajan as its Joint editor to propogate communism. *Home Political/1940*, F 37/2, N.A.I. Also see *New Age*, December, 1937.
121. *Fortnightly Reports*, 19.9.1939.
122. *Fortnightly Reports*, 18.3.1939.
123. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al., *Op cit*, p.450.
124. Ch. Vasudevarao, *Peasants' Straggles at Kalipatnam*, 1939, p.13.
125. Y.V.Krishna Rao (ed), *Andhrapradeshlo Ryotu Udhyaṃalu, poratalu (Part I)*, Visalandhra Publishing House, Hyderabad, 1986, p.97.
126. Kommareddy Sathyanarayana Murthy, *Op cit*, p.34.
127. According to memo submitted by D. Narayanarao and G.Venkanna (M.L.A) to the Government, as refered in Ch.Vasudevarao, *Op cit*, p.10.
128. Y.V.Krishna Rao, (ed)., *Op cit*,p.34.
129. Ch. Vasudevarao, *Op cit*, p.6.
130. *Zamin Ryot*, 15.7.1938.
131. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et.al, *Op cit*, p.441.
132. Ch. Vasudevarao, *Op cit*, p.16.
133. *Zamin Ryot*, 18.11.1938.
134. *Fortnightly Reports*,, 18.3.1939.
135. *Zamin Ryot*, 15.7.1938.
136. Y.V.Krishna Rao, (ed), *Op cit*,p.101
137. *Zamin Ryot*, 26.8.1938.
138. *Navasakti*, 16.8.1939.

139. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al., *Op cit* p.441.
140. *Zamin Ryot*, 21.10.1938.
141. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al., *Op cit*, p.447.
142. *Navasakti*, 5.4.1939.
143. *Harijan*. 15.9.1938.
144. *Zamin Ryot*, 18.11.1938.
145. *Navasakti*, 17.8.1938.
146. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, pp.7-8.
147. Ch.Vasudevarao, *Op cit*, p.8.
148. Kommareddy Sathyanarayana Murthy, *Op cit*, p.34.
149. *Navasakti*, 23.3.1939.
150. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al., *Op cit*, p.445.
151. *Navasakti*, 29.3.1939; Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, p.8.
152. *Zamin Ryot*, 7.4.1939.
153. Ch. Vasudevarao, *Op cit*, p.9.
154. *Fortnightly Reports*, 4.4.1939.
155. *Fortnightly Reports*, 4.4.1939.
156. *Zamin Ryot*, 16.6.1939.
157. As quoted in T.Ramakrishna, *Op cit*, pp.629-630.
158. Ch. Vasudevaarao, *Op cit*, pp.15-16.
159. *Zamin Ryot*, 14.7.1939.
160. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, p.10.
161. K.Chinnayyasuri, *Op cit*, p.69.
162. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op.Cit*, p.11.
163. Chandra Rajeswara Rao, Andhra Pradeshlo Communism Udhyaam (Communist Movement in Andhra Pradesh), *Visalandhra* (Special Issue), 1977, p.5.
164. The Zamindar Nayani Venkatarangarao was adopted by the zamindarini Lachamma as her husband died without heir from

Nayani Raghavareddy, a resident of Warangal district in the then Nizam Province. This link made the Zamindar in his later years to adopt a number of notorious feudal aspects existing in the neighbouring Nizam State.

165. Krishna District freedom Fighters association *Op cit*, p.60.

166. Chandra Rajeswara Rao, *Op cit*, p.53-54, K.V.Ramana Reddy, *Anti-zamindari Struggles in Munagala*, Unpublished paper, Mallampalli Someswara sarma (ed) *Telugu Vignana Saraswathi*, Madras, 1959, p.439.

167. He even attended the 1906 Congress Session held at Calcutta. He presided the 1907 Krishna District Congress meeting held at Nandigama. Tatavarthy Venkateshwar Rao, *Munagala Paragana Praja Udhya Charitra* (History of Peoples' Movement in Munagala Paragana), Munagala, 1981, p.13.

168. Ayyadevara Kaleshwara Rao, *Naajivita Katha-Navyandhramu* (My Autobiography - New Andhra), Vijayawada, 1959,

169. *Ibid*, pp.53-54.

170. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, pp.14-15.

171. *Zamin Ryot*, 4.4.1954.

172. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.17.

173. *Ibid*, p.17.

174. *Zamin Ryot*, 4.4.1954.

175. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, p.15-16.

176. Tatavarthy, *op cit*, p.19.

177. *Zamin Ryot*, 4.4.1954.

178. Tatavarthy. *Op cit*, pp.20-22.

179. He was the author of famous poem 'Maakoddee Zamindarla Pondu' (We don't want association with these Zamindars).

180. *Zamin Ryot*, 4.4.1954.

181. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.28.

182. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.31.

183. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.32.

184. *Zamin Ryot*, 25.1.1935.

185. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.28.
186. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al., *Op cit*, p.450.
187. *Souvenir, All India Kisan sabha*, 26th Conference, 27-30, April, 1987, Khammam.
188. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.29.
189. *Zamin Ryot*, 13.5.1938.
190. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.30.
191. *Zamin Ryot*, 22.4.1948.
192. Nandigama was the village where the Zamindar had his residential palace.
193. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.30.
194. *Ibid*.
195. *Zamin Ryot*, 24.6.1938.
196. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, pp.12-14.
197. *Zamin Ryot*, 12.8.1938.
198. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.48.
199. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, p.15.
200. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.50.
201. *Ibid*, p.51.
202. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, p.16.
203. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al., *Op cit*, p.452.
204. *Zamin Ryot*, 2.9.1938, 2.12.1938.
205. Krishna District Freedom Fighters association, *Op cit*, p.61.
206. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, p.16.
207. *Zamin Ryot*, 30.12.1938.
208. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, p.16.
209. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.54.
210. *Zamin Ryot*, 5.8.1938.

211. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, p.16.
212. kalapala Surprakasrao, *Krishna District Swat antra porata Charitra* (History of Freedom struggle of Krishna District), 1975, p.53.
213. Gottlpatl Brahmayya, *Naa Jivitha Nauka*, (My Life Boat), Machilipatnam, 1976, p.291.
214. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.55.
215. *Ibid*, pp.54-55.
216. *Fortnightly Reports*, 20.6.1939, Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al, *Opcit*, p.453, Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Opcit*, p.18-19.
217. *Fortnightly Reports*, 19.5.1939.
218. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al., *Op cit*, p.453.
219. Kommareddy Sathyanarayana Murthy, *Op cit*, p.68.
220. *Fortnightly Reports*, 20.6.1939.
221. *Fortnightly Reports*, 20.6.1939.
222. *Navasakti*, 19.5.1939.
223. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al., *Op cit*, p.455.
224. T.Ramakrishna, *Op cit*, p.633.
225. *Navasakti*, 23.8.1939.
226. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.61.
227. *Fortnightly Reports*, 20.6.1939.
228. *Ibid*, Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.62.
229. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, p.20.
230. *Ibid*, p.23.
231. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al., *Op cit*, p.457.
232. Krishna District, Freedom Fighters Association, *Op cit*, p.66.
233. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al., *Op cit*, p.457.
234. *Krishna Patrika*, 17.1.1939.

