



Emergence of Communist Party in Nationalist Movement

K.Sravana Kumar

Lecturer in History, NBKR Science and ARTS College, Vidyannagar, Kota Mandal, Nellore District -524413, A.P.India.

KEYWORDS

After the Russian Revolution, vague socialist ideas began to spread among the young intelligentsia. The youth welcomed these ideas with energy and enthusiasm. They started reading Karl Marx as eagerly as an earlier generation had read Mill or Mazzini. 'everywhere there was a new spirit of energy and growing discontent with older ideologies 'However it is difficult to examine and perspectives the status and function of left parties without talking about their background, origin and development. So also their attitude towards Indian nationalist movement. It is important to recognise whether Communist movement in India has been one of the many movements to achieve Indian independence. It can be said that nationalist movement was a profound influence and inspiration for Communist movement although they significantly disagreed with moderate nationalist movement viewing it was more reformist than radical. It is rightly observed by A.L.Basham, "The nationalist movement was at once a reassertion of traditional values and symbols against alien intrusion, and itself an alien, modern, untraditional phenomenon. This paradox is found embodied in the different brands of nationalism represented by such figures a Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Dayanada and the Arya Samaj, Aurobindo, Tilak, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan and the Aligarh School, Annie Besant, and above all Gandhi and the national congress as he influence it. It is hardly surprising then if the paradox has continued to echo in the subcontinent since independence was won."

During the foundation of the first nationalist associations until the achievement of independence, the Indian nationalist movement changed its character in various ways, under the influence of the traditional past and the more recent British past, and also as result of the new ideas and methods that marked its development. Modifying slightly the periodisation which Michael Brecher has distinguished in the history of the nationalist movement, 1) the 1870s-1890: the period of Moderate pre-eminence, 2) the 1890s-1914: the struggle for supremacy within the movement between the Moderates and Extremists, and 3) 1914-1947: the period of agitational politics and Gandhi's leadership.² In the first of these periods the nationalist movement was essentially British in its intellectual origins, in the second it drew both on indigenous symbols and ideas and upon western ideologies and examples, and in the third period, the movement drew upon widening circles of Indians and imported inspiration while becoming increasingly inventive, particularly under the impetus of Gandhi's creative genius.

Any nationalist movement in a colonial situation is bound to have both a negative and positive aspect. The negative aspect is the determination to expel the foreign rulers and achieve self-government; the positive aspect is the concept of the sort of nation which should emerge from the struggle for independence. In negative terms the moderates aimed at moving slowly towards self government of India, with the "white" colonies of the British Empire as their mode.. the moderate Indian Association emerged in 1876 in Calcutta and spread across northern India with the express goal of stimulating the sense of nationalism amongst the people and from its earliest sessions in 1885 and 1886 the Indian National Congress pointed to Canadian and Australian self government as the models for India.³ In this , they were carrying forward the social and intellectual reform movements of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ranade and others, aiming in Gokhale's words, the selective "

assimilation of all that is best in the life and thought and character of the west"⁴ The moderates set up associations, such as the Poone Sarvajanik Sabha in 1870, to work for the improvement of the whole of Indian society, seeking educational and other social reforms through their membership of legislative bodies and organisations such as the national social Conference. They hoped to achieve their ends through the introduction of representative democratic political reforms by the national congress, and by such methods as public meetings, deputations, and the presentation of memorials all modelled directly upon British Constitutional Politics.⁵ In the above discussion the dynamics of Nationalism in the context of are summed up which gives us a proper frame work to talk about Communism in general and its emergence in India with a focus on Andhra Pradesh.

The Communist Revolution began in Russia in October 1917, and in March 1919, the Russian revolutionaries set up in Moscow the Communist Third International for the purpose of propagating and spreading Communism all over the world. Their eyes fell on India too because in the words of Lenin, the growing industrial and railway proletariat on the one hand and the brutal terrorism of the British on the other presented a virgin field for a similar revolution.

Muzaffar Ahmad, one of the veteran Communists in India, claims that the Communist Party of India was founded abroad and was affiliated to the Communist International in 1921. According to him the party was formed towards the end of 1920 at the Tashkent Military School⁶ Tashkent in Soviet Union. One of the earliest Communists of India was Sri-pada Ananta Dange who published a small book "Gandhi and Lenin" in 1921.⁷ He also established a Marathi daily and English weekly for the propagation of Marxist views.

The first Indian to become communist was M.N.Roy who was also associated with the formation of Mexican Communist Party.⁸ He attended the second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 as a delegate from Mexico. British Communists and M.N.Roy inspired a group of young Indians, who were great admirers of Marxism and the Russian revolution, to set up in India an organisation to spread the Marxist ideology. This organisation came formally into existence on 26th December 1925, and was named as the communist Party of India. (CPI) ⁹ Shortly after, the CPI was recognised, on Roy's advice, as a branch of the Communist International.¹⁰ The task for the Communist Party of India was determined by the Communist International in 1928. That was as follows: 1) Struggle against British imperialism for the emancipation of the country, 2) the Communists scattered throughout the country into a single independent and centralised party, 3) unmasking of the national reformism of the Indian National congress and opposing all the phrases of the Swarajists, Gandhites and about passive resistance, 4) mercilessly exposing the national reformist leaders in the Trade Unions, carrying on a decisive struggle for the conversion of the Trade Unions into genuine class organisations of the proletariat and teaching the workers principles of communism through the method of propaganda and instruction. 5) Organising the peasants in the same manner so as to

effect an agrarian revolution and 6) exciting violent revolution in the country.¹¹

