

# REVOLUTION IN TELENGANA 1946-1951 ( Part One )

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Visnuru Ramachandra Reddy, the much feared and hated landlord of Jangaon taluka (sub-district or county) was angry. He had been prevented from seizing the lands of a lowly washerwoman, Ailamma, by a group of peasants. Determined to put an end to such intransigence, he hired goondas (hoodlums paid to serve as guards) to "eliminate" the group leaders. It was July 4, 1946. A procession led by Doddi Komarayya marched down the main road towards the landlord's house. Suddenly shots were heard. Doddi Komarayya was killed on the spot. His elder brother Doddi Mallayya was shot in the leg and two others were wounded. Normally the panic stricken villagers would have dispersed. But now they charged towards the landlord's house. News spread like wild-fire. Soon two thousand people shouting "blood for blood" and armed with a supply of dried grass had surrounded the mansion (Sundarayya, 1972: 36-38; Reddy, 1973: 42-43). This was the start of the Telengana movement, one of the largest armed peasant uprisings in the history of modern India. At its peak, it spanned an area of about 15,000 square miles with a population of 3 to 4 million. Peasant rule was established in 2000-3000 villages and defended by a guerilla army of about 2000 regular members and an additional 10,000 activists.<sup>1</sup> When the Indian army marched into the area on September 13, 1948, it knocked the wind out of the movement. Fifty thousand well trained troops were more than a match for a ragtag peasant army, sometimes brandishing nothing more fearful than stones and slings. Forced to retreat into the forests, the guerillas continued sporadic raids until the movement was "called off" by the Communist Party in October 1951.

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# Telangana

Considering the significance of the Telangana movement,<sup>2</sup> we know surprisingly little about it. Apart from the writings of those who participated in it, there is only one full-scale monograph (Pavier, 1981). The participants' accounts have all been published in the last decade - for the movement's silver jubilee. This has had two consequences: the long lapse of time has resulted in what may be called "thin" description; and the subsequent politics of the Communist Party (which split into "right" and "left" factions) have clearly affected the leaders' own perceptions about the movement.

So that the reader may better assess what is to come, it might be useful to place some of the primary sources used in this paper on the political spectrum. Sundarayya (1972) belongs to the CPI(M) and his is the most detailed account written by a Party member in English. Ravi Narayan Reddy (1973), Raj Bahadur Gour et. al. (1973) and C. Rajeswar Rao (1972) are all members of the CPI. Pavier, who relies heavily on D.V. Rao [a CPI(ML) member] is himself in the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party. In analyzing the events in Telangana, I shall be less concerned with the politics of the Communist Party (henceforth CP) than were any of these people. But I will take their analyses into account along with those of more academic commentators.

Part One of this paper is largely a background sketch and narrative history of the peasant revolution. The first section is a collation of facts regarding physical features, population, infrastructure, etc. taken from the censuses of 1931 and 1941. Then I look at the political economy of Hyderabad in the period preceding the revolution. Parallel to the history of the region runs the history of the CP and that is considered in the third section. The two histories

converge in the Telengana movement, permanently altering the character of both: this forms the substance of the last section. Part Two is also divided into four sections. First, I attempt to take stock of the movement's achievements. That is followed by sections in which tentative explanations are advanced for the movement's success and failure, respectively. The concluding section asks how one is to explain the origins of the movement. Through detailed argument with other studies, I conclude that no satisfactory explanation exists for the origin of revolutionary peasant movements, partly because the very enterprise of constructing a 'general theory of revolutions' may be mistaken.

## GEOGRAPHY

Telengana is the Telugu-speaking eastern part of the formerly princely state of Hyderabad. At an average height of 1250-1500 feet above sea-level (Quereshi, 1947: 10; Pavler, 1981: vii), Hyderabad encompasses an area of 82,700 square miles in south-central India. It was divided into three linguistic regions: Marathwada with six districts, Karnataka with two, and Telengana with nine. When the States Reorganization Commission's recommendations were adopted in 1956, Telengana was merged with the Telugu-speaking areas of Madras Presidency to form the present Andhra Pradesh. The most important centers of the Telengana Movement were the districts of Nalgonda and Warangal, to the east of the capital and main urban center Hyderabad (since then, the districts have been 'reorganized').

Being hilly, Telengana was covered mostly with sandy soils, good for growing jawar and bajra (different kinds of millet). Some areas had fertile black soils, used mainly for dry cultivation. The average annual rainfall was about 30 inches but it fluctuated greatly from year to year. Most of it fell during the period from roughly June to September. The main food crops were jawar, bajra, rice, wheat and pulses. The major cash crops were peanut, castor, linseed, sesamum, tobacco and sugarcane. Double-cropping was commonly practiced, the crop being harvested in October and late January to early February. Jawar and bajra were the main crops in Mahboobnagar; Nalgonda was the chief source of castor and an important producer of rice; Warangal, benefitting from good irrigation and heavier rainfall, produced rice as well as peanuts and tobacco.

Irrigation was provided by tanks, wells and canals. Telengana, where tanks were important, had 80% of the state's irrigation facilities. The percentage of irrigated area to total cultivated area, though, was low in the Nizam's Dominions, just six percent in 1931 compared to twenty percent for the country as a whole (Quereshi, 1947:30). Rain water filled the tanks during the monsoons; by the end of the following summer they were dry. The river Godavari, defining the eastern border of Telengana and the river Krishna demarcating the southern border are both rain-fed. They too dried up during the summer. However, the torrential monsoons caused the rivers to swell. The current in the Godavari was particularly strong, making it virtually uncrossable.

All along the Godavari, between it and the plains of Warangal and Karimnagar where agriculture is the main occupation, were thick forests. That was not true, though, of the entire state, only 12% of which was forested. Adilabad had even larger portions covered with dense forests. Here tigers and leopards, bears, antelopes, wild boar, many species of snakes, and various small animals were to be found. There were forests along the Krishna too, in the southern parts of Nalgonda and Mahboobnagar but these were smaller and less dense.

Hyderabad had a population of just over sixteen million in 1941, at an average density of 198 people per square mile. Though this was far lower than the all-India average of 246, it represented a two-thirds increase over the last sixty years. In a predominantly agrarian economy where well over half the population depended on agriculture for their livelihood, population per square mile was a less important statistic than population per cultivated square mile. In this regard, in 1931, Telengana with 476 people per cultivated square mile was nearly twice as densely populated as neighboring Marathwada which had 243 persons per cultivated square mile (Quereshi, 1947:28).

As in the rest of the country, the rural population, about 89% of the total population, lived in villages in the plains and in small hamlets in the forests. The major portion of the rural

population either came from untouchable castes like the Malas and the Madigas or tribal groups like the Hill Reddis, Chenchus, Koyas, Lambadis, Banjaras, and further north the Gonds (Dhanagare, 1974:113; Gray, 1970:129).

The cattle population, at about 12.5 million, was almost as large as the human one. The dominant breed was called the Deccani. The quality of the cattle can be gauged from two facts. A good pair of bullocks could cover just three-fourths of an acre of dry land and half an acre of land in a day. In Telengana, a cow yielded just over half a liter and a buffalo around 1.25 liters of milk a day. This was enough to provide a meager 4.3 ounces of milk per day per head, whereas nutritionally minimum requirements were estimated at 10 ounces per day per person. Sometimes, as in the homes of some deshmukhs and zamindars,<sup>3</sup> these cattle shared a roof with the families of the domestic servants of the household.

In such places, as elsewhere, hygiene was poor, medical facilities nearly non-existent, and epidemics of cholera and malaria frequently proved fatal to physiques already weakened by malnutrition. Life expectancy was a mere 25.9 years and had increased little over the forty years since 1891. Tribal groups had an even lower average lower life expectancy.

But if health services were poor, "infrastructural" development was worse. Warangal boasted just 443 miles of metalled road until 1950. Adilabad, sprawling over 7000 square miles, had 307 total miles of roadway; Nalgonda had merely 300 miles of metalled roads (Iyengar, 1951b:333). These roads probably extended from one commercial center to another; almost certainly, they led to the big train junctions that were the main vertical links through which trade was conducted. The postal service was minimal: one post office for each 48 square miles or ten thousand people. The entire state had just 64 telegraph and telephone services (Iyengar, 1951b:342). All these details may seem incidental; as we shall see, however, they were to shape in a critical way the content and nature of the armed struggle that followed.

## THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF TELENGANA

In a predominantly rural economy, land and labor were the principal means of production. But the countryside was not a self-contained rural utopia; it was connected both to the industrial and merchant economy of the towns, and more importantly, to the world capitalist system.

The dominating influence on the relations between people was their relation to land. There were three main types of land tenure. In order of importance in terms of area, these were:

- 1) Governmental land revenue system - khalsa or diwani lands - ryotwari tenure.
- 2) Jagirdari system - land given as gifts to noblemen by the Nizam.
- 3) Nizam's personal estate - Sarf-e-khas system

Khalsa lands occupied about sixty percent of the total in 1941 (Iyengar, 1951b:20). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, a series of administrative reforms were undertaken by Salar Jung I, then Prime Minister of Hyderabad State. Among them was direct revenue collection. Previously the rights to collect revenue were auctioned off by the state to revenue farmers called deshmukhs or deshpandes (Pavie, 1981:3; Dhanagare, 1974:111). Instead, Salar Jung proposed direct contact with 'registered occupants', or pattadars, who would be "directly responsible to the Government for the payment of land revenue and whose name has been entered as such in Government records, whether he be personally in possession of the holding or through his shikmidar" (Pavie, 1981:10). Though pattadars were merely 'occupants' of the land legally owned by the State, they functioned as proprietors. Their occupancy right was permanent, heritable and alienable as long as they paid the revenue assessment.

Pattadars could be cultivators who used either their own labor and/or hired wage labor. Or they could be rentiers, leasing the land out to tenants called shikmidars or tenants-at-will called asami-shikmis. Shikmidars could not be evicted as long as they fulfilled their obligations (defined either by explicit agreement, or more often, by custom). Such obligations were often discharged by payment in kind, though cash payment was quite common.<sup>4</sup> The usual custom for

payment in kind was to split the gross produce evenly. The pattadar, though, was responsible for paying the revenue assessment while the tenants bore all the costs of production. Sometimes, a tenant would have to pay a fixed quantity of grain to the landholder. The use of quantities rather than shares, however, was more prevalent when payment was made in cash. Here, besides paying the landholder, the tenant was also responsible for the government assessment. Quereshi observes (1947:108): "this form of tenancy is especially convenient to the capitalist non-resident proprietors..."

The tenure of tenants-at-will, asami-shikmis, ran from one agricultural season to the next. They formed the overwhelming proportion, more than three-fourths, of all tenancies. Moreover, the proportion of landless tenants to all tenants had been growing steadily. After twelve years on the same plot of land, asami-shikmis were entitled to shikmidari rights but they were rarely allowed to stay for more than three or four years (Dhanagare, 1974:111; Iyengar, 1951b:26-69; Pavier, 1981:3-11; Quereshi, 1947: 102-110).<sup>5</sup>

When direct revenue collection was introduced, deshmukhs were granted vatans (gifts of 5-10 villages) or mash (annuities, computed as a percentage of past returns) (Sundarayya, 1972:10-11; Dhanagare, 1974:111). Besides, taking advantage of low literacy rates<sup>6</sup> and their own substantial knowledge of land records, they were able to take possession of large areas of the most fertile land. It seems that registration of land-titles was usually done without the knowledge of the peasant who was cultivating it (Sundarayya, 1972:11; Pavier, 1981:3). Quite often it was even more fraudulent, reducing "the actual cultivator to the status of a tenant-at-will or a landless laborer" (Dhanagare, 1974:112). It was in this manner that the landlords built up huge estates. Visnuru Ramachandra Reddy, the notorious deshmukh of Jangaon in Nalgonda district, owned 40,000 acres in forty villages; Kalluru deshmukh owned 100,000 acres of Madhira in Khammam district; Janareddy Pratap Reddy, perhaps the biggest of all, owned nearly 150,000 acres in Suryapet taluka in the district of Nalgonda.

Legal control however by itself does not constitute effective control (McMurtry, 1978:74): the former is an issue of legitimation; the latter of domination (Giddens, 1979:107,188). How were the deshmukhs able to enforce their newly-won legal rights, to translate the right over property to a more tangible form - rent collected either as cash or in kind?<sup>7</sup> There were several mechanisms, all of which were probably responsible. The deshmukhs normally employed an agent (seridar) to look after their villages. According to Sundarayya, "these seridars used to collect the products from the peasants by force" (Sundarayya, 1972:11, emphasis mine). Similarly, Gray writes, "A dora has many servants and some are used as strong-arm men to enforce his wishes and deal with the recalcitrant" (Gray, 1970:122).

The deshmukhs often augmented their considerable economic power by functioning as the political, judicial, and administrative head of the village. These positions - patel, patwari, mali patel - were hereditary (Sundarayya, 1972:11). Thus the deshmukh's power rested not merely on the means of force that he actually possessed; as was to become clear later, these were not sufficient to suppress the peasantry. Rather, the deshmukh's authority derived from the **potential** force that he could summon; a power invested in him by his various official positions including that of police chief. He represented State power. As a symbol whose physical presence embodied multiple functions of authority, the deshmukh was also a favorite target of the wrath of the peasants (Worsley, 1968:ix-xxi).<sup>9</sup>

But perhaps more important than force, either employed directly or indirectly (as a threat), was the power of tradition. The most powerful means through which structures of domination are reproduced are also the most innocent: the deshmukhs had always been collecting rent, as far as anyone could remember, and there was no reason for it to be otherwise. Traditional inequalities are transmitted through the repetition of simple tasks but they are most deeply lodged in belief-systems: in religion, ritual, folk-tales, song, dance, etc., and very importantly, in language.<sup>10</sup>

We have seen how deshmukhs came to control khalsa lands, but a substantial portion (roughly 30%) of the total land was controlled by jagirdars. Jagir lands were estates granted to nobles by

the Nizam: some 6500 villages scattered over 25,000 square miles (Iyengar, 1951b:20; Dhanagare, 1974:111).<sup>11</sup> They often controlled their own revenue, police, civil, and judicial systems (Sundarayya, 1972:10; Khusro, 1958:10-11). Some paid taxes to the state; others did not. They maintained their own armies which were given in the service of the Nizam when required. This was their only obligation to the State; in turn they enjoyed the privileges of feudal lords, accountable to no one. In these lands oppression was very severe. For example, taxes for irrigated lands were ten times as high on jagir lands as on khalsa lands (Dhanagare, 1974:111; Sundarayya, 1972:10). There are two possible reasons for this. With their own armies, jagirdars felt free to extort revenue. Secondly, they were not constrained, as the landlords were, by being in the middle of a hierarchy of power.

As sub-feudatory states, these jagirs were the only potential threat to the Nizam's rule but their powers were limited by their extreme fragmentation. By 1949, there were 1500 jagirdars in Hyderabad (Khusro, 1958:4). As we shall see, the Nizam was to be overthrown by a combination of "external" as well as "internal" forces.

Besides khalsa and jagir lands was the sarf-e-khas, the Nizam's personal estate. It spread roughly over 10% of the state's area, about 8000 square miles spread over 1961 villages (Iyengar, 1951b:20; Khusro, 1958:5). These areas yielded an annual income of Rs. 20 million. This sum, and an additional Rs. 7 million, were used to meet the personal expenditure of the Nizam and his retinue (Sundarayya, 1972:9; Dhanagare, 1974:111).<sup>12</sup>

So far, we have discussed relations between landowners and tenants. However, a large proportion of the rural population consisted of landless agricultural laborers. If we include poor peasants, who worked mainly as laborers but who owned a small piece of land, then according to the 1951 census, the two groups made up about 40% of the rural population. Agricultural laborers made up about 32% of the rural population dependent on agriculture for a livelihood (SA, 1956:16,186).<sup>13</sup> Employment was uncertain, the seasonal high being harvest time, and total duration being at most five to six months per year (Quereshi, 1947:71). Wages, paid in kind, were pitiful. For example, in Huzurnagar taluka in the district of Nalgonda, wages for a 9-14 hour working day amounted to 1.5 kg. of paddy during the slack season and 2.25 kg. during the busy one.<sup>14</sup> One more fact about employment is crucial to note: the role of the State. The Public Works Department and the Railways employed 420,000 laborers in 1931 (Pavie, 1981:15).

Of the landless poor, the worst-off were no doubt the bhagelas, though all had to perform forced labor called vetti. The bhagelas were typically untouchables bonded to their masters through debt. Wages were low, interest rates high and records could be manipulated easily; when the bhagelas died they were almost always still in debt. This debt was inherited by the next generation and the landlord never had to worry about finding free labor for menial jobs (Pavie, 1981:8; Dhanagare, 1974:112).