235. *Fortnightly Reports*, 20.6.1939.
236. *Report on the Administration of Police in the Madras Presidency*, 1939.
237. *Zamin Ryot*, 23.6.1939.
238. *Fortnightly Reports*, 5.7.1939.
239. *Tatavarthy*, *Op cit.*, p.65.
240. *Fortnightly Reports*, 17.11.39.
241. Y.V.Krishna Rao (ed), *Op cit*, p.146.
242. *Ibid*.
243. G.Venkatasubbayya, *Ghantasala Charitra* (History of Ghantasala), Desi Pub., Vijayawada, 1966, p.204.
244. *Ibid*, p.206.
245. These marches were led by Guttikonda Atchayya couple and their son Uddanda Ramayya who went to jail during civil disobedience movement. Y.V.Krishna Rao, (ed), *Op cit*, p.146.
246. B.Seshagiri Rao, *Op cit*, p.38.
247. *Fortnightly Reports*, 18.3.1939.
248. Krishna District Freedom Fighters Association, *Op cit*, p.70-77.
249. *Home/Political/1940*, F 37/76, N.A.I.
250. Mamidipudi Venkata Rangayya, *op cit*, vol. IV, p.126. *The Communist*, vol II, No.1, November, 1939, *Fortnightly Reports*, 6.10.1939, Y.V.Krishna Rao, (ed), *Op cit*, p.102.
251. *Fortnightly Reports*, 4.4.1940, 18.10.1940, Mamidipudi Venkata Rangayya, *Op cit*, vol.IV, p.127.
252. *Red Flag*, C.P.I.'s organ came down heavily on government's repression. It's article read thus, 'why are the peasants and labour movements being gagged on false pleas and pretexts? Because they are fighting against Zamindars, mill-owners exploitation. The British government cannot tolerate this and the mill-owners, Zamindars and mahajans have ranged themselves against us'. *Home/Political/1940*, F 37/56, N.A.I.
253. *Fortnightly Reports*, 4.4.1940.
254. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Op cit*, p.29.

255. Y.V.Krishna Rao, et. al., *Op cit*, p.456.
256. Overstreet and Wind Miller, *Op cit*, p.178.
257. 'By the time of Interminant Order was served on me on 30.4.1940, I liberated from all political contacts with communists. Thus the popular front or the United Front lost all its attraction for me and hold over the Andhra Kisan Congressites by April, 1940', N.G.Ranga, Fight for Freedom, *Op Cit*, p.224.
258. *Ibid*, p.219.
259. *Ibid*, p.217.
260. *Ibid*, p.209.
261. *Home/Pol itical/1942*, F. 12/12, N.A.I.
262. *All India Kisan Sabha's politics Condemned*, Guntur, 1942, p.3, G.O.No.393, Pub (Gen), dt.4.2.1944.
263. *All India Kisan Sabha's politics Condemned*, *Op cit*, p.10, *Zamin Ryot*, 4.4.1954
264. The All India Kisan Organisation was formed in 1936 and was called as All India Kisan Congress and continued its name in 1937, i.e. at Faizpur Session, which was presided by N.G.Ranga. It changed its name to all India Kisan Sabha in 1938 when the Comilla session of AIKS brought a new constitution. in that year. *Andhra Patrika*, 20.12.1944.
265. As advocated by N.G.Ranga in all his books written 1940s.
266. *All India Kisan Sabha Politics Condemned*, *Op cit*, p.17.
267. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Rangagari Rajakeeyalu* (Politics of Ranga), pp.27-29. *Prajasakti*, 22.9.1942.
268. *Andhra Rastra Ryotu Sangha samavesam* (The Conference of Andhra Provincial Peasants Association), 1943, pp.4-5., *Prajasakti*, 21.2.1942, 29.12.1943, 16.2.1944., *Fortnightly Reports*, First half of Febraury, 1943.
269. ' In Andhra Most of the Congress workers were comrades' commented a government report, *Home/Pol itical/No.7/2/42*, dt.10.1.1942.
270. C.P.I and its committees, sub-committees and branches were declared to be unlawful association. G.O.Ms. No. 7/8/34, *Home (Pol)*, dt.23.7.1934.
271. *Fortnightly Reports*, 3.4.1941, 18.8.1941, 3.9.1941,

- 6.1.1942., *Krishna Patrika*, 17.7.1943.
272. *Public (General) D.O.No.p.4-19*, dt 18.10.1040, Andhra Pradesh State Archives.(APSA)
273. *G.O.Ms No.719*, dt. 31.3. 1942, APSA., *Organisational Report of AIKS*, 1939-40, N.A.I.
274. *Fortnightly Reports*, 4.11.1940.
275. *Home/Pol it ical/1945*, F 7/4/45, N.A.I.
- 276.*Organisational Report of AIKS*, 1944-45, N.A.I., *Prajasakti*, 17.5.1944.
277. *Souvenir*, AIKS 26th Conference, *Op cit*.
278. *Ibid*.
279. *Fortnightly Report*, 7.8.1942.
280. *Prajasakti*, 15.7.1942.
281. *Prajasakti*, 7.10.1942.
282. *Prajasakti*, 2.12.1943., Andhra Rashtra Ryotu Sangha Samavesamu, *Op cit*, p.8.
283. *Prajasakti*, 23.12.1942.
284. *Prajasakti*, 8.9.1943.
285. *GO. Ms. No.4 (Legal)*, dt.17.1.1944.
286. *Prajasakti*, 15.9.1943., *Fortnightly Report*, 25.9.1944.
287. *Prajasakti*, 22.12.1943.
288. *Prajasakti*, 25.10.1944.
289. *M.A.Rasul, History of All India Kisan Sabha*, P.98.
290. *Home/Political/1943*, F 7/11, N.A.I.
291. *Andhra Rashtra Ryotu Sangha Samavesam*, *Op cit*, pp.11.13.,
292. *Ibid*, pp.28-29.
293. *Ibid*, pp.43-44.
294. *Ibid*, pp.51-52.
295. *C.P.I Central Plenam Report*, February, 14 S 25, 1943,

A.P.S.A., pp.30-37.

296. Nanduri Prasada Rao, Andhralo Ryotu Udhyaalu, *Op cit*, pp.25-38.

297. *Prajasakti*, of 24.3.1943 demanded the release of Gandhi.

298. *Eighth All India Kisan Sabha Conference*, Bezwada, 1944, p.20.

299. *Ibid.*, p.20.

300. *Ibid*, p.32.

301. Y.V.Krishna Rao, (ed), *Op cit*, p.106., *Fortnightly Report*, 2.2.1944.

302. N.G.Ranga, Revolutionary Peasants, *Op clt*, p.77. N.G.Ranga, Fight for Freedom, *Op cit*, p.231.

303. *Fortnightly Report*, 2.2.1944.

304. *Organisational Report of All India Kisan Sabha*, 1944-45.

305. *Ibid.*, for 1946-47.

306. *Fortnightly Report*, Second half of January, 1945.

307. N.G.Ranga, Revolutionary Peasants, *Op cit*, p85. He was in Jail from 30.3.1940 to November, 1944 except for a brief period in 1942.

308. *Hindu*, 23.1.1945., N.G.Ranga, Revolutionary Peasants, *Op clt*, p.93.

309. N.G.Ranga, Fight for Freedom, *Op cit*, p.232., *Fortnightly Report*, 22.2.1945.

310. *Fortnightly Reports* of second half of Febraury, 1944, first half of March, 1944, second half of January, 1945.

311. Nanduri Prasada Rao wrote a book called *Rangagarl Rajakeeyalu* Just to criticise N.G.Ranga.

312. *Fortnightly Report*, first half of October, 1945.

313. *Fortnightly Reports* of first half of December, 1944 and first half of October, 1945.

314. *Fortnightly Reports* of first half of January, 1943 and second half of October, 1945.

315. N.G.Ranga, Fight for Freedom, *Op cit*, p.237.

316. *Home/Political/1945, F 7/4/45, N.A.I.*
317. Mamidipudi Venkata Rangayya, *Op cit*, vol.IV, p.120.
318. *Fortnightly Report*, 8.10.1945.
319. *Hindu*, dated 14.12.1945 reported that all communist All India Congress Committee members were expelled for anti-Congress activities.
320. Mamidipudi Venkata Rangayya, *Op cit*, vol. IV, p.1034.
321. *Fortnightly Reports* of first half of August, 1945 and first half of November, 1945.
322. *Hindu*, 15.10.1945 and 17.10.1945.
323. *Hindu*, 1.11.1945, 2.11.1945 and 5.11.1945.
324. Mamidipudi Venkata Rangayya, *Op cit*, vol. IV, p.195.
325. *Fortnightly Report*, 8.11.1945.
326. *Krishna Patrika*, 16.3.1946.
327. *Fortnightly Report* , first half of March, 1946.
328. *Hindu*, 23.4.1946.
329. *Fortnightly Report*, second half of March, 1947, *Omandur Ramaswami Reddiar Papers*, dated 23.3.1947, N.M.M.L, New Delhi, *Hindu*, 15.3.1947 and 22.3.1947.
330. *Hindu*, 26.8.1948.
331. *Madras Legislative Council Debates*, vol. 10, Nos. 1-6, May 1946, p.111.
332. *Ibid*, p.329.
333. *Ibid*, p.373.
334. *Madras Legislative Council Debates*, vol.12, January, 1947, p.27.
335. *Ibid*, p.50.
336. *Fortnightly Report*, 11.10.1947 and 1.1.1947.
337. *Organisational Report of All India Kisan Sabha, 1947-48*, , p.59.
338. *G.O. Ms. No. 2641, Public (General-E) dt. 22.8.1947*, p.14.

339. *Ibid*, p.16.
340. *Ibid*, p.17.
341. *Ibid*, p.17.
342. *Ibid*, p.18.
343. *Ibid*, pp.20.22.
344. *Andhra Prabha*, 12.2.1947.
345. *Andhra Prabha*, 13.1.1937.
346. G.O.Ms No.2641, *Public (General-E)* dt. 22.8.1947, p.20.
347. *Ibid*, p.14.
348. G.O.Ms No.2165, *Public (Confidential) General*, dt. 21.8.1947.
349. *Madras Legislative Assembly Debate*, vol.3, Jan-Feb., 1947, p.24.
350. *Madras Legislative Council Debate*, vol.12, Jan, 1947, p.13.
351. *Madras Legislative Assembly debate*, vol. 3, Jan-Feb, 1947, p.33.
352. *Hindu*, 24.1.1947.
353. G.O.Ms No. 1306, *Public (General-E)*, dt. 2.5.1947.
354. *Fortnightly Reports* for the years 1940-46.
355. *Organisational Report of All India Kisan Sabha*, 1947-48, N.M.M.L
356. *Ibid*.
357. *Hindu*, 30.1.1947.
358. *Fortnightly Report*, 17.4.1947.
359. *Fortnightly Report*, 3.9.1947. *Krishna Patrika* of 11.6.1947, reports that in the *Gazullanka* firing which occurred on 10.4.1947, five people died.
360. *Fortnightly Reports*, 28.6.1947.
361. *Hindu*, 17.1.1947.
362. *Administration Report of Madras Presidency for 1947-48*.

363. *Krishna Patrika*, 13.6.1947.
364. *Krishna Patrika*, 21.6.1947.
365. *Krishna Patrika*, 9.6.1947.
366. *Fortnightly Report*, 17.7.1947.
367. *Krishna Patrika*, 31.8.1946.
368. *Fortnightly Report*, 30.2.1948 and 2.4.1948.
369. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, p.71.
370. *Ibid*, pp.74-75.
371. *Ibid*, pp.80-81.
372. *Ibid*, p.82.
373. *Andhra Patrika*, 25.7.1947.
374. *Andhra Patrika*, 6.8.1947.
375. G.O.Ms. No.2457 (Public) dt.21.10.1947.
376. *Andhra Patrika*, 1.8.1947.
377. Tatavarthy, *Op cit*, pp.94-95.
378. *Zamin Ryot*, 19.12.1947, G.O.Ms No. 291, Public (General), dt.7.2.1948, G.O.Ms No.1075, Public (General), dt. 5.5.1948, G.O.Ms No.1868, Public (General), dt. 31.7.1948.
379. Souvenir, 26th All India Kisan Sabha Conference, *op cit*.
380. *Zamin Ryot*, 12.3.1948.
381. *Ommanduru Ramaswami Reddiar Papers* N.M.M.L.
382. *Zamin Ryot*, 25.6.1948, G.O. No.75, (Legal Dept), dt. 18.4.1949.
383. G.O.No 211, (Legal Dept) dt. 18.11.1949.
384. Nanduri Prasada Rao, *Zamindari Radduku Kala Venkataramaraogari Billu* (Kala Venkatarao's Bill for Zamindari Abolition), *Prajasakti* Pub., Bezwada, 1947, p.24-26.
385. *Ibid*, pp.15.16.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

An attempt has been made in this study to reconstruct the regional history of peasant struggles in the Zamindari areas in the Andhra region during the 1930s and 1940s.