For their vast landholdings, as well as for household chores, landlords conscripted forced labor, vetti, sanctioned by tradition. Harijan families had to send one man from the family to do vetti which consisted of household work, carrying mail or reports, or collecting wood from the forests. Cobblers and tanners were expected to supply material to the deshmukh free of charge. Washermen were used as carriers for the palanquins in which landlords and their families travelled or were forced to run with their bullock-carts or horses (to clear the way). Toddy-tappers<sup>15</sup> set apart five to ten trees just to serve the landlords' needs. The list goes on and on but the idea should be sufficiently clear: free labor was extracted from wherever possible, whether it consisted of shepherding the landlord's livestock or tilling the landlord's fields (Sundarayya, 1972:12-14). Furthermore, vetti was usually demanded without notice. Significantly, it was the weaker sections of society that were called on most often. When the deshmukh overstepped his bounds though, the duality of power became evident: the villagers boycotted him, refusing to perform their services (Pavie, 1981:9; Dhanagare, 1974:112; Gray, 1970:122).

Though the landlords base of power lay in their control over land and the product of labor, their power extended to every sphere of village life. They collected excise duty from toddy-

tappers, a right auctioned off by the State. This was a valuable source of cash which was then used for moneylending. The deshmukhs either lent money directly, or more commonly, allowed a Marwadi or Maratha sahukar to do so. In exchange, the banyas marketed the landlord's produce.

For every ten pattadars on an average, there was one professional or agricultural money-lender. This should have encouraged competition. However, the big moneylenders divided up the villages among themselves and did not encroach on their fellow sahukar's territory. Thus, though an agriculturalist did usually borrow from more than one source, the rates of interest were nothing short of usurious, "never less than 25 percent" (Pavler, 1981:8; Quereshi, 1947:163). Sundarayya's figures commonly indicate that they were closer to 100 percent.<sup>17</sup> Short term loans were especially dear, requiring a 50 percent payback in 15-30 days, an annual nominal simple interest rate of 600-1200 percent (Sundarayya, 1972:508).<sup>18</sup> Besides moneylending, landlords also owned forest and fishery contracts as well as contracts for bidi leaves (Gray, 1970:121).<sup>19</sup> They controlled migration into the village, as well as the exchange of land. They even kept tribal girls as concubines in their homes, giving them away as servants in their daughters' marriages (Gray, 1970:122; Sundarayya, 1972:14).

All in all, the picture that emerges is one of extreme concentration of land concomitant with a concentration of power. According to Sundarayya (1972:15), in Nalgonda, Mahboobnagar, and Warangal, landlords with more than 500 acres owned 60-70 percent of cultivable land. Pavler (1981:4-5) claims that the trend was towards greater concentration. Studies conducted in 1928-29 show that in Warangal 25 percent of the irrigated land was sold in the last quarter century, one third by debt transactions (Pavler, 1981:5; Dhanagare, 1974:114). Most was taken over by the big landlords or the moneylending and trading classes (Dhanagare, 1974:114).<sup>20</sup>

Production relations internal to the countryside are but one side of the story; the other is the incorporation of this rural economy into the world capitalist system. Here cash crops like peanut, castor, linseed, sesamum, sugarcane and tobacco were the vital links. Hyderabad, with more than 30 percent of sown area under non-food crops, was significantly more involved in the primary commodity cash economy than the rest of India (SA 1956:316).

Let us look at the magnitude of the area cultivated with oilseeds (Quereshi, 1947:52-57). These numbers were to increase further, from 13 percent of sown area in 1939-40 to nearly 19 percent in 1951-52 (SA 1956:53) (See Table I). Oilseeds were by far the most important commodities to be exported. They accounted for over half of Hyderabad's total export earnings (Iyengar, 1951a:319). However, this was a relatively recent phenomenon. In the decade 1912-22, for example, oilseeds contributed less than a fifth to total export earnings, the major share coming from the sale of cotton (DR:148).

Castor was already grown in large enough quantities at the turn of the century to be shipped to England (Pavler, 1981:18). Peanut cultivation, however, was a new phenomenon, as can be seen from the rapid increase in peanut acreage in the span of just fifteen years. The increase in peanut cultivation came at the expense of jawar production, which lost nearly a million acres, and of castor where growing competition on the world market led to a decrease of nearly half a million acres (Quereshi, 1947:54-57). But why did peanut production increase so sharply in Telengana? There were several reasons. It (and other oilseeds) prospered on the soil in unirrigated regions, too poor to support other crops. Secondly, the markets for these products were abroad (nearly half of Hyderabad's exports went to the West) where consumers could afford to pay relatively high prices, making it a lucrative production proposition (Iyengar, 1951a: 319; Pavler, 1981:18). We have already seen that money was scarce - these crops brought much needed cash into the rural economy. Furthermore, the State too played an important role in promoting the use of high-yield varieties (Pavler, 1981:18).

Oilseeds were not the only cash crops that benefitted from State benevolence. New varieties of cotton and rice were developed by the Agricultural Department that substantially increased yields (Quereshi, 1947:58; Pavler, 1981:22,24).<sup>21</sup> However, it was sugarcane that best exemplified the growing intervention of the State. Sugarcane cultivation grew from a mere 30,000 acres in

1938 to more than 200,000 acres in 1951-52 (SA 1956:54-55). Besides introducing high-yielding varieties, the State provided the other major input: irrigation. This was done by canals from the newly built Nizamsagar dam just north of Hyderabad city (Pavler, 1981:23).<sup>22</sup> There was good reason for promoting sugarcane: the 20,000 tons that had to be imported annually were a heavy burden on the exchequer.<sup>23</sup>

The State was not the only party interested in promoting agricultural exports. Primary industries, involved either in extracting raw materials or in processing them in an elementary fashion, were growing rapidly: coal mining in Warangal and Adilabad, textile mills, the Nizam State Railway, cement companies, tobacco factories, and plants for processing oilseeds and milling rice. The grip of colonialism was weakening (Pavler, 1981:52-54) and the domestic bourgeoisie in India was coming of age.<sup>24</sup> The biggest gains from international trade were to be made by the merchant class. The channels through which goods could flow were limited; they were linked to the development of transportation and communication. The development of these "public" goods, institutional structures, was controlled by the State - a State which drew its strength from this class and the rural elite.

What happened in effect can be simply stated in this manner: the sale of agricultural goods on the international market had "opened up" the difference between sale price and the cost of production. The larger profit thus occurring was being split up among the various actors.

Let us examine the effect of these changes on agrarian relations. One question crops up immediately: how did all this change the position of the deshmukh? If it diminished their power, how did they resist it, and if not, why not?

It seems clear that the absolute level of the deshmukh's income increased. A lot of low-fertility land that previously lay fallow was brought under cultivation, now that it could be used to grow oilseeds for export (Pavler, 1981: 19). Rents were increased on the basis of the potentially increased value of production.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, crises on the world market enabled the deshmukhs to consolidate their landholdings even more. Productivity increasing inputs like irrigation and the new seeds had to be purchased, probably in cash - the deshmukhs had the liquid assets, and the influence, to turn asymmetric opportunities into inequitable outcomes (Pavler, 1981:19-21).<sup>26</sup>

That the deshmukhs were able to increase their resources is clear; it is not certain, however, that they simultaneously bettered their relative position. Increased control over land and cash made them relatively more powerful as far as the landless laborers and small peasants<sup>27</sup> went. But those peasants who derived the major share of their income by selling their produce were not necessarily worse off.<sup>28</sup> They probably had enough money to buy the required seeds and irrigation water.<sup>29</sup> At the same time they seem to have had as good an access to output markets as anyone else. The latter point is important. The middleman who channeled rural produce into the world market established a relationship with the landlord characterized by mutual dependence. On the one hand the merchant needed the landlord's produce to be able to profit from trade; on the other hand, the landlord needed the merchant to gain the considerable advantages of selling on the international market - of avoiding a crisis of realization. The relation was not entirely equal; if landlords refused to sell, the merchants could always buy from all those peasants who produced a surplus. It was this threat that probably "created the space" that resulted in a widening of the power base.

The question still remains, "Why did the deshmukhs allow their power to corrode away?" In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, one explanation can be suggested. Our assessment so far has been "behind the actors' backs": their actions however would depend on how **they** perceived matters. The landlord's perception of his own power was likely to be systematically biased: his increased power over the villagers could be substantiated in day-to-day life; however, the loss of power involved in his dependence on the trading class was likely to be veiled. This could be for two reasons: relations of exchange, being "free and equal", are seldom perceived otherwise.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, the landlord was interested in selling his produce and could be scarcely be expected to



appreciate the **qualitative** difference between selling food crops for a local market and cash crops for the world market. The deshmukhs were losing power while thinking that they were gaining it: that explains why they jumped into the cash-crop market so enthusiastically.

The deshmukhs acted to bring about their own demise; however, the poorer peasants were pushed to a state of even greater deprivation. This happened for a number of reasons. Marginal farmers did not apparently take advantage of the new cash crops. It seems that they first cultivated food, using up as much area and human resources as was necessary to obtain a secure outcome.<sup>31</sup> Cash crops had a lower priority: land was scarce; irrigation and seeds were obtained with difficulty, and at a price, if at all; and the delay in attending to these crops made the task impossible unless the rains had been plentiful. Landless laborers would not have benefitted in any case: employment opportunities had increased but there was still enough surplus labor to keep wages minimally low.<sup>32</sup> This explains why poorer peasants could not improve their condition and hence were relatively worse off.

If subsistence crises for the landless result mainly from purchasing power deficits, as has been suggested by Sen, then these people may have been left absolutely worse off as well. In the absence of evidence on the movement of real wages, some speculations may be permitted that lend credence to this view. It is clear that population had grown and along with it the absolute number of landless agricultural workers. If we note in addition that no significant new alternative employment opportunities were created, we can conclude that a substantial reserve army of labor existed, keeping wages low (DR:57,69; Quereshi, 1947:24; SA 1956:15).

During the Great Depression, market prices fell disastrously, both for food crops and cash crops. Rents however remained the same. Faced with real rents that had just doubled, and successive crops damaged by the weather and rodents, small landholders had just two options: they could either take loans or sell their land. Those who were already in debt were now faced with the prospect of paying back several times that amount in real terms - things were so bad that some could not even afford to pay the interest (Pavier, 1981:27-31).

Loans were taken for several purposes, often to purchase the only substantial capital input required - a pair of oxen. But there were other important reasons: substantial expenses were incurred in marriages; homes, wells and carts needed to be repaired or replaced; grain storage facilities were poor and a bad harvest necessitated borrowing just to meet household expenses over the summer months (Pavier, 1981:30-31). Most loans were taken for 'productive' purposes or for the repayment of previous debts. Interest payments and debt repayment also carved out the largest chunk, nearly a quarter, from a family's savings. When debts were incurred by mortgaging land, the overwhelming proportion (nearly three-fourths) was either in the form of "mortgage with possession" or "usufructuary mortgage". In two decades, the latter, relatively minor in 1929-30, had become the predominant form, accounting for just over half of all mortgages. "The explanation," Iyengar (1951b:416) thinks, "lies in the high prices ruling for agricultural produce"<sup>33</sup> (Iyengar, 1951b:408-456; Quereshi, 1947:149-165). Unable to pay off their debts, many peasants had no choice but to sell. For example, a man sold two acres of wet-land to Ravi Narayan Reddy in 1931 for just Rs. 25 (Reddy, 1973:5).<sup>34</sup>

The inflationary crisis accompanying the Second World War further worsened the situation. Prices of food crops doubled within the space of two years; cash crop prices went up even faster. Wage rates, on the other hand, did not increase as quickly, perhaps reflecting the stickiness of implicit wage contracts in the absence of collective bargaining. Thus the real income of landless laborers fell. Seeing the opportunity for quick profits, the large landowners switched to cash crop production. However, small landholders were inclined to cereal production as we have already seen. In the face of a widespread food shortage, this tendency was reinforced. Here the role of the State becomes crucial. Concerned with war-time food shortages, the Hyderabad Government started actively encouraging food-production. At the same time, like the Government of India, it imposed a levy: the State was to be the sole purchaser and distributor of foodgrains. The problem was that the levy was ten to twenty percent lower than the market prices. More important is the mechanism for enforcing the levy - it was done by people from the village, one of whom was an

official. This meant that the deshmukh was the de-facto collector and he used this right as an instrument to further his domination (Pavier, 1981:33-37; Dhanagare, 1974:115).

In the study of the political economy of Telengana we have so far concentrated on the "economy" aspect. It is now time to turn to the "polity", the institutional framework of politics in the State and its development.

### Political Organization in Hyderabad

Formally, the supreme authority was the Nizam, presiding over a "political and social structure from medieval Muslim rule (that) had been preserved more or less intact" (Smith, 1950:28).<sup>35</sup> This was certainly true as far as the jagirs were concerned but it was also true in another respect: the Nizam had the equivalent of a royal retinue, consisting of big industrialists, administrators and government officials. These were usually Muslims, though Hyderabad's population was predominantly (81%) Hindu (Smith, 1950:27; Quereshi, 1947:30).<sup>36</sup>

The Nizams of Hyderabad had ruled since 1723 when Asaf Jahi had founded the dynasty by breaking away from the Moghul Empire. They had retained close relations with the British who stationed a permanent force of 9000 troops in Secunderabad, on the northern outskirts of the city of Hyderabad.

In the second quarter of this century, when British withdrawal from India was imminent, the Nizam was placed in a tenuous situation. His power base within the state was extremely narrow, limited to a small group of noblemen in the urban areas, a few jagirdars in the countryside, and those Muslims in the city who benefitted directly from the State's Islamic character. On the other hand, the British were increasingly reluctant allies. The concerted efforts of the communal Majlis-i-Ittehad-ul Mussulman<sup>37</sup> to raise the slogan of Anaal Malik (literally "I am the King") can be interpreted in this context (Reddy, 1973:9; Pavier, 1981:70). With the Nizam's blessings, the Ittehad (as it was popularly called) was engaged in a last ditch legitimization campaign but it was to be too little too late.

In the last few years of the Nizam's rule, the Ittehad was to play an increasingly important political role, especially in the armed struggle. Thus, it might be useful to trace its origin and character.

It started in 1927 with a cultural organization called the Anjuman-e-Tabligh-ul-Islam which engaged itself in converting untouchables to Islam (Reddy, 1973:9; Pavier, 1981:69). The Arya Samaj<sup>38</sup> responded by converting them back; communal clashes resulted and both organizations were banned. Bahadur Yar Jung,<sup>39</sup> the leader of the Tabligh, then took over another social and cultural forum - the Ittehad. Under his leadership, the Ittehad became an aggressive political organization dedicated to the Nizam's rule. However, it was not until the lawyer Qasim Razvi became the leader of the organization that it attained its reputation for fanaticism. He created an armed wing called the Razakars which became an informal army parallel to the Nizam's regular army. It was then that the Ittehad obtained the dubious distinction of being identified with autocracy, communalism, and fascism<sup>40</sup> at the same time (Reddy, 1973:9; Pavier, 1981:69,112; Smith, 1950:9,33).

Religion was just one of the ways in which group loyalty was divided - there was class, culture, and caste, and there was language.<sup>41</sup> The Nizam patronized Urdu, making it the only medium of instruction in the State's schools (Pavier, 1981:65).<sup>42</sup> Urdu and English were the official languages: while none of the other languages prospered, Telugu was singled out for derision.<sup>43</sup> Even among elite Hindus, Telugu was not favored; resentful of the treatment of their native language in their own land, some of these people formed an organization called the Andhra Jana Sangham (literally "Andhra Peoples' Association"). Its objective was to secure "a proper place for (the) Telugu language and culture in Hyderabad city." In a couple of years - by 1924 - it had become a statewide organization and was given a new name - the Andhra Kendra Jana Sangham.

The Jana Sangham in turn became an umbrella organization for other similar groups; finally, in March 1930, a new organization called the Andhra Mahasabha (literally "Andhra Convention") was formed at a conference in Jogipet. The emergence of this organization is significant: it indicated some slippage of the Nizam's hegemony. Previously, there was strict control of libraries; public meetings, even of a literary nature, could only be organized with prior permission from the state; newspapers were closely regulated; and civil liberties were in general few. Composed largely of the urban petite-bourgeoisie - the prospering merchants and traders, and professionals like lawyers, government officials and teachers - the Mahasabha represented the lower strata of the ruling class, divided from the upper echelons by linguistic, cultural and other factors. Its class composition was reflected in its concern,<sup>44</sup> which consisted of passing resolutions aimed at social reforms (Reddy, 1973:1-12; Pavier, 1981:65-67; Sundarayya, 1972:18).

From its inception, the Andhra Mahasabha fused linguistic and regional concerns with cultural and later social ones. This is best seen from Ravi Narayan Reddy's description of the incident that started it:

It was 1922. A Hindu social conference was held in Vivek Vardhini Theater where all the speeches were in Urdu and Marathi. Only one speaker tried to speak in Telugu but he was hooted and shouted down. The number of Maharashtrians in Hyderabad city was small, yet they exhibited their superiority in all walks of life (Reddy, 1973:11).

In the fourth conference at Sircilla, a resolution was passed requiring all speeches to be delivered in Telugu (Reddy, 1973:14). This orientation stayed with the Mahasabha well into the Telengana movement.

At its sixth conference, the Mahasabha elected Ravi Narayan Reddy, already a secret member of the Communist Party, as Secretary. By its eighth conference in 1941, the Mahasabha was well on its way to becoming a front organization for the communists. Before we go on, it would be helpful to take a brief look at the history of the Communist Party of India (CPI).

## THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND TELENGANA

The Communist Party of India (CPI) was founded at Tashkent in October 1920 by a group of Indians in exile headed by M.N. Roy.<sup>45</sup> By July 1924, it had been admitted into the Communist International (Ram, 1969:4; Pavier, 1981:79; Masani, 1954:24). From the start, the Communist tradition has leaned very heavily on Moscow.

From a small base in the Indian intelligentsia, the illegal CPI working with the active participation, and under the influence of, the Communist Party of Great Britain (henceforth CPGB), convened an all-India conference in December 1928 of its "front" organization, the Workers and Peasants Party. By this time, the Sixth Congress of the Comintern had adopted its famous resolution entitled The Revolutionary Movement for the Colonies and Semi-Colonies. The colonial thesis advocated an aggressive attitude towards the bourgeois national-reformist parties but did not rule out temporary agreements in the name of anti-imperialism. One year later, specifically addressing the CPI, the Comintern's tenth plenum discredited the two-class Workers and Peasants Party (Ram, 1969:5).

On the Comintern's advice, the CPI denounced the nationalist movement. However, this only succeeded in isolating it from any mass following. In addition, 31 of the CPI's most important leaders were put into jail in the Meerut Conspiracy Case (Ram, 1969:5; Masani, 1954:36-40). At the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in August 1935, the CPI was severely criticized for its "left, sectarian errors". The CPI was urged to work with the nationalist movement to create an anti-imperialist united front (Ram, 1969:6; Masani, 1954:56-58). The CPI politburo issued a statement:

The concrete application to the present stage of the anti-imperialist movement in our country of the line of the Seventh Congress is a historic affair (Masani, 1954:59).

A two-pronged strategy was decided upon: individual CPI members were to infiltrate the Congress; at the same time the Party would continue to build a base of mass support. The communists' efforts to infiltrate the Congress were greatly aided by the Congress Socialist Party (henceforth CSP), the "left" group within the Congress. Working within the Congress gave the CPI access to the students and trade unions while freeing them from an "outward-oriented" image. When the communists were finally expelled from the CSP in 1939, they already had significant backing. In Kerala, for example, the entire CSP cadre reconstituted itself as the CPI (Masani, 1954:59-75; Pavier, 1981:80).

The communists had been active in the coastal districts of Andhra since 1934; however, it was not until 1939 that some organization was established in Hyderabad. The Nizam State Communist Committee, which brought together four small groups, registered the nominal start of the CPI involvement. However, it was the Andhra Mahasabha that provided the first substantial gain: in the eighth conference in 1941, Ravi Narayan Reddy was elected President. Resolutions were passed demanding the abolition of vetti, jagirdari, the tax on tapping toddy, and the eviction of tenants; the reduction of land taxes, rents, and compulsory survey settlements was proposed, as was the confirmation of land-titles (Sundarayya, 1972:21; Dhanagare, 1974:118; Reddy, 1973:17-30; Pavier, 1981:81-85). Before this time, the Mahasabha had done little to organize the peasantry; they were content to pass resolutions or at most make "representations" to government officials. Now they tried to devise campaigns around themes like education, anti-forced labor, etc. Their most effective action however was against the levy of foodgrains mentioned earlier.

Two other factors were important for the Mahasabha's increased popularity. The Congress had been banned in 1938 and was rendered virtually powerless, leaving the field to the Mahasabha. By contrast, the CPI, which had also been banned was now allowed to operate legally (Reddy, 1973:19; Dhanagare, 1974:116-117; Pavier, 1981:83).

The reason for lifting the ban on the CPI was a remarkable about-turn in the Party's policies. Sensing revolutionary opportunities at home and seeking to capitalize on Britain's preoccupation with the fighting in Europe, the CPI started vigorously opposing the British war effort, calling it an Imperialist War. In the face of the Congress' lukewarm opposition to the war, such activism greatly helped to win support for the CPI though inviting repression from the British, and in Hyderabad, from their loyal ally, the Nizam (Masani, 1959:79; Overstreet and Windmiller, 1959:171-190).

Then in June 1941, Nazi Germany invaded Russia, throwing the CPI into confusion. After some internal debate on the merits of the antiwar nationalist effort and considerable pressure from the international organization, the CPI decided to abandon its earlier position and support the People's War of the Soviet Union against the German aggressor. The CPI joined the war effort at the same time that the Congress was launching the Quit India movement and popular opposition to British rule was growing (Masani, 1954:80-86; Reddy, 1973:34-35; Pavier, 1981:83; Ram, 1969:7). While the Congress was banned as a result, the CPI was encouraged in its activities.

With almost all the Congress leaders in jail, the CPI could consolidate its organizational gains; however, it had lost much of its credibility. Even Ravi Narayan Reddy, after giving a feeble justification for the switch, had to admit that

The Communist Party committed certain mistakes in implementing the people's war policy. It recognized the danger of fascism but underestimated the imperialist danger. Therefore it made the mistake of characterizing many patriots as fifth columnists (Reddy, 1973:35).

Despite their mistakes the CPI, "grew substantially during the war period" (Reddy, 1973:35; Overstreet and Windmiller, 1959:207-212).<sup>46</sup>

This was evident at the eleventh conference of the Mahasabha at Bhongir in 1944. Membership fees which had earlier been reduced from Rs. 1 to four annas<sup>47</sup> were further reduced to one anna. A vigorous membership drive had been launched in the past year; 100,000 people had been recruited in the rural areas, 8000-12000 of whom had come to Bhongir. Faced with almost certain defeat, the "right" wing of the Mahasabha walked out. The CPI now had the organization to themselves and elected Ravi Narayan Reddy President and Badam Yella Reddy Secretary (Reddy, 1973:20-22; Pavier, 1981:85-89; Dhanagare, 1974:117-118; Sundarayya, 1972:27-28).

But the greatest gains of this period were to be found in the increase of grassroots organization: district, taluka, and village committees were formed and cadres trained. Most of these initial cadres came from rich peasant backgrounds. To discourage armchair revolutionaries, they were asked first to organize against the landlords in their own villages. "Training" was mostly intellectual. They discussed politics and read translations from Lenin, Stalin, Palme Dutt,<sup>48</sup> other Marxist classics, as well as Gorky's Mother and a local novel on the oppression of untouchables, Malapalli (Pavier, 1981:88; Dhanagare, 1974:118).

First the question of forced labor - yetti - and then problems of tenancy and eviction increasingly turned into minor skirmishes.<sup>49</sup> The Nalgonda District Committee, led by former student leaders not strongly influenced by Gandhi and Mahasabha-style reformism, was particularly truculent. This strategy worked very well against small landlords who were quite unable to meet cooperative resistance (Pavier, 1981:87-89).<sup>50</sup>

But why did the State and the big landlords allow these initial organizational attempts by the CPI to succeed? What did they do about it? The evidence here is very sketchy. "The revolutionaries", according to D.V. Rao, "...had to face intense repression in the form of arrests and sentences of imprisonments" (Pavier, 1981:87). By this time in 1944, the CPI had not yet come out for the abolition of landlordism and the Nizam's rule. It even appealed for an Interim Government in which half the seats were reserved for the Ittehad (Pavier, 1981:84; Sundarayya, 1972:27). The end of the War also witnessed a quickening of the pulse of the national Independence Movement, forcing the Nizam to pay increasing attention to external events. These reasons are, however, not sufficient answers for the questions posed above.

The early success of the CPI was thus characterized by the following features: articulation of the long-standing grievances of the poorer peasants; action on issues which affected the economic conditions of these peasants in a direct fashion; an aggressive district committee in Nalgonda; the creation of a dedicated cadre; and most importantly mass participation. Reddy tells us that people joined the Party because "...membership by payment of one anna was deemed by the people as a passport to their emancipation from these atrocities" (Reddy, 1973:39).<sup>51</sup>

It was in this context of increased agitation that the incident described at the start of the paper occurred: the Telengana movement was on its way to a prolonged period of armed struggle.

## **ARMED STRUGGLE 1946-1951**

Momentous changes were taking place both inside and outside Telengana. Not surprisingly, the larger currents of the independence movement were to shape the course of events inside Telengana more than the other way round. Changes were taking place in the communist movement too, both within India and on the international front. Here, the Telengana movement was of greater importance - it shaped the character of Indian communism as much as it was shaped by it. The armed struggle in Telengana went through two distinct phases. The first one, from July 1946 to September 1948, was a period of growth and expansion; however, after the Indian army invaded the region in September 1948, the movement was forced to retreat until it was called off in October 1951.

The Doddi Komarayya incident sparked off a wave of protest that spread to 300-400 villages in the same month. A spontaneous movement seems to have emerged: groups of villagers seem to have

marched from one village to the next, and congregated to discuss problems of vetti, land eviction, and grain levies and their relation to zamindari. Then they would conduct processions that stopped at the landlord's house. At each village, some people would drop out of the group, having already come quite a distance from home. But new ones would take their place - in this way the enthusiasm and strength of the group remained undiminished. In a village adjacent to Kadavendi, the place where Komarayya was killed, the CPI seized 200 acres from a landlord and proceeded to distribute it (Pavler, 1981:96; Sundarayya, 1972:38; Dhanagare, 1974:120-121).

Once land seizure started, it was difficult to stop. But land that had been redistributed also needed to be defended; otherwise the landlords would seize it back and probably become even more repressive. Defense corps had been organized since 1942. Now they were formed into units wielding lathis.<sup>52</sup> One male from each family was recruited for the task.

These dalams (para-military units) were responsible for defense while administration was handled by committees called gram-rajyams (village republics or village 'soviets'). They supervised redistribution of land, and handled complaints, disputes, and personal and family problems. In short, they took over the deshmukh's job. The committees were elected at meetings; however, the candidates were first selected by the CPI. At this stage, the committees were dominated by rich peasants (Pavler, 1981:98-99; Dhanagare, 1974:123-124). They effectively carried out a campaign to abolish forced labor, "illegal" payments (rents, levies, etc.) and "illegally" seized land (disenfranchisement for non-payment of debt, etc.).

The landlords were not standing by idly. First they let their goondas loose on the peasants. When these forces proved to be too few in number and too poorly armed to deal with mass unrest, they summoned the police and the Nizam's army. Finally, when the situation could not be controlled, they left the village.

Meanwhile, skirmishes between the villagers and the police or goondas had become routine. When a local leader, Matta Reddy, was shot by a policeman in November 1946, thousands attended the cremation. The villagers became more organized in the face of increased repression. A big drum put in the center of the village was sounded in case of danger - this alerted all those working in the fields nearby. Stones, to be used with slings, were collected and put on housetops. Women would arm themselves with chili-powder (to be hurled at the enemy), stones, and even boiling water to protect their homes and their children (Sundarayya, 1972:42-44; Reddy, 1973:43-44).

The police by now had set up camps throughout the Jangaon area. Infuriated by a police raid, one thousand people converged on the Mundral camp with the intent to attack. They had their usual "arms" and had covered their bodies with gunny sacks, believing that police bullets harmlessly deflected off them (Sundarayya, 1972:43). This action was carried out over the objections of the local CPI leaders.

Warfare was also conducted on the cultural and psychological planes. At night, posters and leaflets were posted on the doors of "anti-social elements"; domestic servants sympathetic to the movement often left such "messages" in unlikely places in the home; and physical attacks on landlords also increased (Sundarayya, 1972:52). The local dramatic form Burra Katha, Golla Suddulu (shepherd's tales), songs, poems and newspapers were all employed actively. An observer describes one performance of the Burra Katha:

After the monotone recital of the prologue came a single lengthy act, cleverly recounting a tale of ancient India, the story of a tyrant monarch who lived a frivolous life of luxury at the expense of his poor subjects. A brave and pious guru dared to reproach the slothful king in public for his perverse misrule and of course was sentenced to death. At the last moment the people rose in rebellion, rescued the guru, and imprisoned the impostor.

The greater part of the play consisted of long speeches by the guru and the proletarian rebels, partly in the usual Marxist jargon, and partly couched in the philosophy

of Mahatma Gandhi to plant the message more deeply in the hearts and minds of the audience (Pavler, 1981:101).

The Andhra Praja Natya Mandali (Andhra Peoples' Theater Association) produced a play Na Bhoomi (My Land) on the Telengana struggle. It proved to be a big success and helped raise money for the movement. The newspaper of the movement was Meezan, published in Hyderabad city in Telugu, Urdu and English.

In November 1946, the CPI was officially banned. At the same time, in the face of an army equipped with modern weapons,<sup>53</sup> the peasant movement came to a temporary standstill. On the surface everything appeared calm. The Nizam withdrew the armed camps from the villages. But the surface calm was misleading; feverish activity was being conducted and the leadership of the Andhra CPI had decided to escalate the armed struggle (Sundarayya, 1972:46-47; Pavler, 1981:100).

It was now 1947. Independence was imminent, first announced to take effect in eighteen months and then with the Mountbatten Award, on August 15, 1947. Like the other princely states, Hyderabad had the option of joining India, Pakistan, or remaining autonomous. The Nizam and the ruling Muslim minority wanted to remain independent. The Congress, on the other hand, was putting pressure on the Nizam to accede. Both sides wanted more than the other was willing to give; finally an agreement was reached to leave matters as they were with the British. The Standstill Agreement, as it was called, was good for a year (Smith, 1950:36-37; Ram, 1969:8).

Within the State, the Congress launched a satyagraha to seek the merger of Hyderabad with the Indian union. The ostensible purpose of this move was to enable the reorganization of the states on a linguistic basis. The Andhra CPI had a long-standing plan to integrate the Telugu-speaking areas of Hyderabad with those of the Madras Presidency to form Vishalandhra.<sup>54</sup> They now started holding meetings and demonstrations jointly with the Congress. In some ways, such a strategy proved to be successful. Sundarayya recounts how one such meeting in Vijayawada yielded Rs. 20,000 for buying arms to fight the Nizam. On the other hand, when the CPI joined the Congress campaign to cut toddy-trees, it found itself alienating the toddy-trappers, a large fraction of the landless rural poor who constituted its main base.<sup>55</sup> In Nalgonda, CPI cadres went on a walking tour around the district, raising the Indian flag and burning the records of village officials and moneylenders. At the border, they burnt the checkpoints used to collect duty. They seized grain hoarded by merchants and distributed it (Sundarayya, 1972:56-57; Pavler, 1981:111-112; Reddy, 1973:49). The communists broke with the Congress by January 1948.

The Telengana movement was now in full force. The gram panchayats, consisting of five to seven members, had become the de-facto governing bodies in the villages. The cadres were divided into two groups: village squads and guerilla squads. The former, numbering around ten thousand, continued to lead normal lives but conducted small activities on the side. Guerilla squads had about two thousand members and had been formed on three levels: district, taluka, and village. But armed struggles did not follow administrative boundaries - mobility was limited, communications poor, and weapons scarce. Under these conditions, geography and strategy dictated organizational choice. Accordingly, the guerilla squads were reorganized along operational lines: there were to be five area committees; many zones within each area, each with an organizer; and several military and political squads within each zone (Pavler, 1981:115-116; Sundarayya, 1972:59-66). Each regular squad was to consist of ten guerillas.

Organizational skill was necessary but could be developed with experience; weapons on the other hand had to be either manufactured, bought or seized. Some were bought but at great expense; no one knew how to manufacture them; and so they had to be taken by force or cunning from those who possessed them. Many raids were made on deshmukhs' houses and police stations but the yields were low. The shortage of weapons was so acute that when a volunteer agreed to become a full time guerilla, he had to take an oath before the Red Flag which said in part, "Weapons are more precious than life" (Sundarayya, 1972:67).<sup>56</sup> Hard to obtain, weapons were nonetheless easy to lose, left behind because they hampered quick movement in retreat.