To identify the forces that influenced and shaped the anti-zamindari struggles in the first half of the 20th century, it is essential to understand the nature of contradictions within that rural context. An analysis of the process of peasant differentiation and the nature of contradictions between different agrarian social classes has been probed to identify the areas of potential conflict.

The great depression of the late 1920s greatly affected the whole fabric of rural society and economy. The effects of the depression has been emphasized mainly because it was a crisis of a peculiar kind, not specific to this country. Further it highlighted the nature and extent of India's integration into the world capitalist system in a subordinated position. The fact that the depression affected all sections of rural society explains the extent of changes that had come about during the decades of the present century.

This period witnessed the changing relationship of the colonial state vis-a-vis the emerging new social classes and upset the traditional class relationship in an unpredictable way and created a new set of political alignments. It has also been noticed how this crisis accentuated the already existing contradictions and introduced some amount of dynamics in the political situation in the Zamindari areas.

Various techniques were used by the Congress and Communist leaders to galvanise the disillusioned peasants into action. The main mechanisms of the Zamindari and colonial exploitation were exposed. The notion of the growing poverty of the peasants due to excessive rents and land alienation was firmly implanted

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in the peasant mind and an anti-zamindari and anti-colonial

ideology consciousness developed. At this Juncture, there was little variation in the Congress and Communist message, both attempted to emphasise peasant unity and tried to develop national consciousness. One interesting aspect was that the peasant had always tried to project their demands as dominant within the general national movement and did not aim at structuring their struggles away from the basic anti-colonial struggle. This was perhaps due to the powerful methods of mass mobilization and politicization used by the nationalist leaders to establish the hegemony of the nationalist ideology and the basic anti-colonial struggle over the newly emerging class-consciousness of the peasantry. However in the 1930s and 1940s a striking feature was the spread of new social and political ideas rooted in Communist ideology. But this new thinking was largely restricted to a minority of Communist intellectuals and did not filter down to the grass-root levels of rural Andhra.

The Congress while in power in Madras Presidency during 1937-39 could not ignore the concerns of the Zamindari peasants. During the nationalist movement, the Congress tried to integrate the peasant into the movement. As the Zamindars were staunch supporters of the alien rulers, the fight against the Zamindars could easily be integrated into the wider struggle for the country's freedom. Despite the claim that the national movement was an all-class movement, the Zamindari regions of the British Raj were known to the peasants through the local landlords than through any of its other leverages. The Zamindars played a dominant role in strengthening the British authority. Even where a few big landlords supported the Congress, the peasants in their estates remained exploited. thus the work of the Congress became very easy in wooing the Zamindari peasants to its side. It never tried, however, to exclude Zamindars as a class from its strategy of class-adjustment. It only criticised when the latter contested against Congress candidates and where the pulse of the peasants was strong against Zamindari exploitation.

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Once the Congress came to power a conflict arose between the proclaimed policies to enlist the support of the peasants during the election on one hand and the readiness of the Congress to take necessary steps to implement them. The conflict was between peasant expectations and Congress commitment to the rights of Zamindari peasants. This explains why there were extensive **anti-zamindari** struggles during the Congress rule. Another fact that cannot be ignored in this context is that, these were largely facilitated by the Communists, who themselves were allowed to function openly. Though the Congress at this juncture was not revolutionary, its reformative and populist measures, enabled it to bolster its image among the peasantry.

The **anti-zamindari** struggles which erupted between 1937-39 and 1946-48 finally led to the abolition of the Zamindari system. The peasant associations wanted the Congress to implement the policies promised by the Congress while seeking votes. Congress reluctance led to these peasant struggles. Why did the anti-zamindari struggles take place only in a few estates? In examining the constellation of social forces in a given area, it has been seen that wherever the Communists had strength in numbers and were **prominent** in peasant association, there were enthusiastic peasant struggles like in Munagala, **Kalipatnam** and Challapalli. It has also been noticed that militant peasant struggles were organised in those Zamindari areas where the Zamindars took active part in politics either through Congress or Justice party. This might have helped the growth of political awareness among the peasantry.

Until the emergence of the Communist Party of India and its intrusion into the All India **Kisan** Sabha, the Congress served as the only spokesman of the peasants. N.G.Ranga took it upon himself to stop the Communist **inroads** into the peasant struggles. From this point onwards, i.e. from late 1930s, the peasant movement in Andhra ran on rival parallel lines, one

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section of the peasantry being led by N.G.Ranga under Congress banner and the other section being drawn into the Communist fold. The mass of Zamindari peasants, however, stood behind the Communists during struggles and shifted their allegiance to Congress during the elections, showing their tendencies of mixing local issues with national movement at a broader level.

The final result of these anti-zamindari struggles, i.e. the abolition of Zamindari system exposes the true nature of the entire movement as a whole. The beneficiaries were surely the occupancy tenants. The peasant movements during thin period were based mainly among the occupancy tenants ranging from rich to poor peasant. The Communists were working in the agricultural front with tactics of anti-imperial united bloc, making every joint action with the Congress. Their slogan of peasant unity meant drawing all peasant sections into the peasant and freedom struggles. In such a process there were all possibilities for the rich peasant, with their resources and social position, along with the middle peasant, with their sheer number and position in the production relations to dominate the struggles and thus entering the ranks of the political parties that led the movement.

The Congress with its limited and reformist outlook based itself mainly on the landlord and rich peasant classes, but mobilised all the peasant section on their immediate grievance as a part of the freedom struggle. On the other hand, the Communists waged more militant struggles and widened their peasant base by including the poor peasant and agricultural labourers. But basically they too moved along reformist lines because CPI also was dominated by the landowning peasants, and the issues on which agitations were conducted were mainly beneficial to these sections.

N.G.Ranga represented an interesting trend in the anti-zamindari struggles in Andhra. He championed the cause of

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land owning peasants. Essentially, remaining a Congressman, he was also close to the Communists in the early thirties and in his ideas he sometimes appeared to veer to the radical left. His campaign for land owning peasants in particular, and private: property rights in general, led to his active anti-communism, because he was convinced that the Communists were against the possession of private property. But he and the Communists stood for peasant- worker unity, though their understanding of such unity could differ to some extent and the purposes for which they wanted to channelise this unity were different.