Transportation and communication gave the government forces a crucial advantage. Though we have seen that hard-bed roads were few, jeeps and trucks could be used to transport large numbers of troops in a relatively short time. By contrast the guerillas seem to have travelled entirely on foot. Motor vehicles could be captured but were of limited utility: they were highly visible in the countryside and needed a steady supply of fuel. The only other possibility was to prevent the government from using the means at its disposal. With this in view, on the nights of February 26-27, 1948, twenty coordinated attacks were made on railway tracks, telegraph and telephone poles, and new bridges (built to support armored cars). Trenches were dug around villages to prevent vehicular traffic and roads were either blocked or destroyed. When this was not possible, planks studded with six-inch nails were placed on the road (Pavier, 1981:133; Sundarayya, 1972:94-98; Reddy, 1973:54). The price was high even for such mildly subversive activity:

In Jagireddygudem (Suryapet taluka) area, the military forcibly brought people to fill up the breaches in the road and while (they) were doing so under the threats of bayonets, they (the military) shot dead six and threw the bodies into those same ditches and filled them with earth afterwards....a total of 60 persons were shot dead and buried in the breaches on the road (Sundarayya, 1972:97).

Injuries sustained either in battle or as a result of torture were only too frequent while medical facilities, if they existed at all, were poor. Doctors at Vijayawada sympathetic to the movement arranged a separate ward at the Vijayawada General Hospital to treat injured fighters. In addition, squads were supplied with first aid kits complete with antivenom for snakebites. Two doctors even joined the guerillas, training cadres in first aid. When a cholera epidemic broke out in Bhongir taluka, these 'paramedics' were instrumental in controlling it. Preventive medicine was emphasized, such as disinfecting drinking water using local materials like coal and lime (Paranjpe, 1973:154-156; Reddy, 1973:57).

By mid-1948, the movement had spread northward to Karimnagar and Adilabad districts and eastwards to the areas bordering the Krishna and West Godavari districts of Andhra. There were now six area squads of 20 people each, and 50-60 village squads (Sundarayya, 1972:89; Dhanagare, 1974:123).

Geographical expansion was accompanied by a corresponding "expansion" of the participants' consciousness. Some of this was intentionally affected by the Party. A literacy training program was instituted.<sup>57</sup> According to Sundarayya (1972:126), the Party 'propagandized' for equal rights for men and women.<sup>58</sup> The village councils prevented forced marriage, allowed divorces, and encouraged widowed women to remarry.<sup>59</sup> Many times, however, change occurred as the unintended consequence - the by-product - of some other action. For example, fighting and working together helped break down caste distinctions among the members of the squad. Similarly, Sundarayya (1972:127) points out that "belief in gods, demons, etc. had decreased to a great extent. Especially among the youth, it had disappeared noticeably." But the only description of the process itself is offered by Paranjpe (1973:161):

It was very moving to see illiterate young boys battling with the intricacies of rhyme and meter and ultimately coming up with a song or a poem, occasionally full of exquisite poetic imagery; or a chap quickly grasping the important points in a complex argument or yet other youths showing their gift of intelligence in matters of tactics to be followed in offense and defense.

A big change took place in the relations between the sexes. Women at first filled an auxiliary role in the armed struggle, acting as couriers or looking after the old and very young. As the war progressed, they became drawn into actual combat. But the Communist Party was no equal opportunity employer. Sundarayya, one of its leaders, himself says as much (1972:344): "the Party admitted only a very few women into the forest areas, even fewer in the guerilla squads." Those who were admitted to the squads were not treated equally (Sundarayya, 1972:328,347-348):



We women are still looked upon with the old outlook that we are inferior. Any slip or mistake we commit, our leaders come down very heavily on us. It becomes a subject of open gossip and scandal. We must be guided and improved, not derided. If we move a little freely, we are watched with suspicion.

In the squads, "there were strict rules...of behavior and deportment" (Paranjpe, 1973:159). Not only did the Party "frown on licentious behavior" (Sundarayya, 1972:351), it discouraged too radical a break in cross-gender relations:

One woman, after our squad's exhortation, went to the extent of declaring that she would make her husband cook the food. The leadership pointed out how this approach would only lead to domestic trouble, instead of the women being drawn into fight against the present social and political system (Sundarayya, 1972:513).

The land distribution scheme was running into problems. One of the programs being carried out consisted of returning land that had been "illegally" confiscated from the peasants over the last twenty years. This land was either sold, or more commonly, leased to another peasant who was supporting the movement. The sanghams were in a dilemma. "In this sort of case they used to offer the aggrieved party lands of equal size and fertility, but often came up against the peasants' desire for their hereditary lands". Sundarayya, 1972:115) goes on to say that such cases were usually solved by "the need for unity, the pressure of public opinion..." When the land in question had been confiscated by richer peasants who supported the CPI, the sangham would not act against them (Pavler, 1981:99).

The pattern of land seizure seems to have been the following: first, wastelands and marginal forest lands were captured from the government; then the lands of the big deshmukhs and jagirdars were seized; next came all surplus lands over 500 acres; when this move proved inadequate, the ceiling was reduced to 200 acres; finally, faced with still more pressure from the peasantry, it was fixed at 100 dry and 10 wet acres. Only the lands of those supporting the Party were spared. All told, one million acres of land was redistributed, a tenth of which was government land (Sundarayya, 1972:115-118; Dhanagare, 1974:117).

The immediate effect of these changes went entirely counter to expectations: according to D.V. Rao production expanded as never before (Pavler, 1981:136).<sup>60</sup> Fighting did not disturb cultivation: the grain produced was hidden scattered all over the fields. Agricultural workers, a 'great' percentage of whom were women,<sup>61</sup> now received a higher wage that was fixed by the CPI. The interest rates on loans were also regulated by the village committees. After initially abolishing debts, the committees found that rich peasants were no longer willing to give credit: the funds dried up and were restored only when the gram rajyams guaranteed repayment.<sup>62</sup> The village committees were beginning to control prices too but were still dependent on old trading arrangements to realize the value of production. Middlemen often had to be bribed to market the produce of rebel villages; on the other hand they supplied the raw materials to make gunpowder and bombs (Pavler, 1981:136; Sundarayya, 1972:127-129).

While the Andhra branch of the CPI was going from strength to strength, there was great confusion in the national ranks. Independence presented the CPI with a dilemma: should it continue in an "anti-imperialist" front with the domestic bourgeoisie or should it struggle against them as a representative of the working class? After prolonged deliberation, the CPI politburo passed a resolution granting unqualified support to Nehru. In Moscow, the reaction was not so favorable. E.M. Zhukov called the new government reactionary and imperialist because it favored formal independence but continued to depend on Britain for economic and military considerations. In February 1948, the Second Congress of the CPI elected B.T. Ranadive as General Secretary. He called for an alliance of workers, peasants, and revolutionary intelligentsia to rise in a one-stage revolution from below, attained through violent means. In this context, the armed struggle in Telengana achieved a new significance. "Telengana today means Communists and Communists mean Telengana", thundered Ranadive. While this provided ideological justification for them, the leadership of the Andhra CPI had its differences with Ranadive. These were stated in

the famous Andhra letter which said:

Our revolution in many respects differs from the classical Russian revolution; and is to a great extent similar to that of the Chinese revolution. The perspective is likely not that of general strikes and general rising leading to the liberation of the rural sides; but the dogged resistance and prolonged civil war in the form of an agrarian revolution culminating in the capture of political power by the democratic front (Ram, 1969:25).

The Andhra thesis identified feudalism and imperialism as the main enemies in the first, "new democratic" stage of the revolution.<sup>63</sup> A four-class strategy was to be adopted, uniting workers, peasants, intellectuals and the national bourgeoisie. Specifically, the struggle in the rural areas was to combine all peasant classes against the three "leeches" -landlords, moneylenders and profiteers. This "united front", consisting of the rural proletariat, and small, medium, and rich peasants was also to include the few big landlords who were fighting the Nizam. Ranadive attacked the "two-stage" theory, arguing that the reasons rich and middle peasants were being wrongly included as allies was due to their influence within the Andhra CP (Ram, 1969:8-30; Pavier, 1981:97-121; Dhanagare, 1974:124).

Whether it was the result of ideological confusion or "low political consciousness" (Pavier, 1981:124),<sup>63</sup> the Hyderabad City Committee of the Party issued a statement in May 1948 denouncing the integration of Hyderabad into India. The Indian Government was labelled 'pro-landlord and pro-bourgeoisie' and the call for an Azad Hyderabad (Free Hyderabad) was raised. This pleased the Nizam and he lifted the ban on the CPI; on the other hand, the Indian Government publicized the statement widely on radio and in the print media, saying that the communists had joined the Razakars. The Hyderabad City Committee was still against the Nizam, but neither this fact nor the Andhra CP's denunciation of the statement could undo the damage (Sundarayya, 1972:179; Pavier, 1981:124; Dhanagare, 1974:124-125). Once lifted, the ban on the CPI was for some reason never reimposed.

The City Committee's statement must be viewed against the backdrop of the collapse of negotiations between the Nizam and the Indian Government. Since the signing of the Standstill Agreement on November 29, 1947, relations had deteriorated steadily. There were two major reasons for this. Subsequent to the fighting in Kashmir, and after communal disturbances, labor unrest, and other 'instabilities' had been controlled, the Indian Government was in a strong enough position to force the cards, but Hyderabad refused to acknowledge this fact. The Indian Government responded by imposing an economic blockade on land-locked Hyderabad. Secondly, the Nizam gave a Rs. 200 million<sup>65</sup> 'loan' to Pakistan in January 1948, at a time when hostility between Pakistan and India was at its peak. At the same time, the Ittehad encouraged Muslims from neighboring states to migrate to Hyderabad to alter the religious composition of the population. By mid-1948, the war with Pakistan was over. Its troops free, and using the 'internal security threat' as a justification, the Indian Army, moving in on five fronts, marched into Hyderabad on September 13, 1948 (Prasad, 1972; Menon, 1956:369-389; Smith, 1950: 37-43; Pavier, 1981:130,139-141; Dhanagare, 1974:125).<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the threat to internal security had been less severe than imagined. In four days, the military had disarmed and arrested the Nizam's army, and suppressed the Razakars, the only real source of resistance.<sup>67</sup> The Nizam publicly surrendered; meanwhile, with no police and the Indian Army looking the other way, fanatic Hindus launched a massive massacre of Muslims.<sup>68</sup>

If there was a threat to the national government of any consequence, it was surely the peasant movement - a communist takeover right in the heart of India!<sup>69</sup> It has even been suggested that Delhi waited so long to overcome the Nizam because it was afraid that a radical change in the status quo might be to the communists' advantage (Smith, 1950:40). Once the Nizam had been safely disposed off, the Army turned to its real task. General J.N. Chaudhuri, who headed the Army's operations, confidently announced that he would liquidate the communists in all of Hyderabad in six weeks (Sundarayya, 1972:178).

The task turned out not to be so simple. Within a week, the military set up armed camps in the rural areas. They then methodically proceeded to arrest or kill Party activists and torture and rape suspected sympathizers. The typical mode of operation consisted of encircling anywhere from five to fifteen villages at a time,<sup>70</sup> gathering all the inhabitants at one place, and then conducting house to house searches. Since the guerillas usually hid in the fields, the circle would slowly be closed until they were discovered. Sometimes informers would tip the police off if a squad was in the area. Here superior communication and transportation proved to be a crucial advantage: the military would quickly surround such an area and almost always succeed in their mission. Over a period of time, such raids decimated the squads: over two thousand peasants and Party members were killed and ten thousand arrested (Dhanagare, 1974:125-126; Pavier, 1981:144-145; Sundarayya, 1972:189-196).

Some squad members not killed in combat were perhaps the worse off for being caught alive. Ramulu was tied to a truck and "dragged on the road until his body was torn to bits." One squad member "was tied to the wheels of a bullock cart and the bullocks were whipped." Several guerillas were burnt alive, some were buried alive. Ganji Satyanarayana and Harijan Muthayya from Malkapuram "had their eyes gouged out, testicles cut and thrust into their mouths, and later hacked to pieces." Yellaswamy from Nomula got this treatment: "... pieces of flesh were cut from his body, nails were hammered into him, he was branded with a red-hot iron" - a common technique (Sundarayya, 1972:198-199).

Informants often received the same treatment. They were not to forget their loyalties easily, "beaten with lathis and bayonets and tortured to the extreme - **like peeling the skin in the design of hammer and sickle**" (Reddy, 1973:60).

In Loyapalli and surrounding villages, people were thrown into thorny bushes and were trampled upon by the military with their boots on. At 12 noon, in (the) hot sun, people were made to crawl on those thorny bushes on their knees and elbows. The whole place was splattered with blood. Three hundred men became unconscious (Sundarayya, 1972:199).

There were other factors at work that contributed to the 'success' of the Army besides tactical and numerical superiority. For many people, the Army invasion marked a victory over the Nizam and the landlords supported by him. The Army was met with demonstrations of support; certainly when Nehru visited the state shortly afterwards, he "was welcomed with enthusiasm as a delivering hero by immense cheering crowds" (Smith, 1950:48; Pavier, 1981:143; Reddy, 1973:59). Though many of the CPI squads took advantage of the confusion in the ranks of the Razakars to seize valuable weapons, others surrendered their arms to the Army, having "developed illusions about the character of the intervention by the Indian Union" (Sundarayya, 1972:181).<sup>71</sup>

To characterize the faith placed in the Indian invasion as an 'illusion' was not entirely misleading, as the villagers soon found out. When the Army turned to the countryside, it brought in tow the deshmukhs and the tax collectors. It ensured that all the confiscated lands were returned to their 'legitimate' owners. Almost all the 'excess' land redistributed by the village committees seems to have been taken back in this way; however, neither 'traditional lands' nor waste lands were uniformly reconfiscated.

It is not surprising then, as a police official revealed, to find that "the people are not helping the government in the villages; on the contrary, they are helping the communists" (Sundarayya, 1972:203-205).<sup>72</sup> The policemen were all from other states (mostly Malabar and Mysore) because it was felt that native policemen would either balk at doing violence to their own people or worse, be secret sympathizers. Even so, the Military Governor had to warn the police about "going under communist influence" (Sundarayya, 1972: 203-205).

Despite help from the peasantry, the squads were forced either to give up or run away. There was a simple reason for this: in the plains there was no place to hide. The size of the squads was cut from about ten to about five or less, and cadres were instructed to dress like villagers and not carry any weapons (Sundarayya, 1972:196). Nothing helped; guerilla warfare against a

superior foe can only succeed if the sympathy of local people and intimacy with the territory can be turned into a decisive advantage.<sup>73</sup> The former was not sufficient; the latter could only be useful if the battleground could be shifted to the forests.

We have seen that there were forests both to the south along the Krishna and more dense ones to the east along the Godavari. It is to these areas that the guerillas now turned. But they had not made any plans to prepare for such an eventuality: they found themselves among forest-people who fled at the sight of them (Sundarayya, 1972:249).

The tribal people who lived in the forests were pathetically poor and acutely exploited. They lived in little hamlets, practiced shifting cultivation, raised cattle, wore what few clothes they could obtain, and survived on a diet of grass seeds, forest fruits and nuts, wild roots, ippapuvvu (flower used to make liquor), forest fowl, boar, buffalo, and coarse millets made into roti or gruel (Sundarayya, 1972:247,253). The wood they required for cooking food and building their huts was traditionally obtained from the forest. Now under government protection, forest-wood could not be cut without the forest official's consent. This was given only in exchange for unlimited free labor, bribes, and women (kept as concubines). Often tribal leaders were party to their own peoples' exploitation: they took bribes from forest contractors and used their traditional authority to provide contractors with cheap labor (Sundarayya, 1972:248; Pavier, 1981:158-159).

It took the cadres from four to six months to win over the tribals, a process helped considerably by the CPI's reputation. Some forest officials fled on hearing of the guerillas' arrival; some were killed; and those who remained at once agreed to pay higher wages and allow the redistribution of land and cattle. About 40-50 squads were formed among the Koya people consisting of a total of a thousand fighters; 200 of these were recruited into the Party (Sundarayya, 1972:89,243; Pavier, 1981:159).

But fighting in the forests had its price: the cadres were ill-fed, often forced to make raids just to eat; they suffered from bad health and disease; and morale was low, all contact with the State Party Center having been lost for almost two years (Sundarayya, 1972:246). Worst of all, they were on the run constantly: the military was not letting up.