The peasant associations of the 1920s and 1930s which were predominantly Congress-oriented, were led by dominant peasants, and the Gandhian ideology prevailed in them. They launched their agitations on a very broad class basis; the key slogan being the unity of all peasants.

The moderate broad-based ideology of the early local kisan sabhas was reflected in the All India Kisan Sabha which brought them into a national organisation from 1936 onward. It addressed itself to the entire peasantry of India, i.e., to all peasants as distinct from landlords. This strategy of class collaboration was never to be questioned. This pre-eminent position of the well-off peasants was denounced at AIKS Bezwada session in 1944 by Swamy Sahajananda Saraswati, a radical peasant leader of Bihar, who said "(It is) really the middle and big cultivators (who are)...for the most part with the kisan sabha...They are using the kisan sabha for their benefit and gain". The All India Kisan Sabha was, nonetheless, dominated at this period by the Communist Party of India. But the CPI itself, after 1936 when it began to work seriously among the peasantry also advocated almost without exception a policy of class collaboration. In its election appeal of 1946 the CPI called for the abolition of landlordism, but pledged not to touch the rich peasant.

Among the many paradoxes of Indian life, nothing is probably

more striking than the mutual exclusiveness of the city and the village. Indian Intellectualism had been predominantly urban. It was probably the urban intellectual or middle-class orientation of Indian Communism that made the CPI indifferent to the cause of the poor-peasant. This relatively small group of Communists functioned during the 1930s and 40s within the Congress 'system', which was itself basically an urban middle-class movement. The CPI had neither the resources nor the mental equipment to seek pastures unexplored by the Congress. Moreover as the CPI opted for constitutional communism and adopted the parliamentary line, it could not seriously venture into the problem of the landless, confining itself to the dominant peasantry. However, whatever progress that had been registered in the field of land reforms in the zamindari areas in Andhra the credit goes largely to the Communists. Through their propaganda and mass activity, they facilitated the abolition of Zamindari system in Andhra.

Another aspect that has been noticed in the analysis of this work, is that though the crucial cause for these agitations was rent and land alienation, it alone did not necessarily cause the peasant unrest. That is to say, the anti-zamindari struggles were not simply a response to local problems. They were but a reaction to major social relations set in motion by overwhelming societal changes. The spread of the market had torn the rural society to a large extent. The ongoing freedom movement further gave a boost to these changes.

This study also observes that no class of peasantry can be regarded as revolutionary except in the context of the particular period and social conditions and contradictions that were obtaining in that period. In this case the substantial peasants took lead in organising agitation against their enemy, the Zamindar and successfully achieved their goal. In this anti-zamindari and anti-imperial movement all classes of peasantry participated. These were not transformed in Andhra

into a revolutionary militant struggle like in Telengana, where the degree of feudal oppression was more and the target of the struggle was also clear. With the advent of independence and the Congress measures, the upper sections of the peasantry became the base of the new State in the country-side and the agricultural movement receded as the communists failed to focus upon those classes who stood in hostile opposition to all the exploiting elements in the agricultural sector. This also highlights that those Communists who were in the fore front in the anti-zamindar struggles were satisfied with the abolition of the Zamindari system, which directly benefitted the occupancy tenants than the agricultural labourers. Thus it is not surprising that the agitating peasants had scarcely any radical programme to uphold and sought only some minor adjustments within the framework of the existing structure.

They occasionally talked of stopping rent payment as a whole, but this hardly amounted to a rejection of the system of private property. Even the intelligentsia, both Congress-men and the Communists, who stood behind the peasants did not think in terms of the abolition of the system of private property.

Most of the peasants and their leaders, infact, owned several acres of land each and they agitated mainly in order to hold their own against the encroachments by zamindars. This also explains the eagerness of the peasantry to rely on the existing legal structure in their battle against the Zamindars. Though extra-legal actions, as has been noticed, did occur from time to time, the essentially legal and constitutional character of the struggle persisted.

The leadership was basically in the hands of rich peasants under the hegemony of the nationalist bourgeois ideology throughout. This can be explained by the fact that this particular section alone had some tactical and secure control over its resources which gave them political leverage. They

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also created a situation in which their leadership and privileged position seemed natural.

When the oppression became unbearable, however even the middle and poor peasants took the **initiative** in leading the struggles. There were leaders like Ranga, who had a professional base but remained with the peasant for his cause and there were other leaders like P.Sundarayya, **K.Sathyanarayana** and N.Prasada Rao who felt impelled by their faith in communism to **mobilise** the peasant.

Another observation that has been made is regarding the peasant initiative in the struggles. Is the peasantry capable of organising itself? This study has amply demonstrated that the local peasants took the **initiative** of mobilising themselves to redress their local grievances. However, the responsibility of the integration of these activities into wider political activities was taken up by other social groups.

A striking feature of the **anti-zamindari** struggles under study is that there was no non-political organisation leading the peasants. The peasant organisation were invariably linked with one or the other of the political parties. This again proves the effectiveness of the methods of mobilisation used by the Congress and Communists in capturing **the minds** of the peasants. Another interesting doubt may arise at this juncture. Why did the peasants stand firmly behind the Congress rather than the Communists, despite their bitter experience with the Congress while it was in power?

The Communist minded, peasant leaders, like Congress leaders, stood for strengthening the freedom struggle, though they differed from the bourgeois Congress leadership with regard to the direction of the freedom struggle. They wanted freedom both from the British and from the hegemony of Zamindars. Their dilemma was; how to achieve this without weakening the freedom struggle. The policy it pursued was to mobilise the peasant

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behind the **kisan** sabha as well as the Congress; to strengthen the Congress within; not to pose an alternative to the Congress and at the same **time** expose the vested interests in the Congress. At no stage did the peasant leadership ask the peasant to come out of the Congress or withdraw support, this even at the peak of differences between the Ranga group of peasants and **Communist leaders**. On the other hand, the Congress was able to neutralise the left movement by projecting Nehru, N.G. Ranga and others, who had been in their early years had been attracted towards socialism.

The peasants also, on the other hand, perceived Gandhi and the Congress as a great helper of the oppressed. This perception gained currency due to the public posture and pro-peasant propaganda of the Congress. The peasants viewed the Congress message of nationalism in relation to their own economic and social grievances. For them 'swaraj' meant an end to all grievances. Apart from their positive perception of the Congress, there was virtually no political choice before the peasants. The CPI during this period hardly functioned in an organised form. It was still in its formative stage, and was subject to various limitation and hardships.