The Government had adopted the Briggs Plan - tribal people were evacuated to 'camps' outside the forest areas and their hamlets razed to the ground. Living conditions in these camps were terrible: an estimated ten thousand people died of epidemic diseases. Meanwhile, in the forests, the squads were literally left without shelter. Troops then camped at water-holes, patiently waiting for the squads to refill their water stocks in the hot weather. Strict restrictions on travel were imposed throughout the area: a pass specifying the route of travel and length of stay was required.

Even in these restrictive conditions, some tribal people managed to bring food and supplies to the guerillas. Earlier, they had helped the cadres in extending their operations. People from a sympathetic hamlet would contact neighboring ones, asking all of them to be at home on an assigned day because they were bringing their 'relatives' over to meet them (Sundarayya, 1972:252). One more example will suffice. A squad leader was once surrounded by the police. He was promptly dressed up as a girl who had just reached puberty and kept in a dark corner of a hut. Respecting custom, the police did not check 'her' face and his life was spared. Once the troops suspected a village of harboring activists, they spared no niceties. Sundarayya (1972:245) describes what happened in Nereda:

Once 70 women were beaten with tamarind birches. They were forced to wear pyjamas and chameleons were put into these pyjamas and at the bottom the pyjamas were tucked up. The reptiles started biting and the agony of the women was indescribable. Red chili powder was also sprinkled on the wounds.

The movement nevertheless spread, down among the Chenchu people in the Nallamalla forests of the Krishna River Forest Area and up among the Gonds in Adilabad.<sup>74</sup>

In the face of increased repression, loss of contacts with groups in the plains, and diminishing squad sizes, the guerillas increasingly adopted hit-and-run terrorist tactics. The nature of the fighting was changed to a 'secret war'. But if the squads were not well prepared to meet the Indian army or to retreat into the forests, they were even less prepared to carry on a well-coordinated battle requiring high secrecy. By the time the movement was 'called off' on October 21, 1951, the armed struggle had degenerated into sporadic acts of violence against individuals.

The Army invasion and subsequent events caused a split within the ranks of the Andhra communists, a split which was to find its way into the national ranks of the CPI. We have already seen Ranadive's impatience to bring about a one-stage revolution and the Andhra leadership's disagreement, expressed in the Andhra Letter. What happened next was predictable: Ranadive's policies collapsed when planned strikes failed to materialize. The worst failure was when an all-India railway strike called by the CPI did not get the support of the All-India Railwaymen's Federation, the parent union controlled by the Socialists. The CPI was largely discredited among urban labor groups as a result of its activities in this period (Ram, 1969:20; Pavier, 1981:149-151).

When the Central Committee met in May-June 1950, Rajeswara Rao replaced Ranadive as General Secretary. Four out of the new Politburo of nine came from the Andhra region. They adopted the Chinese model of armed struggle for India as a whole, barring a few areas. Telengana was to be India's Yenan (Ram, 1969:39-41; Pavier, 1981:152-154).

But for most areas in India, urban as well as rural, armed struggle was an impossible dream. Soon, the leadership was being sniped at from both 'left' and 'right' factions, especially the latter. To settle their differences, a four member delegation secretly visited Moscow and met a committee headed by Stalin. Two documents resulted: the 1951 Draft Program and the Statement of Policy.<sup>75</sup> The Draft program recommended a four-class alliance (working class, peasants, intelligentsia, and middle-class and bourgeoisie) in a two-stage revolution. It identified the Congress leadership with British imperialism. The Statement of Policy pursued tactical questions. It rejected both the Russian path of general strikes among the industrial proletariat and the Chinese path of partisan warfare as the only path for India. Rather, it suggested a working class-peasant alliance under the leadership of the former (Ram, 1969:42-55; Sundarayya, 1972:398-404).

The immediate implication of the new tactical line was clear: the armed struggle in Telengana was to be called off. The Central Committee issued a statement that only the "people of Telengana" could decide whether or not to continue the struggle. However, the Central Committee would be willing to negotiate with the Indian government to protect the gains made by the peasantry if they should decide to call it off (Ram, 1969:56; Pavier, 1981:166).

A three-member team was sent to Hyderabad to negotiate with the Indian Government shortly thereafter. It had three main conditions: land-evictions were to be stopped, the military was to be withdrawn, and all communist prisoners were to be released. The Party wanted to be in full strength for the upcoming general election in February 1952. The government refused to negotiate; left with no other option, the CPI 'called off' the insurrection anyway (Ram, 1969:57-58; Sundarayya, 1972:421-422; Pavier, 1981:167-168).

While the communist-led guerilla movement was on the wane, a wave of agricultural strikes was sweeping the plains. From June to December 1949, in Warangal district, 20,000 agricultural workers in 150 villages went on strike; as a consequence their wages doubled or even tripled. At the same time, in the Pindiprolu and Ilendu areas, there were agricultural labor strikes in 90 villages; in 20 villages, women workers went on strike independently

(Sundarayya, 1972:243,259).

Neither in these movements nor in the urban areas was the CPI very effective. Students and workers went on strikes and demonstrations often during 1948-49 but urban unrest remained largely unaffiliated with the insurrection in the rural areas (Sundarayya, 1972:307-312; Pavier, 1981:161).

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Sundarayya (1972) puts the figures at 16,000 square miles, 3 million peasants and 3000 villages; Alavi (1965) and Gough (1974) at 15,000 square miles and 4 million people in 2000 villages and an army of 5000; the figure of 4000 villages comes from Dhanagare (1974) who is in turn quoting Rajeswara Rao; Ram's (1973) numbers are 16,000 square miles, 3000 villages, 4000 militants killed and an additional 10,000 jailed or detained.

<sup>2</sup> Smith (1950:33) has called it the "largest and for a brief moment perhaps the most effective peasant uprising in Asia outside of China".

<sup>3</sup> Large landowners. Deshmukhs usually lived in the rural areas; zamindars, by contrast, were often absentee landlords residing in bigger towns and cities.

<sup>4</sup> Which form of payment dominated varied over the years. Cash payments were more prevalent in 1929-30, covering 55% of rented area. But by 1949-50, this figure was down below 40% (Iyengar, 1951b:58).

<sup>5</sup> Iyengar (1951b:60) reports that 82.7% of all tenants had been cultivating their land for five years or less.

<sup>6</sup> The literacy rate in the whole state was only 3.3% in 1921, several decades later. This in itself represented "considerable improvement as compared with the statistics of 1911" (DR, 1930:62-64).

<sup>7</sup> This is a question that none of the authors who has worked on this subject addresses.

<sup>8</sup> Dora or durra means "sir", "master", or "lord of the village".

<sup>9</sup> Gray (1970:122) says, "Doras are occasionally murdered."

<sup>10</sup> It is impossible to give examples of how these operated. Close scrutiny of the literature reveals nothing.

<sup>11</sup> There was a complex differentiation among various types of jagirs as is evident by their names: paighas, ilagas, samsthans, jagirdars, ijardars, banjardars, maktedars, inamdars, and agraharams (Sundarayya, 1972:10).

<sup>12</sup> The magnitude of this figure can only be gauged by comparing it with the annual wage of a farm servant - Rs.300 or of agricultural laborers - Rs.50-400 (Iyengar, 1951b:212).

<sup>13</sup> Pavier claims that 60% of the rural population consisted of poor peasants and agricultural laborers but "the figure cannot be definitely verified from official statistics" (1981:14). While it seems beyond doubt that official statistics cannot be trusted, they can at least be used to establish broad claims. To substitute these numbers by arbitrarily chosen ones, as Pavier seems to do, is totally unjustified. To give a counterexample, Iyengar (1951b:218) claims, on the basis of field research, that the percentage of landless laborers had gone down significantly since 1929-30.

<sup>14</sup> Wages in peanut farming were even more dismal, on an average Rs. 0.75 per 33 kgs. of peanuts dug up and shelled (Sundarayya, 1972:507).

<sup>15</sup> Toddy is an inexpensive country liquor obtained from the palmyra palm.

<sup>16</sup> Sahukars or banyas are merchants, traders, sometimes landowners - the process of primitive accumulation through mercantile profit seems to have been widespread.

<sup>17</sup> For example, he points out (1972:508) that loans were paid back at the rate of 3 seers jawar per rupee when the market price was only 2 seers jawar per rupee. Since most loans were taken in the dry season - April to June - this would put the simple interest rate at 100%. However, interest was usually compounded.

<sup>18</sup> There seems to have been a high premium for paying back loans in kind. Interest rates for cash were 2-3 percent per month. The 1937 Inquiry corroborates this: cash rates varied from 6-36% (Quereshi, 1947:149-165).

- 19 Bidis are country cigarettes - tobacco rolled in a leaf.
- 20 Iyengar's (1951b:112-126) figures show that only 7% of the land area was transferred in the last fifteen years, more of it transferred to cultivating classes than from them. He notes that only 15% of all land transferred was due to accumulated debt, most of it being passed on through the "usual legal sale process". The 1937 Inquiry, though, shows that from 1922, 10% of all land area passed into the hands of moneylenders and village officers. The evidence for increased concentration is therefore not conclusive.
- 21 Research on cotton was subsidized by the Azam Jahi Mills, showing the close connection between the new industries that processed agricultural goods and the state. However, cotton was grown mostly in Marathwada and was never very important in Telengana's economy.
- 22 Nizamsagar was built between 1924 and 1931.
- 23 Hyderabad had its own currency, whose exchange rate with the british Indian rupee was adjusted semi-annually.
- 24 It is not surprising to find these, the Tatas, Birlas and Sarabhais, giving strong backing to the Congress-led Nationalist Movement - see Kosambi (1946).
- 25 It is not clear whether rents increased in relative terms. Rents in Hyderabad, it should be noted, were higher than comparable figures in other states (Iyengar, 1951b:62-64).
- 26 Irrigation water, for example, was only available to peasants after the deshmukh had finished watering his fields.
- 27 The term "small peasants" is used loosely in this context: it indicates anyone who also works as a wage laborer.
- 28 There seems to be some controversy about this point. Pavier thinks that "the deshmukhs certainly depressed the income of rich peasants" (1981:21; emphasis mine). Dhanagare (1974:114), on the other hand, sees "the gradual development of the rich peasant sector". I am inclined to agree with him for the reasons stated in the text.
- 29 Pavier himself points out (1981:25) that fertilizer and farm-machinery were not yet important considerations. Seeds and irrigation are classic examples of non-lumpy, 'differentiable' inputs - they can be purchased at any scale. Thus, his argument concerning access to capital does not seem very plausible.
- 30 This was Marx's great discovery, as he himself claimed - how free and equal exchange could simultaneously be exploitative at another level (1977:51).
- 31 Scott's subsistence hypothesis seems plausible here (1976:15-26). Pavier (1981:20) quotes a visitor to that area - "the fields in the valley are exclusively reserved for food crops which have to be attended to immediately after the first rain sets in. It is only after the farmer has finished work connected with food crops that he can devote attention to the castor seed which is grown on the slopes."
- 32 Except at harvest time, when wages typically went up, often by 50 percent (Sundarayya, 1972:507).
- 33 Both the high percentage of debt invested in productive uses and the predominance of usufructuary mortgages points to the increasing formal subsumption of labor to capital (Banaji, 1977).
- 34 The amount is equal to a farm servant's monthly wage. The price of wet land at that time ranged from Rs. 100-400 per acre (Pavier, 1981:5).
- 35 This statement is best interpreted loosely.
- 36 In 1941, Muslims formed about 13% of the state's population.
- 37 Literally, "Council of the Union of Muslims" (Smith, 1950:33, fn.3).
- 38 Reformist Hindu organization formed in Bombay in 1875.
- 39 Bahadur Yar Jung was a nobleman; perhaps that had something to do with the direction taken by the Ittehad.
- 40 Both Smith (1950:33) and Pavier (1981:65) describe the Ittehad specifically using this term.
- 41 There were five languages. In descending order by number of speakers, they were: Telugu, Marathi, Urdu, Kannada, and Lambadi.
- 42 Reddy (1973:2-3) reports that there were only 15 high schools in the State in 1927. He may be referring to non-English medium schools for the official statistics show 20 English and 11 Osmania High Schools in 1922 (DR:201-202).
- 43 In Urdu, there was a saying - telangi bedhangi. Pejoratively used, it equated everything telangi with that which is deficient and inapt.



- 44 Though it need not have. Dhanagare (1974:118) seems to make the elementary error of equating people's class backgrounds with their interests.
- 45 There is apparently some dispute about the organization's founding date. The CPI(M) locates it in 1920 while the CPI thinks the correct date is 1925 (Lieten, 1977:1610).
- 46 This was probably truer in rural areas; the CPI adopted a "no-strike" wartime policy that did not endear it to the trade unions.
- 47 There were 16 annas to the rupee.
- 48 Palme Dutt was a member of the CPGB who was very influential in the politics of the CPI.
- 49 Reddy (1973:40-41) identifies three types of problems concerning land: distribution of fallow lands; prevention of eviction; and stopping disenfranchisement.
- 50 Pavier's reliance on D.V. Rao who was Secretary of the Nalgonda District Committee makes it suspect of overemphasis.
- 51 The atrocities he refers to were the usual exactions of landlords.
- 52 Long wooden stick. The Andhra Mahasabha came to be known as Gutapa Sangham - the lathi group- whereas they were previously known as Chitty Sangham - petitions group (Pavier, 1981:95-98; Sundarayya, 1972:39).
- 53 Relative to the peasants who were armed with slings, sticks, and very occasionally country-guns.
- 54 'Vishal' literally means 'huge, vast, or expansive'.
- 55 The campaign's purpose was to deprive the Nizam of excise-tax revenue. But while the Congress could legitimize it in moralistic terms, the CPI had no such excuse.
- 56 The only time the peasants could obtain modern weapons was when the Nizam's forces were in retreat but then they had to face the Indian army (Sundarayya, 1972:135).
- 57 It is hard to estimate how widespread or effective this was. Some of the cadres, including squad leaders, were illiterate. Reddy (1973:57) claims that "illiteracy was wiped out during those glorious days," but a few sentences later suggests that the change was not so sweeping: "Many became literate through night schools" (emphasis mine). Sundarayya (1972:127-128) says that adult literacy was encouraged but not systematically carried on.
- 58 There is no reference anywhere about **how** it was done.
- 59 The latter is important because of the large proportion of widowed women in Hyderabad, 20% of the female population in 1921 (DR:62). These 'evils' have always been the main targets of the reformist tradition in India. This betrays the petite-bourgeois orientation of the Andhra CPI; they were, however, separated from reformism in one crucial respect: they could make goals **effective**.
- 60 If this observation is correct (no figures are given to support it), it certainly could not be explained on the basis of land distribution and the "inverse relation", for the simple reason that probably not enough time had elapsed to see the results.
- 61 Statistics from 1921 show that women formed a larger proportion of the field laborers than men (DR:70).
- 62 In effect, they were functioning as insurance agents. Lack of capital is often cited as an impediment to productivity increases in agriculture. Here is an example where an alteration in the balance of power made a simple institutional arrangement possible.
- 63 The domestic bourgeoisie were to be fought next - in the "proletarian stage".
- 64 He even suggests that this may be due to cultural conditioning since the leading Party members in Hyderabad came from Muslim backgrounds.
- 65 About \$20 million.
- 66 Pavier suggests that Jinnah's death on September 12 was a big psychological blow to Hyderabad and may have been a factor.
- 67 The code name for the invasion was "Operation Polo", perhaps a reflection of its expected difficulty. The military invasion and subsequent repression is euphemistically referred to as the "Police Action". It is a measure of the state's hegemony of the ideological domain that it has since always been referred to by that epithet, even by the communist leaders. Until today, the murder of 'extremists' by government forces is always referred to as an 'encounter', a word that neuters the act by trivializing its deliberateness.
- 68 Smith (1950:46) puts the number of Muslims killed at anywhere between 50,000-200,000, mostly in Marathwada. "The Muslim community fell before a massive and brutal blow, the devastation of which left those who survived reeling in bewildered fear...somewhere between one in ten and one in five adult (Muslim) males may have lost



their lives in those few days. In addition to killing, there was widespread rape, arson, looting and expropriation."

69 In February 1947, K.M. Munshi, India's Agent-General in Hyderabad, was afraid that (1957:133) "...in the end the Communists would obtain a complete hold over Andhra". Dhanagare (1974:125) cites a Government of India report which says: "The immediate intention of India's forces in Hyderabad was (a) to round up the communists in the south-eastern districts; (b) to go round, taluka by taluka, tracing out the Razakars and disarming the population so that the Nizam could be retained as head of the State." See also Menon (1956:384).