Now the question that remains to be addressed is v to what extent was the anti-zamindari struggle **succesed**. At the outset, it was a monumental success, as the agitators achieved **their** goal of Zamindari abolition. This movement was responsible for various legislations in the Madras Province in the field of land reforms. From this point of view the struggles were a tremendous sucess. But viewed from a much more broader plank, the success is questionable.

The impact of the reform was subtle. Zamindari as a legal institution was gone but its abolition produced no miraculous transformation of the agrarian scene. Hundreds and thousands of acres still remained in the hands of Zamindars as private lands. Large amount of money was paid to the Zamindars as compensation.

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No agricultural **income-tax** existed. The Congress had made the Zamindars viable, though the system was abolished.

"In the name of Zamindari abolition the Nehru government has hatched plans to pay the feudal parasites, sworn enemies of our people and traditional agents of the British imperialists, the stupendous sum of 400 crores of rupees as compensation while at the same time leaving in their hands millions of acres as private land". This was the observation of the Communists which was expressed in their Election Manifesto of the CPI published in 1951.

Even the **beneficiaries** from the abolition, overnight changed **into** a new form of landlords. The land hunger, the symptom of acute agrarian crisis, was left intact. The land-ceiling legislation was never implemented **in** letter and spirit. Politically the abolition became a device to extend and stabilise the social base of the Congress. Economically it created a new class of rural bourgeoisie who would exploit the poor peasants and other sections of the rural population in a much more intensive form.

The document adopted by the Polit Bureau meeting of the CPI in December, 1948 and published in its organ *Communist*, (January, 1949) is revealing "The fact that we had to add 'Land to the **Tiller**' was an admission that mere abolition of landlordism might not benefit the toilers, that the fruits might be appropriated by the new class of exploiters (**i.e. the** beneficiares of the Zamindari abolition)".

The distinction between peasant and labourer **is** crucial for the agrarian struggle. The **anti-zamindari** struggle was a fight primarily of the peasants and which affected the labourers most peripherally. This limitation of the peasant movement, was never really recognised by the leaders of the peasants. Even the Communists assumed **that 'anti-zamindari'** was equivalent to '**land to**

the tiller' but infact it was not. There were tillers, the **landless** labourers who were not tenants, and had no historically recognised claim to the land, and did not stand to **benefit automatically** from the abolition of the Zamindari system.

By the late 1940s there was a recognition among **the Communists** that the AIKS was essentially represented the **interests** of the substantial peasantry, and that 'it sometimes **allowed** even the rich-peasant ideology to dominate and influence **the AIKS, neglected** the poor-peasant and kept the **agricultural workers** at an arm's length'. With surprising candour, the same **document goes** on to say ' that the failure to organise the agricultural workers into a seperate organisation is not an accident alone. It reflected the capitulation to the **rich peasant and** middle peasant, the fear of offending them, of disrupting the 'peasant unity'. It was seen in the kisan sabhas **and** kisan factions when the question of redistribution of **land** was discussed, many comrades demanded hundred acres for the rich peasant, as a matter of principle - once again in the name of peasant unity".

Thus in the name of peasant unity, the Communists and **in** the **name** of class-collaboration to fight against colonialism, the Congress sacrificed the **interests** of the lowest stratum of **rural** society, but achieved the demands of the substantial peasants. The political consequences of the anti-zamindari struggles, i.e., the abolition of the Zamindari system, were **very far-reaching**. By strengthening the principle of private property **the reforms multiplied** the number of independent land-owning **peasants** thereby creating a middle of the road stable rural society.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

• ANDHRA PRADESH . . ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS



Districts under study are East Godavari,
West Godavari and Krishna.

Some of the **important** Zamindari estates in the districts of
of Krishna, West Godavari and East Godavari.

Krishna:

Challapalli,
Munagala,
Vutukur,
Gampalagudem,
Vuyyur,
Kapileswaram,
Telaprolu,
Gannavaram,
Musunur,
Chintalapattl Vontu,
Devarakota.

West Godavari:

Kalipatnam,
Mirzapuram,
Vasanthavada,
Niduparru,
Elamaru,
Sanivarapu Peta,
Elamaru.

East Godavari:

Pittapuram,
Viravaram,
Chintalanka,
Gangole,
Jaggampet,
Kolanka,
Gopalapuram,
Gollaprolu,
Kesanakurru,
Gutala,
Polavaram.

APPENDIX 2

The Sunnad issued at the time of Permanent Settlement was as follows:

Sunnud-i-Milkeut Istimrar or Deed of Permanent Property granted by the Right Honourable Edward Lord Clive Baron Clive of Walcot in the County of Salop and Baron Plassy of the Kingdom of Ireland, Governor in Council in Council of Fort St. George, on the part of the Honourable the United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies, to Zamindar of

1) It is known to the Zamindars, talookdars, merasidars, ryots, and all cultivators of land in the territories subject to the Government of Fort St. George, that from the earliest to the present period of time, the public assessment of the land revenue has never been fixed; but that according to the established practice of Asiatic Government, the assessment of the land revenue has fluctuated without any fixed principles, for the determination of the amount; and without any security to the Zamindars, or other persons for instituted by the ruling power, whether Hindu or Muhammadan, for the purpose of augmenting the assessment of the land revenue; and it has been customary to regulate such augmentations by the enquires and opinions of the local officers appointed by the ruling power for the time being. In the attainment of an increased revenue on such foundations, it has been useful for the Government to deprive the Zamindars, and to appoint persons on its own account to the management of the Zamindars, thereby reserving to the ruling power the implied right, and the actual exercise, of the proprietary possession of all lands whatever. It is obvious that such a mode of administration must be injurious to the permanent prosperity of the country, by obstructing the progress of agriculture, population, and wealth; and destructive to the comfort of individual persons by diminishing the security of personal freedom, and of private property.

2) The British Government, impressed with a deep sense of the injuries arising to the state and to its subjects from the operation of such principles, has resolved to remove its administration so fruitful a source of uncertainty and disquietude; to grant to Zamindars, and other landholders, their heirs and successors a permanent property in their land in all time to come; to fix for ever a moderate assessment of public revenue of such lands, which shall never be liable to change under any circumstances; to institute Courts of Judicature for the protection of these valuable rights; and to secure to every description of its native subjects under the operation of fixed and defined laws the free exercise of the religious institutions and domestic usages of their ancestors.

3) In **conformity** to these principles the assessment of your Zamindari has been **fixed** at the annual sum of and is hereby accordingly declared by this sunnud to be the permanent annual **Jummah** of your Zamindari payable in the current coin of the province **in** fixed monthly instalments agreeably to the separate **kistbandi** signed by you (**i.e.**, the Zamindar).