70 Pavier (1981:144) quoting D.V. Rao puts the figure at 10-15 villages; Reddy (1973:60) puts it at 5-6. It seems that as the cadre population thinned out over time, the dragnet grew larger.

71 I will suggest later that such 'illusions' were of a systematic character and not merely subjective deviations.

72 The name or rank of the police official is not revealed nor is the date of the interview. Sundarayya's sources are seldom clear: it is presumed that his book is reconstructed from first and second-hand accounts.

73 As the example of Vietnam clearly shows.

74 The Gonds apparently had revolted before but had been brutally suppressed.

75 This was the 'open' version of a document called the "Tactical Line" (Ram, 1969:53).

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TABLE I

Areas of Oilseed Cultivation (in thousand acres).

CROP	1925	1931-35	1939-40
Peanuts	3.0	986.0	1959.5
Castor	1000.0*	772.0	670.9
Linseeds	n.a.	318.0	526.2

NOTE: n.a. signifies data not available.

The figures for 1931-35 are averaged for the whole period.

\*Figure for 1921-22 (actually larger or equal to).

# REVOLUTION IN TELENGANA (1946-1951) (Part Two)

Akhil Gupta

The first part of this article was largely descriptive. In it, I attempted to sketch the state of affairs that prevailed in Hyderabad before the revolutionary rupture. That was followed by a narrative of the events that constituted the movement and the actions undertaken by the various parties involved. In this part, I try to assess the achievements of the movement and to seek the causes of its initial success, its subsequent defeat and of its origins. In doing so, I will consider some of the proposed theories of revolution. Applying these theories to this particular example should help delineate their explanatory power in terms of both their strengths and weaknesses. Finally, I will indicate what I believe to be important gaps in this study, theoretical lacunae present as well in the more general theories of revolution considered here.

The detailed description of the armed struggle given so far has been but a necessary prelude to the questions that make such a study relevant: What did the insurrection achieve? Why did it succeed? Why did it finally fail? Most difficult of all is the question of origins: Why did the Telengana movement begin? That is left to the concluding part of this paper. In answering these questions, I will take account of the assessments made by some of the leaders of the movement as well as of some of the more general theories of revolutions.

## THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE MOVEMENT

In the short run, the impact of the movement was considerable: the land distribution scheme altered the lives of poor peasants in a fundamental way. Not only did land provide a secure basis for life, it provided employment, and very importantly, respect and credit (Sundarayya, 1972:116). The gram-rajyams (also called "village soviets") were the effective government in the 'liberated' areas, controlling all juridical and administrative functions. At least among the guerillas, caste-distinctions broke down and patriarchal authority was questioned by women activists. New legislation was introduced: the Jagir Abolition Regulation of 1949 handed over all jagir lands to the state; and the Hyderabad Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act of 1950 provided for extensive land reforms.<sup>76</sup> These included the right to buy land on easy terms to tenants who had been cultivating it for over six years, and the granting of a ten-year lease to all tenants.

Over the long run however, the considerable gains made during this period could not be sustained. We have already seen that after the Indian government took control, the peasants managed to hold on to only waste lands or 'traditional lands'. All 'excess' land, that is, land seized from the big landlords, had to be returned. Very few of the tenants who could have legally claimed occupancy rights actually did: most of them were evicted before the new laws took effect. Of those "protected" tenants who remained on their land, only 55.5% were still on it a mere three years later, having either been bought out, evicted or having "voluntarily surrendered" their rights. Sundarayya reports that in 1972 - twenty years later - usury and indirect forced

labor still exist in these areas. In some sense sense, the situation got worse: landlords adopted self-cultivation with the help of wage labor and refused to rent land out for tenurial cultivation. To evade the land-ceiling act, they distributed land among the family members, legally separating it while maintaining effective control. However, the worst features of the old system - vetti and the illegal exaction of "gifts" - decreased noticeably along with the abolition of jagirdari<sup>77</sup> (Sundarayya, 1972:438; Pavier, 1981:176; Dhanagare, 1974: 132).

It is not clear what the long-term impact of the movement was on social relations. Certainly caste had reaffirmed its traditional role in the legitimization of stratification; landlords even adopted the tactic of donating land to certain castes or communities to weaken class alliances (Gray, 1970:119-135; Sundarayya, 1972:438). But some effects have persisted - one small example of how influences are transmitted even in the absence of a 'written' culture can be given. A squad leader who died in a police raid had a song written about him - "Sai Sai Gopal Reddy".<sup>78</sup> More important is the fact that several people named their children after him, a sufficient guarantee that his exploits would be remembered by the next generation (Sundarayya, 1972:107).

Any consideration of the achievements of the Telengana movement presupposes theoretical judgement on one crucial question: is the movement best characterized as a '**revolt**', '**insurrection**', '**rebellion**', '**uprising**' (and similar terms) or as a '**revolution**'? The issue is not merely academic - it has very important implications for practice.

Taking one of the most influential recent definitions as a point of departure (Skocpol, 1979:4).<sup>79</sup>

Social revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structures; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below.

Skocpol emphasizes the necessity of "the coincidence of societal structural change with class upheaval; and the coincidence of political with social transformation." She clearly excludes transformations where 'actual change of state and class structures' has not occurred (1979:5).

Using this definition, would the Telengana movement be considered a revolution? Yes, because it did **actually** transform state and class structures, partly through a class-based revolt from below. In the liberated villages, an alternative form of rule was set up and land - the principle means of production - was redistributed. But such a situation persisted only for a short time. So if we consider a longer period (or a greater geographical area - the newly formed nation-state), no social revolution occurred. Employing Skocpol's definition, then, we could conclude either a) that a revolution did occur, but its impact was undone, or b) that the movement was not a revolution at all.

One way out of this conceptual dilemma, suggested by Aya (1979:45) is to define revolutions prospectively instead of retrospectively: by looking only at situations rather than by also including outcomes.<sup>80</sup> Though Aya (1979:45) limits his prospective definition to "revolutionary **situations** of multiple sovereignty", it could be expanded to include a fundamental redistribution of the ownership of the means of production accompanied by parallel changes in the relations of production<sup>81</sup> (class structures) as well as the institutional mechanisms used in the extraction of surplus (for example, the state's coercive and bureaucratic apparatus), all of which is partly the result of a broad-based peasant uprising. Defined in this manner, the Telengana movement was clearly a revolutionary situation as contrasted with, for example, the Mutiny of 1857 (Metcalf, 1964).

The overall impact of the Telengana movement may be summarized in this way: it altered the balance of forces in the rural areas in such a way that the worst forms of domination were rendered illegitimate. Its long term effects, however, have been slight as far as the poor agrarian majority is concerned. Why this combination of results obtained should be clear from the next two sections.

## REASONS FOR THE MOVEMENT'S SUCCESS

The success of the Telengana movement was due to a conjunction of factors which can initially be divided into four groups, two structural and two strategic. The first of these was the economic and military pressures put on Hyderabad by the newly independent Indian state. These pressures were articulated along lines that lay isomorphic to at least some of the issues being raised within Telengana. Along with a whole host of other factors, this was responsible for generating the broad base of support that was structurally necessary for the movement to become a 'mass-based' revolution. On the other hand were the the tactically necessary conditions: the orientation toward meeting the participants' immediate needs; and the ability to organize and coordinate the various groups involved.

The Telengana movement's greatest successes came in the first half of 1948, when pressure on the Nizam from the outside was the strongest. With independence, the Nizam no

longer enjoyed the backing of the British. On the other hand, in the face of collapsing negotiations, the Nehru Government imposed an economic and military blockade on Hyderabad. There was a widespread belief that invasion was imminent. External pressures served to force open preexisting internal structural weaknesses. The regime in Hyderabad was characterized by a growing centralization of power. This power was concentrated in the hands of the Nizam and an educated, militantly Muslim, urban bureaucratic class imported from North India. The new administrators came into conflict with the old nobility and rural aristocracy. At the same time, their elitism antagonized the large majority of the Muslim community which, under the leadership of the Ittehad, demanded the devolution of autocratic rule and the setting up of representative (Muslim) government (Elliott, 1974). However, when the Ittehad finally did achieve effective control, at the end of 1947, matters were already out of the Hyderabad government's hands (Pavier, 1981:127-130).

In the move towards giving the state a more Muslim character as well as in the imposition of Urdu, the Hyderabad government created and encouraged opposition to the regime. This opposition found support from the Congress. For a short period just before independence, the Congress and the CPI even worked together in Hyderabad. Though its partnership with the Congress was short-lived and though the Congress never managed to get a foothold in the rural politics of Telengana, the CPI benefitted for taking up some of the same issues that the nationalist movement was raising in the rest of the country. While expressing reservations about the communists' tactics the Congress initially even encouraged them.

Religion, language and regional loyalties, along with several other factors - class, caste, culture and geography - help explain what alliances were created and why they cohered. Taken together, they constitute the reasons that the movement attracted such a broad base of support. Each of these factors is considered briefly below.

It seems that the participants in the Telengana struggle came from different classes. All the major leaders of the CPI were either themselves rich landowners or belonged to such families. On the other hand, most of the other participants, including the Party's rank-and-file were either landless laborers or poor peasants.

Dhanagare suggests three reasons why an interclass alliance came about: a) all sections of the peasantry had grievances against the big landlords and, by inference, would benefit from their removal; b) coming together was the only effective way to challenge the landlords' power; and c) such an alliance functioned to serve the interests of the rich peasants who controlled the Party. While the first two propositions seem incontrovertible, the last one is problematic for at least three reasons. First, it seems that the movement did not always follow Party directive, especially in the formative early stages (this much is admitted to even by Party historians - Sundarayya, 1972:52-54).<sup>82</sup> Secondly, to presume that leaders can direct their followers in order to fulfill their own personal ends is an enormous oversimplification (Worsley, 1968). The duality of power - the symmetric dependence of leaders on those whom they lead - makes it necessary to demonstrate the presence of the structural and legitimizing preconditions necessary for the exercise of power (Giddens, 1979).<sup>83</sup> Finally, if we grant that CPI leaders were sincere in their belief in communist ideology and were thus not consciously acting in their class interests (there is no evidence to the contrary), it would

need to be shown that they were nevertheless doing so **unconsciously**. This would be a very difficult endeavor at best and one that Dhanagare does not even attempt.

As with class, so with caste: the composition of the movement seems to have been truly heterogeneous (Pavier, 1981:184). This is surprising since cast divisions have always yielded the weak links that can be used to crack groups whose solidarity depends on common class interests. None of the authors tries to explain this phenomenon: indeed, caste is largely ignored by most on the grounds that it was not an important factor. The problem I will suggest, really lies in the inability of their theoretical framework to adequately address this issue. Certainly the marxism of the CPI of the forties and fifties had no substantial analysis to offer for caste and religion.

Songs and drama seem to have been the predominant modes of cultural expression - the means by which consciousness of the movement spread among its largely illiterate participants. These forms, as well as stories, dance and poems were produced spontaneously for the most part. Some of these have already been mentioned but the evidence regarding either the content or the context - the mise-en-scene - is slight. There is no reference to how traditional cultural practices either obstructed or encouraged the movement. The only examples given are those about the forest people who helped the cadres by making them 'relatives' and who saved one squad leader's life by dressing him up as a pubescent girl.

The success of an insurrection spread over a wide geographical area depends crucially on communication and transportation. In the absence of sophisticated telecommunications equipment and widespread literacy, the mode of communication was face-to-face and oral. Similarly, in the absence of motored transportation, the primary method of travel was by foot. It is not surprising then that the revolt first spread among the densely populated plains: we have seen how groups walking from village to village quickly spread the revolutionary message. At the same time, when faced with government forces the movement was able to do better in the forests. That was because knowledge of the terrain and the sympathy of local residents was an advantage over modern transportation and superior communication, neither of which was very effective in the jungles. Similarly, the guerrillas had the upper hand during the monsoons while the police reigned supreme in the summer months (Sundarayya, 1972:224). The reasons are not hard to guess: hard-bed roads were few and far between and country paths probably became untraversable by motored traffic after the first few rains. Military camps in the countryside, whose strength relied greatly on being able to quickly summon reinforcements, became more vulnerable - the guerrillas thus had a freer hand. In the forests though, the monsoons were no advantage: the squads had no shelter and the rain was particularly heavy. Summer restored the advantage of superior transportation possessed by the police; at the same time, the squads in the forests were vulnerable because the army could monitor their sources of water.

Group identity is formed as much by what its members have in common as by what separates them from other groups: by difference as much as by identity. So far, we have considered the common interests that formed and maintained the alliance; now, we will consider those common oppositions that served the same purpose. Chief among them were religion, language, and regional loyalties.<sup>84</sup> On these issues, the goals of the Telengana movement coincided with the nationalist movement: they supported and fed into each other.

Religious differences became an issue because the Nizam had concentrated power in the hands of Muslim noblemen. While most deshmukhs were Hindus, the exploitation on jagir and sarf-e-khas lands would be directly linked with the Nizam and the Muslim nobility. Furthermore, in seeking legitimation by giving Hyderabad the aura of an Islamic state, the Nizam polarized religious groups further. The rural areas were already more than proportionally Hindu since a large fraction of the Muslims in the state lived in Hyderabad City. Thus religion further exacerbated the opposition and presumably strengthened the alliance against the Nizam and his forces. This process was accelerated by the atrocities of the exclusively Muslim Razakars.

More strongly than religion, language and regional loyalties were focal points of popular opposition. We have seen how the imposition of Urdu and the suppression of Telugu resulted in the formation of the Andhra Jana Sangham. The dissolution of Hyderabad State and its reconstitution along linguistic lines drew considerable support in Telengana. Both the CPI with its campaign for 'Vishalandhra' and the Congress had policies directed to this end. It is unclear whether language-based discontent was predicated on demands for cultural autonomy or merely served to validate anti-Nizam feeling by grounding it in an alternative plan. But there is no doubt that the dominance of Marathas in the urban areas and the presence of Marwadi and Maratha moneylenders in the rural areas contributed to linguistic and regional chauvinism.

It was a sentiment that the Nehru Government could both encourage and tap into, gaining a measure of legitimacy 'below' which allowed them to put greater pressure on the Nizam from 'above'. Though underlining accession to the Indian Union may have been a very popular plank on the CPI's platform, it was eventually to turn against them, as we shall see in the next section.

The Telengana movement recorded such spectacular successes because of enthusiastic participation. This in turn was due partly to the immediate, visible payoff from doing so. The goals achieved included the abolition of vetti and illegal exaction; the return of confiscated 'family lands'; either the reduction or non-payment of rents - ending landlordism; initially, a moratorium on all debts and later the regulation of interest rates; distribution of 'surplus' land and waste-land; distribution of grain, agricultural implements and livestock seized from big landlords; higher wages for agricultural laborers and parity of men's and women's wages; burning of official records (legal rights over land and debt records were thus lost); non-payment of taxes like the excise tax on toddy; construction of canals and small tanks, provision of preventive medicine and housing material; and a dual policy on the government's grain levy, preventing big landlords from evading it while encouraging everyone else not to pay it (Sundarayya, 1972:58, 126; Dhanagare, 1974:127).

Peasant uprisings, as we know, are not uncommon; Gough (1974), for examples, has recorded at least 77 major insurrections (having at least several thousand participants) in the last two hundred years of Indian history. But spontaneous uprisings cannot be sustained for long without the emergence of some kind of organizational framework if they are to develop into something more than flash uprisings.

We have already seen the various positions along which the CPI sought ideological justification; language, culture, and regional affiliations; an anti-landlord, anti-Nizam, pro-accession stance; and in meeting immediate needs. Similarly, it organized both the gram-rai system of village government to replace the old system and the armed squads to perform

the necessary military tasks. It formulated rules of conduct for members that prevented reckless atrocity and needless provocation. For example, guerrillas were under instructions not to hurt non-participating old men, children, and women as well as not to engage in looting.<sup>85</sup>

This is not to say that the movement followed some CPI master plan because there was none. Often events happened despite the CPI, not because of it. The first land seizures were spontaneous acts; once committed, the Party had no choice but to defend them. The fledgling CPI in Telengana was perhaps shaped more by the turn of the events than it was able to shape them.<sup>86</sup> It could not always make the majority of peasants (who were not cadres) do what it wanted them to; secondly, even when actions were carried out in accordance with intention, they could have effects which were not foreseen.