4) This permanent assessment of the land tax on your Zamindari is exclusive of the revenue derived from the manufacture and sale of salt and saltpetre; exclusive of the sayer or duties of ever description, whether by sea or land the entire administration of which the Government reserves to itself; exclusive of the **abkari** or tax of the sale of spiritual liquors, and intoxicating drugs; **exclusive** of the excise which is or may be levied on commodities or articles of consumption; exclusive of all taxes personal and professional, as well as of those from markets, fairs, and bazaars; the exclusive of lakheraj lands (lands exempt from payment of public revenue) and of all other alienated lands paying a small quit-rent (which quit-rent unchangeable by you, is included in the assets of your Zamindari); and exclusive of all lands and rusums heretofore appropriated to the support of Police **establishments**. The Government reserves to itself the entire exercise of **its** discretion in continuing or abolishing, temporarily or permanently, the articles of revenue included, according to the custom and practice of the country, under the several heads above stated.

5) You shall regularly pay in all seasons the amounts and permanent assessments above fixed. The remissions which have occasionally been granted according to the custom of the country on account of drought, inundation or other calamity of the season shall now cease and never be revived; and if (which God forbid) you shall fail to discharge your engagements, your Zamindari and your personal property shall be answerable for the consequence of such failure.

6) In this event your personal property will be liable to attachment in the first instance, and your lands will ultimately be liable to be sold and transferred from you. But under the moderate terms of the assessment on your Zamindari, this event can never happen except in consequence of default.

7) You shall be at free liberty to transfer, without the previous consent of Government, or of any other authority to whomever you may think proper either by sale, gift, or otherwise, your proprietary right in the whole or in any part of your Zamindari; such transfers of your land shall be valid, and recognized, by the courts and officers of Government, provided they shall not be repugnant to the Muhammadan or the Hindu laws, or shall have been regularly registered at the office of the Collector, and unless the public **assessment** shall have been previously determined, and fixed on such separated portions of your estate by the Collector, such sale, gift, or transfer shall

be of no legal force or effect; nor shall such transaction exonerate you from the payment of any part of the public land-tax assessed on your entire Zamindari previously to such transfer; but your whole Zamindari shall continue to be answerable for the total land-tax, in the same manner as if no such transaction had occurred.

8) In the event of the sale of any part of your Zamindari for the liquidation of arrears of the assessment or in satisfaction of the decree of a court of Judicature or in the event of the transfer of any part of your Zamindari by gift, sale, or otherwise, you shall furnish the Collector with true and correct accounts of your entire Zamindari, and of the portion of your Zamindari to be so separated, for a period not less than the three years preceding such sale or transfer, in order that the due proportion of the public revenue may be fixed thereon. The assessment to be settled on the separated parts of your lands, shall always bear the same proportion to the actual produce of the separated portion, as the total permanent Jummah on your Zamindari bears to the actual produce of the whole Zamindari. So that if the accounts to be furnished by you should be correct, no partial assessment can happen; nor any increase of the fixed Jummah be ever made, under whatever changes or improvements, your interests or your pleasure may lead you to introduce into the Zamindari.

9) Although you shall have free right and liberty to transfer by sale, gift, or other wise, any part of your Zamindari not repugnant to the Regulations of Government, yet it shall not be competent for you, nor for any Zamindar to form any part of your lands into a separate estate paying its jummah directly to Government, unless the public assessment on such a separate estate shall amount to the annual sum of ...

10) In order that you may at all times be enabled to comply with the conditions of the 8th article of this Sunnud, by which you are bound to furnish true and correct accounts of your Zamindari when required by the Collector, you shall support the regular and established number of karnams in the several villages of your Zamindari. The darnams shall be appointed from time to time by you; and shall obey all regular orders issued by your authority; but they shall not be liable to be removed from their offices, except by the sentence of a court of judicature. In the event of your having, or of your under-farmers, tenants, or ryots, having cause of complaint against the karnam of any village for a breach of duty, you shall be at liberty to institute at your own peril a suit in the Adaulat of the Zillah for the purpose of bringing such karnam to trial and punishment but in the event of your dispossessing a karnam of his office without such previous regular process, you shall be liable to make such satisfaction for the injury as the adaulat of the Zillah may decree. Where a karnam may be dismissed from his office by the sentence of a court of judicature, you shall in the first instance select a successor from the family of the last incumbent, provided any member of that family shall be capable of discharging that duty,

you shall exercise your discretion in the appointment of a proper person. The name of the person appointed to succeed shall be reported to the Collector.

11) The Government having charged **itself** with the maintenance of the police of the country will defray the entire expense of that establishment; you shall nevertheless aid and assist **its** officers in apprehending and securing offenders of all description; and you shall enquire and give notice to the Magistrates of all robbers or disturbers of the public peace who may be found, or who may seek refuge in your Zamindari.

12) You shall enter **into** engagements with your ryots either for a rent **in** money or in kind; and shall within a reasonable time grant to each ryot a patta or **cowle** clearly defining the amount to be paid by him and explaining every condition of the engagement; and you shall grant, or cause to be granted regular receipts to the ryots for all discharges in money or **in** kind made by them to you, or for your account. If after the expiration of a reasonable period of time from the execution of your cabooliat you shall neglect, or shall refuse to comply with the demand of your **under-farmers**, or ryots, for the pattas and receipts above mentioned, you shall be liable to be used in the Adaulut of the Zillah; and you shall also be liable to such damages as may be decreed by the Adaulut to the complainant.

13) The foregoing conditions contain an abstract of the obligations and duties which you shall incur, and of the rights which you have acquired under the new constitution erected for the security, protection and prosperity of the subjects of the British Government. But for the enlargement of that constitution, and for the improvement of the condition of the people, the Governor in Council will continue from time to time to enact such regulations, as experience may suggest, or the progress of human affairs render necessary. Such regulations will be administered by independent Judges in constituted courts of Judicature, governing their decisions by the laws only. The decree of those courts will be founded on the regulations of Government, **printed**, published and translated for the **information**, and security of its subjects; and on the **institutes** of the Hindu or Muhammadan Laws, which are also open to the enquiry, of all persons; the proceedings of the Adaulut will be held in open courts accessibly to persons of every description; all parties will be at liberty to attend to their own interest by their preference in the courts during such proceedings; or employ their vakils with such instructions regarding the mode of prosecution or defence, as may appear to be most eligible to themselves; the sentences of the courts will be pronounced **in** the same public manner; and executed by civil authority without the interposition of military force; the Collectors, and other public servants of the Government will be compelled to appeal to the courts of judicature for the adjudication of all cases, in which by virtue of their offices they may be parties; and finally, the greatest practicable degree of security has been extended to the native subjects of the British Government by the establishment of

a gradation of appeals from the Zillah Court to the Provincial Court; and from the Provincial Court to the Court of Sudder Adaulut at the Presidency; and in the last report from the Court of Sudder Adaulut to the Governor-General in Council of Bengal.