In attempting to explain why the movement succeeded to the extent that it did, I want to suggest a complex causality where several factors played a necessary part yet no one factor was sufficient. The analytical question of why revolutions succeed or fail is too often merged with the question of why revolutions begin in the first place. The two sets of issues are closely related insofar as they can be explained by the same set of structural determinants. For neither case, however, are structural explanations by themselves sufficient. The question of origins, I will argue, poses problems of an entirely different, and more severe order of complexity, than the question of success or failure.

Skocpol (1979:17-18,291) proposes to explain the revolutionary process by two factors. The first is the "objectively conditioned and complex intermeshing of the various actions of the diversely situated groups." In presenting such an "impersonal and nonsubjective viewpoint," however, she does not rule out the second factor, the role of revolutionary organizations and ideologies. These function to "cement the solidarity of radical vanguards" and to "facilitate the consolidation of new regimes". But "ideologically oriented leaderships. . . have been greatly limited" (1979:171) by those very structural conditions that created the revolutionary situation to begin with. The success or failure of revolutionary movements hinges on the results of the state-building efforts of their leaders (Skocpol, 1979:161-4).

Skocpol's understanding of revolutionary process, I will argue, is seriously deficient in two respects. First, in reducing practice to the "objectively conditioned. . . actions of diversely situated groups", Skocpol herself runs up against what Bourdieu (1977) has called "the objective limits of objectivism". Structure is seen by Skocpol, not in its dialectical relation with action, as both the medium and outcome of practices (Giddens, 1979), but as the factor determining or limiting action. In her (justifiable) reaction to voluntarism, Skocpol seeks solace in an extreme structuralism where actions are conditioned but do not condition and where structure circumscribes practice but does not enable it.<sup>87</sup> Even if we accept, with Skocpol, that actions are objectively conditioned, we still don't have an explanation for why these actions are undertaken in the first place. What it does explain is the form that these actions take and how they interact.<sup>88</sup> By contrast, consider Bourdieu (1977:3), who seeks to explain how practices arise in this manner:

the critical break with objectivist abstraction ensuing from inquiry into the conditions of possibility, and thereby, into the limits of the objective and objectifying standpoint which grasps

practices from outside, as a fait accompli, instead of constructing their generative principle by situating itself within the very movement of their accomplishment, has no other aim than to make possible a science of the dialectical relations between the objective structures to which the objectivist mode of knowledge gives access and the structured dispositions within which those structures are actualized and which tend to reproduce them.

The second major problem with Skocpol's analysis follows from the first: she leaves out the problem of legitimation altogether. Revolutionary organizations and ideologies are ascribed functions like cementing solidarity and facilitating state-building efforts but we are not told how they work. Problems of legitimation are inextricably involved with the breakup of the old regime (failure to continue to legitimize old forms of domination) and the creation of new state organizations (the legitimation of new forms of domination). Quite correctly, Skocpol (1979:25-26) wants to reject those views that treat legitimacy as being synonymous with consensus (Gurr and Johnson). She does this by opposing legitimacy to coercion as alternative forms of state domination, arguing that neither view satisfactorily incorporates the autonomy of the state.<sup>89</sup> But is this opposition valid? Legitimation and domination (coercive and otherwise) are not distinct mechanisms in the reproduction of social structure; they are bound together with the symbolic realm, in the constitution of all social practices (Giddens, 1979). In her analysis of France, Russia and China, Skocpol concludes that all these revolutions were more centralized, rationalized and mass-incorporating than the regimes they replaced. She asks why this happened but not how it took place (Skocpol, 1979:161-173). Thus the process by which revolutionary leaders legitimize their own power is never raised.

In analyzing the success of the revolution in Telengana, the structurally conditioned crisis in state authority and the actions of the different groups that came together to form the movement's broad-based alliance form but one side of the story. That has to be counterbalanced by those strategic and immediate short term aims that propelled the largely poor participants into action and the contingent nature of the failure of the other. The course of the revolution may have escaped the specific intentions of any one set of people involved; however that is no reason to conclude, as Skocpol does (1979:17, quoting Wendell Phillips approvingly), that "revolutions are not made; they come."

Alavi (1965) forwards four reasons to account for the success of the Telengana movement: the rise of nationalist sentiment; the demoralization of the Nizam's corrupt and inefficient administration; the broad-based demands of the movement which brought middle peasants into the fold; and, the solidarity, independence and fighting-spirit of the tribal populations where the movement spread. From the first part, it should be clear that all but one--the middle peasant thesis--were relatively minor reasons. Middle peasants are initially the most militant, Alavi says, because they are relatively independent of the direct bonds that poor peasants have with their patrons.<sup>90</sup> Their position as self-sufficient landowners often brings them into conflict with rich peasants and landlords.<sup>91</sup> Once poor peasants see that the power of their masters can be effectively challenged, however, they enthusiastically jump into the fray and give the revolution its real impetus. Applying Alavi's thesis to the Telengana struggle proves not to be a very fruitful exercise. It is true

that the organizational efforts of the Andhra Mahasabha were led by people who were not poor peasants. They were, however, not middle peasants either - it is clear that almost all of them came from rich peasant backgrounds (Pavier, 1981:187). Furthermore, there is no evidence to believe that the spontaneous uprisings that started the movement were initiated by middle peasants. Alavi's principal insight consists in having isolated a potential source of structural dislocation. But it cannot be argued that it is either a necessary or sufficient (ahistorical) cause of revolution.

In his famous study of revolution, Wolf (1969) locates some groups and organizations as being central to the revolutionary process. Peasants and the "intelligentsia-in-arms" (1969:296) fight together for their mutual benefit. Organizational structures are of three kinds: the armed peasant band, the military organization and the ideologically driven paramilitary party. The manner in which army and party combine is different in various revolutions. Different as well are the means by which they incorporate the peasant rebels. In Telengana, the rebels had no army distinct from the paramilitary party organization nor was there a group that could qualify as an "intelligentsia-in-arms". It would seem, then, that the success (failure) of a movement does not necessarily depend on the presence (absence) of these groups. Even if they are present, Wolf does not tell us why and under what circumstances would they succeed.

In conclusion, structural analyses prove not to be sufficient explanations of the success (failure) of revolutionary movements. In particular, they do not help us understand why people participate in such movements. Theories that seek to account for popular participation are much more concerned with why movements begin than with the revolutionary process itself. The shortcomings of such explanations should now be clear. I am not, however, proposing an alternative to these explanations. Whether alternative explanations are possible, and if so what form they should take, are issues that are raised in the last section. Before we come to that, let us examine why the revolution in Telengana collapsed in the manner already described.

## REASONS FOR THE MOVEMENT'S FAILURE

Paradoxically, some of the reasons for the movement's initial success were later responsible for its failure. Most of these latent problems emerged after the invasion of Hyderabad by the Indian Army. Apart from the obvious factor of physical force were the following problems: the Congress made inroads into the CPI's base of legitimacy; diverse interest groups who had come together in their common opposition to the Nizam now tugged the united front in different directions; having to concentrate on short-term goals, the CPI failed to institute the kind of long-term changes that would have proved difficult to erase; and the peasant movement was almost entirely confined to the Telengana countryside, receiving little help either from urban areas or from neighboring states.

To say that the Telengana movement 'failed' is to convey a sense of inadequacy in fulfilling certain goals. But the dominant reason why the movement 'failed' was that it was successfully suppressed. We have seen how the peasant army managed only limited success against the Nizam's troops. In front of the Indian forces, they were pathetically overmatched. Faced with almost certain extermination of the plains, the communist cadres ran into the forests. But they

were even less prepared to fight a secret, guerrilla war than a conventional one.

It is in this light that we must assess Sundarayya's claim that the 'mistake' made by the Party was in confusing 'partisan struggle' with a 'liberation struggle' (Sundarayya, 1972:120). He advocates the former strategy which would consist of armed resistance aimed at defending partial gains, for example, in protecting seized land. The latter would assume the form of an all-out war against the State. From the evidence, it is clear that the military's strength was so overwhelming that defending any kind of gains would have been very unlikely. In fact, fights did take place over land that the Congress wanted to return to its 'legal' owners - the deshmukhs. The result was a foregone conclusion: almost from the start, the guerrillas were on the run. It would be hard to characterize their efforts as a 'liberation war' - which implies an offensive as well as a defensive strategy - if anything, the battle they fought was a defensive partisan struggle. Similarly, Pavier claims that the Party made a mistake in leaving the plains and adopting Chinese-style guerrilla warfare tactics (Pavier, 1981:184). He may be right about the decision on guerrilla war but on the issue of running to the forests, he ignores the facts that he himself marshals earlier. They show that leaving the plains became a strategy of necessity, not of choice.

In the forests, the guerrillas were hopelessly out of their element. An examination of a CPI document, Present Secret Organization and its Tasks, released on May 14, 1949, is quite revealing (Sundarayya, 1972:528-551). The guerrillas were warned that the military was arresting "persons with cropped hair, white clothes, those who smell of soap and coconut oil" (Sundarayya, 1972:530). They were instructed to wear the same clothes as those worn by the local people, unsuspiciously dirty (water was not easily available), not appear foreign. Squads were chastised for leaving secret locations in the forest with visible signs of having been inhabited - food, pots, and fire-places were not covered up. Then there were simple mistakes: smoking cigarettes at night; talking, singing, calling out loudly "Comrade!", and greeting each other the with 'red salute' while marching; holding public discussions in the daytime without posting guards; not using assumed names; and even snoring while sleeping.

Lack of military experience may have done the squads in but the process was aided by cracks in the CPI's base of support. The Congress managed to entrench itself among a significant section of the communists' followers. It could do this because the CPI's anti-landlord, pro-accession, and pro-Vishalandhra policies attracted diverse groups who were united in their opposition to the Nizam. The Nizam thus became the perfect symbolic locus of popular disenchantment; however, it then became relatively simple to diffuse such discontent merely by overthrowing him. The CPI suffered for letting its campaign pay too much attention to personality and short-term goals; when these goals were met and the issue of personality became irrelevant, it found itself stripped of the backing necessary to accomplish more substantial tasks.

Let us first look at class divisions. There is some evidence to indicate that a large proportion of wealthier peasants deserted the united front after the Indian Government takeover. To understand why this happened, it is worthwhile to consider how class relations changed with the new government. The collapse of authority in Telengana no doubt owed much to the extreme concentration of power. The

Congress could see that a stable balance of power in the rural areas involved a somewhat broader base. At the same time, it was interested in securing an agricultural surplus to feed industrial development and that meant yields had to be increased. The solution was to promote capitalist agriculture (productive investment): the old style of landlordism (rent-squeezing) would have to go. The Congress was not opposed to the landlords themselves; we have seen that it brought them back in Telengana. What happened could be termed as a 'revolution at the top' - the surplus-producing peasants had gained at the expense of the landlords without entirely displacing them from the highest rungs of the rural hierarchy.

But gaining more power was only one side of the rich peasants' attraction for the Congress; in the united front, they were slowly losing their dominant position. That was due both to higher wages and land distribution. One of the Party's planks was higher wages for the landless poor who constituted its major fraction. Such demands, however, went against the wishes of wealthy peasants who depended on wage labor for most of their output. Secondly, when land distribution picked up momentum, the Party was pressured to successively decrease the ceiling. The first limits on landholdings only affected the large landlords; soon however, smaller landlords and rich peasants also began to lose land. Faced with a choice of entering an untried coalition that had egalitarian aspirations or an implicit agreement with a stable central government where they gained more power than they currently possessed, the rich peasants naturally chose the latter.

Just as the rich peasants did not "change sides as a group",<sup>92</sup> so neither did the rest of the rural population consistently support the CPI. The Congress adopted radical rhetoric while pursuing reformist programs, a fact of little importance until we consider that they controlled the media, most importantly the radio. The new order also gained legitimacy by its relative sophistication in concealing the origins of domination: while the deshmukhs could be clearly linked to the Nizam, the new rural ruling-class drew its authority from abstract legal and economic relations, having no **visible** symbol to back them up.

While the CPI had tried to downplay the importance of caste and religion, the Congress had no such intention: the Indian Army stood by as the Hindus regained their supremacy in a bloodbath. In composition and ideology, the Congress was largely Hindu though it presented itself as a secular organization. Similarly, one finds that traditional relations patterned on caste differences were once again restored in full measure in the Telengana countryside. The Congress was not seeking to implement radically egalitarian programs. It found that broadening the base of the dominating classes and changing the means by which power relations were regenerated were sufficient to be able to rule securely.

Apart from class, caste, and religion, the Congress took advantage of the agitation concerning language and regional autonomy. The communists had made linguistic states a popular issue. So had the Congress but there was one big difference: the Congress controlled the central government and they alone had the power to do so. By stressing this issue, the CPI played into the hands of the Indian State.

The Congress thus 'pulled' out a large chunk of the CPI's support; at the same time, different groups within the united front 'pushed' it apart. Both movements were helped by the CPI's concentration on short-term goals at the expense of long-range ones. It was finally the failure of successful spatial and temporal extension that brought down the movement.

We have seen how the abolition of vetti and other **concrete** changes made in the short run problematized the usually reified nature of traditional practices. But having challenged the historically given relations of domination regenerated in the most innocent practices of everyday life, the movement went no further. **There was no systematic attempt made to alter the normative structures of the participants' consciousness** (Sundarayya, 1972:510, for an example). This is where the Telengana movement failed most acutely.

That the CPI failed to attempt deep-seated changes in belief-systems is not really surprising when we consider their politics. Their theoretical understanding was derived in large part from the international communist movement: no substantial effort was made to understand the Indian situation. For example, there was no significant analysis of caste and religion. It is not enough to dismiss them as constituting 'false consciousness': one must be able to explain their obviously dominating role in everyday life.<sup>93</sup> Such a theoretical understanding obviously has ramifications for policy issues. The Andhra communists in fact fully embraced the Maoist model of armed guerrilla warfare only to realize that conditions in Yenani in the thirties were very different from Telengana in the fifties.

Such ideological shortcomings were exacerbated by organizational ones. In a revolutionary situation, with poor communication and information flows, the CPI needed the ability to decide and respond quickly to local developments. That would have meant the decentralization of decision-making authority, relative autonomy to pursue action, and a flexible organizational scheme. If anything, the Party did almost exactly the reverse: authority was centralized, 'adventurist' acts were denounced, and the organization of the squads as well as the personal lives of its members was strictly regulated.

If the CPI in Telengana could not extend the movement over time, it could not extend it over space either. Even within Telengana itself, the 'disturbance' was concentrated mostly in Nalgonda and Warangal. There was little cooperation from neighboring districts and states. When the Indian forces invaded, the guerrilla army was clearly concentrated in too narrow a geographical base. The Party instructed its cadres to spread the attack to new areas so as to disperse the Indian forces (Sundarayya, 1972:192). But it was too late to start organizing on a mass scale in new areas; besides, the Army was such an overwhelming presence that it could have crushed the movement wherever it started. We have already seen that there was little coordination between urban and rural unrest: the Telengana movement received very little support from urban groups, especially their theoretical 'leaders', the working-class.

This brings us to the crux of the problem. If an insurrection of the magnitude of Telengana wilted under State repression, how can we expect any peasant movement to succeed?

As in the previous section, I have again advanced an inter-connecting matrix of causality to explain the degeneration of the Telengana movement from a full-scale peasant war to acts of terrorism against individuals. But unlike the conjunction of reasons that explain the movement's ascendance, its downfall has one salient factor: the superiority of the State in the means of violence.



## IN SEARCH OF ORIGINS

Though the question of origins is temporally and logically prior to that of revolutionary process, the order of presentation has been reversed in this paper. The reason for doing so is simple. I do not have an adequate explanation to account for the movement's origins. How can existing theories help in this regard? Looking at some of these theories, I conclude that they are partially useful but do not constitute complete explanations. In this context, it is worthwhile to consider what **would** count as a "complete explanation". It is on that note that the paper ends, indicating directions of further inquiry.

Why do revolutions begin? Let us start from necessary causes. A revolution is first and foremost a reaction against oppression: whatever else may contribute to it, some form of exploitation has to be present. However, domination can only be sustained if it either potentially can or does involve control over resources, including the most important resource of all, human labor. The success of the Telengana Movement was due to the failure of the deshmukhs and the Nizam's forces to control labor and its product. Domination, though, rarely has to be sustained by force: it is legitimized by various means. The purpose of legitimation is to universalize the interests of the ruling class to appear to be the interest of society at large and to 'naturalize' these interests so that they appear to be permanent. The symbolic system used to do this is embedded in the recursive practices of everyday life that arise from habit and tradition and are internalized in popular consciousness.