14) Being therefore sensible of the benefits conferred on you by these institutions, and confident of enjoying the fruits of your **industry**, you shall be punctual in your engagements **with** Government, you shall conduct yourself with good faith towards your ryots, whose prosperity is **inseparably** connected with your own; you shall treat them with tenderness, encourage them to improve and extend the cultivation of the land, and lay the foundations of your own happiness **in** the permanent prosperity of your Zamindari.

15) Continuing to perform the above stipulations, and to perform the duties of allegiance to the British Government, its laws and regulations, you are hereby authorized and empowered to hold **in** perpetuity to your heirs, successors, and assigns at the permanent assessment herein named, the Zamindari of **Anakapalli**.

Given in Fort St. George, this_____(date) by and in the **name** of the Right Honourable the Governor **in** Council.

Source: *Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee*, Land holders Statement, Part II, 1938, pp.15-17.

APPENDIX 3

IMMEDIATE AND URGENT DEMAND OF THE ZAMINDARI RYOTS
(As incorporated in the Memorandum by the Andhra Peasants' March)
1938

- 1) Rents and water-rates:- The existing rents in all estates should be reduced to the level of rates prevailing in the adjoining Government ryotwari areas.
- 2) Cropwari rates should be abolished and special rates for garden crops and mulum lands should no longer be collected and only dry rates should be assessed on all such lands.
- 3) Water rates and penalties should not be collected from lands which have no regular source of irrigation but depend only on rain water, hill streams and village channels and lift irrigation from similar natural sources.
- 4) No rents should be collected on house-building and cattle-shed sites occupied.
- 5) Waram rents should be abolished and should be commuted or settled into cash rents.
- 6) Remissions:- The tenants should have the right to claim remissions whenever there is failure of crops due to seasonal and other unforeseen causes or whenever there is sudden abnormal fall in prices of crops.
- 7) Irrigation sources:- All irrigation sources which are out of repairs should be completely repaired by Government and the cost thereof recovered from the Zamindars concerned. They should hereafter be vested in panchayat boards and be controlled by them.
- 8) An irrigation fund should be constituted to meet the recurring charges of maintaining these irrigation sources in good condition and Panchayats to be empowered the collection of the same.
- 9) Forests:- All fees collected on fuel for domestic consumption should be abolished. All grazing fees should be completely abolished.
- 10) At least forests to the extent of a mile in distance from adjoining villages should be set apart as unreserved so as to afford free grazing facilities to cattle.
- 11) In other forests facilities to obtain fuel, fencing and other materials for agricultural implements, green manure, etc., free of cost should be afforded.

12) Facilities to those ryots living adjoining forest areas by way of granting gun licences, etc., to protect themselves and their property from the ravages of wild animals should be afforded.

13) Local officers should be directed to renew forthwith all gun licences, etc., which have been cancelled in the past.

14) Collections of rents and land revenue should be entrusted to **village** Panchayats.

15) The landholder is entitled under the Debt Relief Bill Act to recover costs awarded by a court in a rent suit, and water and land-cesses actually paid to Government by him. This should be cancelled as it is surely a great hardship to the ryots.

16) The provision which stipulated that only those who pay in full rents due for 1346 and 1347 **faslis** will be entitled to the benefits under Chapter III of the Madras **Agriculturists'** Relief Act should be cancelled.

17) Rents due for each year should be collected during the year and arrears should not be allowed to accumulate. Landholders should be prohibited from proceeding against ryots for the collection of **accumulated** arrears of rent.

18) The seasons and instalments for **payments** of rents should be conveniently fixed extending over four months to suit the harvesting of crops in each district.

19) The landholder should have no right to attach movable properties for the realization of rents. He should proceed against the immovable property that he may have in excess of the minimum economic holding that may be decided upon by **Government**. He should attach only that land and only to the extent of the arrears of rent for which it had fallen into arrears. The landholder's right of first charge to realize his rents should be removed from the statute.

20) **Communal lands:-** All communal lands like that of **village-sites**, topes and gardens, cremation grounds, public paths and thoroughfares, pasture lands, tank-beds and thrashing floors which were being enjoyed by the village community since time **immemorial** should hereafter rest in the panchayat boards to be used for such communal and common purposes for which they were formally **intended**.

21) **Survey and Settlement:-** All lands in Zamindari areas should be compulsorily surveyed by Government, record of rights maintained and field maps and pattas of individual holdings should be supplied to pattadas free of cost. All survey costs should be borne either by the Government or the landholders concerned. Landholders who do not grant pattas and field plans and exchange **muchilikas** should have no right to attach properties

for realization of rents due.

22) Lanks Lands:- Lands which due to the fluvial action of rivers and due to the erosion of such lands have diminished in area should not be assessed to tax. Lanka lands which are newly formed as a result of floods should be assigned to such of the pattadars who have lost their adjoining lands due to similar floods and any land in excess should be kept at the disposal of the village panchayat for communal purposes.

23) Home Farms:- All home farms should be abolished and converted into **Jirayati** land and assigned to landless peasants and agricultural labourers without collecting any premiums from them with a view to encourage co-operative farming.

24) **Zamabandi**:- **Zamabandi** or the annual revenue enquiry should become a permanent and customary feature in Zamindari areas also as in the case of ryotwari tracts and opportunities should be afforded to the ryots to ventilate their grievances on such occasions and such zamabandi should be arranged before the harvesting of crops so as to facilitate the ryots to represent their tale of woe due either to failure of crops or water scarcity or famine.

25) Land Courts:- Touring land courts should be established to settle all disputes that may arise either between landholders and tenants or among tenants themselves.

26) Village Fund:- The Government should collect at least 4 annas in the rupee from the gross land revenue collections of each village in the estates to be credited to the village fund to afford civic amenities of the said village.

27) Miscellaneous:- All the above facilities should in fairness be extended to the ryots in inam, mokhasa and shrotriyam villages also.

28) Ryots' associations should be statutorily recognized by the Government and the landholders and the right to sue and act in representative character should be recognized and all benefits derived therefrom through court decisions should uniformly apply to all ryots concerned without distinction, situated in similar circumstances.

Source: *Report of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee, Memorandum, Supplemental Volume, 1938, pp.32-34.*

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