So much scarcely anyone will dispute. But as Scott (1976:193) has put it so well, if "exploitation alone were a necessary **and** sufficient condition of rebellion, much of Southeast Asia and the Third World would surely be in a semi-permanent state of civil war".<sup>94</sup> While most theories of revolution claim to be explaining the same state of affairs - revolution - they really focus on very different aspects and form explanations of very different kinds.

Let us begin with the most influential of the 'third-generation' (Goldstone, 1980) theories: Theda Skocpol's States and Social Revolutions. Skocpol traces the beginnings of social revolutions to the "politico-military crises of state and class domination. And **only because** of the possibilities thus created have revolutionary leaderships and rebellious masses **contributed** to the accomplishment of revolutionary transformations" (Skocpol, 1979:17, emphasis mine). The logically prior, 'final' cause, then, is the crisis in state and class domination. This is a response to the state's inability to cope with new requirements suddenly thrust upon it (1979:32) by international military competition with economically superior powers (1979: 23, 47, 50, 110, 154, 285, 286).<sup>95</sup> The state is unable to cope, in turn, because of constraints imposed by "existing class structures and political institutions" (1979:285), specifically a landed rural aristocracy who can block the state's efforts to extract a greater (and increasing part) of the surplus from the peasantry (1979:110). External pressures and internal inability together constitute "sufficient distinctive causes of social revolutionary situations" (1979:154). Skocpol insists that this specific conjuncture of internal and external causes is not generalizable beyond the cases she studies - France, Russia and China. Yet she maintains that a logically similar causal structure helps explain the origin of social revolutions in dependent, colonized countries. The "continuities or disruptions of state machineries during crises" occasioned by

the (internationally prompted) breakdown of colonial control (1979:291) lie at the root of recent revolutions.

The possibilities created by the structural breakdown of the old regime sometimes, but not always, lead to social revolutions. That depends on internal instabilities, specifically on the appearance of widespread peasant revolts directed particularly against landlords. Peasant revolts are facilitated, Skocpol argues (1979:112-117), by institutional arrangements in which peasant solidarity and autonomy are high. If the agrarian system is based on independent smallholdings and if communitarian relations bind individual families in opposition to landlords, then a collapse in the state's repressive capacity leads to "widespread and irreversible revolts" (1979:117).

At its most general level, Skocpol's theory turns out to be vacuous. To say that "states collapse because they are unable to cope with external pressures" is logically akin to 'explaining' heart failures by saying that "a heart attack occurs because the heart is unable to pump blood", that is, because it fails to perform its function.

If we apply Skocpol's theory to Telengana, we would begin by observing that the Indian state put pressure on Hyderabad. In order to show that this **caused** the collapse of the Hyderabad State, however, we would have to first identify all the possible actions that the Nizam's government could have undertaken to meet these pressures. Then we would have to demonstrate why in fact such actions were not carried out, or if they were, why they failed. Elliott (1974) goes some way towards a more complete functional explanation.<sup>96</sup> She argues that the Hyderabad government's inability to cope was due to the failure of its political institutions to adapt in a mass-incorporating direction and due to the ineffectiveness of its elites to build suitable alliances either among themselves (horizontally) or with the lower classes (vertically). Yet Elliott confines her discussion to political institutions. She does not specify what the pressures on Hyderabad were and how they were enforced. Thus, there is no mention of the Indian government's economic blockade. She does not discuss what, if anything, the Hyderabad state could do to protect itself against the kind of military invasion that did actually take place. And her discussion of the state's failure to gain legitimacy does not consider symbolic processes at all. Elliott's analysis is incomplete, I think, because she equates the question: "Why was Hyderabad so vulnerable to outside influences?" with the other question that she asks: "Were there no political institutions within Hyderabad to buttress it against these winds?" (1974:28).

Skocpol's other major argument viz. that the state's collapse is logically (and perhaps temporally?) prior in turning a peasant rebellion into a revolution seems to have a greater degree of plausibility. It is not hard to accept that those two conditions were jointly necessary for the cases she studies. But in what sense do they constitute separable, and logically (if not temporally) hierarchical steps? In Skocpol's model, the societal crisis initiating revolutionary change is sole due to conflicts in the stratified realm of world affairs and elite politics. Let us accept for a moment, despite our better judgement, the functional explanation offered for this crisis. Why a state is unable to cope with external pressure presumes knowledge of why, and how, it is able to cope in the absence of such pressure, that is, in 'normal' circumstances. Skocpol, like other theorists of revolution, fails to ask this question. Because of this, she attributes the collapse in state authority to its conflict with, and loss of legitimacy among, the politically powerful elites (e.g. the

landed aristocracy) but does not connect the issue of (loss of) legitimacy with that of surplus extraction (domination). Failure in the former task, she says, results in political crisis; failure in the latter, on the other hand, results in peasant revolt. A consideration of the 'normal' operation of the state, I will argue, would have shown how intimately questions of legitimation are bound with the extraction of surplus and the control of resources. Yet, without knowing how and why states cope, and thus why they fail to cope, it seems to be altogether questionable to assert that their collapse is **in any sense** prior to peasant revolts in the making of revolutions.

In contrast to Skocpol - who can be interpreted as saying that the development of capitalism is itself a consequence of revolutionary change (Collins, 1980) - stand the 'moral economists', for example Wolf (1969) and Scott (1976). Both Wolf and Scott think that the penetration of capitalist relations is a major factor leading to peasant revolts. Wolf sees the dissolution of the "integument of custom", the cutting of traditional ties of dependence, reciprocity and solidarity, and the breakdown of the mechanisms for alleviating risk as the central causes of revolt. Yet he recognizes that "rebellion cannot start from a situation of complete impotence; the powerless are easy victims" (1969:290). Since the poor peasant has "no tactical power", being totally dependent on his employer for his livelihood, it falls on the middle peasant and the tactically mobile peasantry in peripheral areas to start an uprising. As it turns out, middle peasants are precisely the group "most vulnerable to economic changes wrought by commercialism" (1969:292).

In Scott's view, the likelihood of peasant revolt is increased by simultaneous, unexpected shocks to the subsistence arrangements of a large group of peasants. The effects of such shocks are exacerbated by population pressures, the risks of production for the market, and the growing claims of the state and are registered in the variability of real income. When crops succeed or prices rise and the agricultural economy booms, the state and elite classes siphon off a greater amount of surplus value. However, in bad seasons or when the relative price for the agricultural output falls, the state does not adjust its claims downward. Here lies "the key to the insurrectionary potential of such regions" (1976:199). However, revolt will not occur if 'adaptations' exist which reduce the threat to subsistence. Scott (1976:204) identifies four such strategies: "(1) reliance on local forms of self-help; (2) reliance on the nonpeasant sector of the economy; (3) reliance on state-supported forms of patronage and exploitation; and (4) reliance on religious or oppositionist structures of protection and assistance." Yet, he admits that these form solutions only "under very special circumstances" (1976:225). For it is not the alleviation of economic threats to subsistence that has blocked rebellion. Economic conditions have often worsened but so have the negative consequences of risking rebellion. The growing ability and willingness of the state to use terror is a powerful deterrent. "Peasants", according to Scott (1976:226), "live in a world that gives them little scope for such fatal misjudgments."

In applying these theories to Telengana, one major objection is obvious. The revolution did not follow immediately on the heels of capitalism. We have seen that production for the world market began at least as early as the beginning of the century. It is highly probable, as Banaji (1977) has demonstrated for the region adjacent to Telengana, that the process of capitalist penetration began

even earlier. The important aspect of the increasingly capitalist relations of production was its differential impact on different segments of the rural population. Wolf and Scott ignore this insofar as they do not consider it an explanatory variable of any importance.<sup>97</sup> Their vision of the peasantry as a mutually reciprocating and secure, though unequal whole torn apart by market forces is altogether too romantic. Any available description of the lower classes and bonded laborers in Telengana makes that clear. Thus, we cannot understand **why** revolutions begin by using Wolf and Scott's thesis about the invasion of capitalism. Neither can we understand **who** revolts from Wolf's middle peasant and peripheral peasant theses. To be fair, Scott's model is different and more nuanced than Wolf's. Though Scott sees capitalist relations of production as a sluiceway for already precarious subsistence margins, he does not consider them a direct cause of rebellion, as Wolf does. Rather, he thinks that the consequences of selling in capitalist markets entail higher downside risks because the state maintains downwardly rigid demands on the size of the absolute surplus. But why can the state or elites get away with adjusting tax demands upwards but not downwards? Scott gives no reasons: the state's legitimacy to do so, he thinks, goes unquestioned. Here, in a manner similar to Wolf, Scott treats power as a **possession** in the hands of elites, not as a **relation** between social classes that is constantly shifting and essentially contested.

If Skocpol fractures the dialectic of structure and action in favor of the former (Dunn, 1982), it is in reaction to earlier theories that erred in the opposite direction (Aya, 1979; Freeman, 1972; Goldstone, 1980). On the other hand, Wolf and Scott who do attempt to integrate structure and agency fail to provide a robust framework, as the example of Telengana reveals so clearly. It seems that theorists of revolution need to confront an assumption implicit in their practice.<sup>98</sup> To what extent, if at all, is it possible to construct a general (i.e. robust) theory of revolutions?

This question, hinted at earlier, is really about the conditions that constitute adequate explanation. First, an analytical distinction needs to be made between the causes for the origins of a revolution and its process. Skocpol's emphasis on revolutionary outcomes is important because it raises questions about how one would characterize the end of a revolution (hence its outcome). There is just as much a problem with questions about starting points. Then we need to consider who acts and why they do, that is, what motivates them.

It is the illusion of 'voluntarism' that in order to understand revolutions, it is sufficient for the analyst to determine why people should be willing to act in a rebellious manner. But that does not tell us what enables them to do so, as has been pointed out by Wolf, Aya and Skocpol. Concepts like 'exploitation', 'relative deprivation' and 'system disequilibrium' are not the terms in which most participants justify revolutionary actions to themselves and to each other (Scott, 1979).<sup>99</sup> It is also true that the reasons why certain outcomes obtain may be different from what the actors think the reasons are. Finally, the outcome may escape the intentions of the various actors because it depends on their inter-action, not on their action alone. From this, Skocpol (1979) mistakenly concludes that the intentions of actors are irrelevant. Her neglect of human practice, I have argued, makes her see revolutions as processes occurring entirely behind peoples' backs. Skocpol wants to substitute the double hermeneutic of social theory (Giddens, 1982) - the analyst's interpretation of the pre-existing interpretation of

social actors - with the scientific 'truth' of the scholar (1979:18).

Why revolutions begin is not just a question of explaining the timing of particular events, it is also a matter of explaining the location of those events. There are two ways to proceed. One can use the method of comparative historical analysis and/or the method of counterfactual analysis.<sup>100</sup> Take the example of Telengana. Using the first method, one would compare Telengana with another movement similar in every respect and attempt to deduce common points of analysis: this is the positive case. The negative case would try to explain why situations similar in every respect but without the explanatory causes do not have revolutionary consequences.<sup>101</sup> By comparing Telengana with a similar region, we want to explain why revolution occurred in Telengana and not elsewhere and why it happened in the late 1940's and not at some other time. In counterfactual analysis, on the other hand, the comparison is not with some other region but with an imagined state of the world where the hypothesized causes are absent. If the original consequences still obtains, then we know that our hypothesized causes are wrong.<sup>102</sup> Comparative historical and counterfactual analyses are not mutually exclusive but it remains to be seen how they can be fruitfully combined.

Whatever the methodology employed, the central analytical problem should be clear from all the criticisms made so far. It can be stated quite simply. To understand why revolutions begin, we need to understand how relations of domination are reproduced (not 'continued') in everyday life. Only then can revolutionary ruptures be explained - the breakdown of the routinized and usually unproblematic reproduction of social relations. The means by which the structures of domination are reproduced are different, for example, in capitalist society than in a feudal system. I have argued that Skocpol does not adequately address the question of origins. It is precisely this fact that allows her to treat as 'similar' cases the bourgeois, liberal-democratic revolution of eighteenth century France, the statist, communist revolution of Russia in 1917 and the peasant based, mass-mobilizing guerrilla uprising that constituted the Chinese Revolution (1979:40-43). Though Skocpol warns that "one cannot **mechanically** extend the specific causal arguments (made by her) into a 'general theory of revolutions'" (1979:290, emphasis mine), she nevertheless maintains that "the basic principles of analyses used here. . . should also prove fruitful for comparative analyses of the **causes** and outcomes of other social revolutions" (1979:290, emphasis mine). If by 'causes' we mean material and formal causes, then it seems to me to be stretching the case. For if final and efficient causes are inextricably connected to world-historical space-time,<sup>103</sup> as I have argued, then it does not appear plausible to construct a 'general theory' of revolutions that would be just as valid, for example, in the capitalist mode of production as in the feudal one. It would seem that the entire project of constructing a 'general theory' of revolutions needs sober reconsideration.

## NOTES

76. The jagirdars were given a 12.5 percent remission on land revenue in the first year after their lands had been seized (Pavie, 1981:176).

77. This statement is not to be construed causally. I am not saying that extortion decreased **because** of the abolition of jagirdari.

78. "Sai" means "beloved" - the phrase has an incantatory quality.

79. Compare this definition to the very similar one advanced earlier by Huntington (quoted in Aya, 1979:47, original 1968) who defined revolution as a "rapid, fundamental, and violent domestic change in the dominant values and myths of a society, in its political institutions, social structure, leadership, and government activity and policies." Skocpol has jettisoned "values and myths", always problematic baggage, and has made class-based revolts part of her definition. This meets objections that Huntington's definition could not distinguish between mass-based movements and reigns of terror as in fascist regimes.

80. In fact, Skocpol's definition obviates any discussion regarding the success or failure of a revolution: social revolutions, by definition, are revolutions that are successful.

81. For a painstaking elaboration of the terms 'means of production' and 'relations of production', see Cohen (1978:28-79).

82. Scott (1979) argues that it is more often the case than not that leaders and participants have divergent interests and beliefs while sharing both a tactical line of action and a vocabulary in which these (divergent) interests are expressed.

83. These conditions are too often forgotten - the result is the creation of heroic, and mostly mythical, figures. For the particular case of Gandhi, see Gupta (1983).

84. I have omitted opposition to landlords here - it will be considered further on.

85. How well these instructions were followed cannot be determined.

86. The events in Telengana profoundly affected the CPI at the national level as well. Differences on questions of tactics split the Party along lines that were to prefigure the breakup of 1964 (into CPI and CPI[M]).

87. Here I do not even consider the far more damning criticism that has been made of the subjective/objective dichotomy. See, for example, Rorty (1979:315-394) and Bourdieu (1977:1-30).

88. Using the Aristotelian definition, Skocpol's entire enterprise can be seen as an attempt at locating material and formal causes, not efficient and final ones. For an argument along the same lines in a different context see Ruben (1981).

89. Skocpol identifies the 'legitimacy versus coercion' duality with 'nonmarxist versus marxist' views, despite the work of marxists such as Habermas. See for example, his Legitimation Crisis.

90. Eric Wolf (1969:290-292) has picked up the same hypothesis and integrated it into a moral economy framework. However, he is careful to delimit its explanatory ambit to the realm of "revolutionary potential", not the "revolutionary process".

91. Alavi doesn't say why these conflicts arise, what endows them with significance in the peasant's world-view and what makes middle peasants coalesce as a class 'for-itself'.

92. D.V.Rao as quoted in Pavie (1981:148). There seems to be some controversy about this point. Sundarayya claims that both small landlords and rich peasants 'defected' while D.V.Rao says that only the former really did.

93. I am using 'dominating' in the same way as it is used by Althusser and his disciples, that is, as distinct from 'determining'.

94. Not to mention the advanced capitalist world.

95. "Wars and imperial intrusions," she writes (1972:286) echoing Marx's famous statement on violence, "were the midwives of the revolutionary crises."

96. For what might constitute adequate grounds for a satisfactory functional explanation, see Cancian (1968).
97. Scott in particular thinks that the subsistence crises resulting from production for the market and state domination do not fall **systematically** on any class. He says "such variations were in part **individual** and **random** (Scott, 1976:196, emphasis mine).
98. It might seem that I am too hasty in drawing this conclusion from the handful of theories that I have discussed so far. Yet my criticisms, I believe, hold for other theories as well.
99. They probably do not consider their actions "revolutionary" either. This is not to say that they are not aware, for example, of exploitation.
100. The first of these is used effectively by Skocpol (1979) despite her positivism.
101. Skocpol's negative method (1979:36-37) comes close to being a counterfactual.
102. For a debate on when counterfactuals are legitimate, see Barry (1980) and Elster (1980).
103. For the notion of space-time, see Giddens (1981).

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