The Communist International not only determined the programme of the Communist Party of India, it also trained many Indian Communists in the art of fomenting discontent and rebellion among the people, of preparing them for armed insurrection, of organising worker's strikes and directing the freedom struggle and of infiltrating into government and institutions so as to wreck them from within. A few of the Communists who were trained in Moscow were N.N.Roy, S.A.Dange, G.M.Adhikari, C.P.Dutt Dr. Hafiz, NaliniGupta, Ayodhya Prasad and Shaukat Usmani.¹²

Lenin considered Gandhi as progressive, while M.N.Roy thought of him as "medieval reactionary". Lenin wanted the Indian Communists to help the national liberation movement conducted under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie. Despite Lenin's advice to the Indian Communists that they should cooperate with the national liberation movement they did not in fact do so.¹³ The Communist Party of India later on admitted that it had failed to adopt the correct approach to the national liberation movement and had also failed to recognise that Gandhi, in launching the Civil disobedience movements against British rule, was playing a progressive role. An official Communist publication stated 'There is no doubt that if Indian Communists in the early thirties had studied and grasped Lenin's opinion on this question, Communist Party of India would have been saved from the extremely costly mistakes it made in the Civil disobedience movements(1930 to 1934) and would have merged as a powerful national force'¹⁴

By 1923 Communists sought to organise Workers' and Peasants' Party which was intended to be a mass party and whose nucleus was to be the members of an illegal Communist Party. In the mean time the Indian British Government was keeping a close watch on the Communist movement in India and the party Comintern and its emissaries were playing in that connection. To stop the spread of Communism, in 1923 the Indian Government launched the Kanpur Conspiracy case in which certain Communists like M.N.Roy, Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani, S.A.Dange, Singaravelu Chettiyar, Ranacharan Lal Sarma, Nalini Gupta, Samshuddin, M.P.S.Velayudham, Dr.ManalalShah, Sampoorananand, and Satya Sakta were implicated.¹⁵ In December 1924 a conference of the Communists party of India was convened at Kanpur. Satya Shakta took a leading part in the formation of this party. But shortly after its formation he left it and founded a separate 'National Communist Party'.¹⁶

Towards the end of the twenties many strikes were organised in the industrial cities of India. The British Government felt that Russian gold and Russian money were encouraging strikes to create anarchy and the spread of Communism in India. To arrest this trend in March 1929 the Government implicated certain Communist leaders such as S.A. Dange, Shaukat Usman, and Muzaffar Ahmad along with Philip Spratt and Benjamin Francis Sradley, in a case which came to be known as the Meerut conspiracy.¹⁷

The accused were charged that in league with the Communist International (which existed in Russia) they aimed at the staging of armed revolution to overthrow the British government in India. Meerut conspiracy case created a great sensation and received nationwide attention. Foremost among those who protested against the trial was Jawaharlal Nehru, the then President of the All India Trade Union Congress.¹⁸ The All India Congress Committee sanctioned Rs.1500/- as legal aid for the defence of the accused persons in the case. Motilal Nehru presided over the committee for the defence of the accused and Gandhi interviewed many of them in prisons.¹⁹ Notwithstanding the judgement which sentenced many Communist leaders to various terms of imprisonment, the 'attraction of Communism increased by reason of publicity', that the case received. Meerut case became one of the landmarks of the Communist movement in India.

Thus the Communist movement in India began under the

leadership and guidance of Soviet Union, its programme of action and strategy was determined by the Third International. Its leadership was subservient to the Soviet leadership. Such being the character of the Communist movement in India it was but natural that it should act to promote either the interests of the Soviet Union or the aims and objects of the Third International. This became clear from the part played by the communist Party of India during India's freedom struggle. The top leaders of the Communist movement, Clemens Dutt and Ben Bradley an Englishman thought that the Indian national Congress as it then existed was not the united front of the Indian people in the national struggle, that its constitution left out the broadest sections of the masses, that its programme of the struggle was defective, that its leadership could not be recognised as the leadership of the national struggle. And that as it was, the Congress leadership did not draw out and guide mass activity but rather acted as brake upon it.²⁰ As a result, when in 1928 the congress leader, Vallabhbhai Patel, started the Bardoli Satyagraha or the Congress organised country wide boycott of Simon Commission the same year or when in 1930 Mahatma Gandhi launched his Salt Satyagraha or when in 1932, a more powerful mass struggle was started against the British rule, the communist Party of India opposed all these movements and denounced them. Communist Party of India continued to follow this policy for some time which resulted in the isolation of Communists from the mainstream of the freedom struggle.

In 1932 through an open letter to the Indian communists, the Communist parties of China, Great Britain and Germany criticised the Communist Party of India for having alienated themselves from the liberation movement that the people were waging against the British imperialism. It pointed out that the bourgeois National Congress still had a great influence over the Indian masses and that the Indian Communists should not alienate themselves from the national movement against the British imperialism, but they should, while exposing the national Congress and its left wing, be in the forefront of all demonstrations and activities of the toiling masses against the British imperialism.²¹

The attacks on Gandhi and the other nationalist leaders alienated many Indians from the Communist movement and proved to be a tactical error for the Communist Party of India: 'To the many Indians' writes Sanker Ghose, 'who might otherwise have been attracted to communism, it appeared that the Indian Communists wanted to write on a clean slate altogether and to make a complete break with the past, and this repelled some of them from the Indian Communist Party'²²

By the mid-thirties, the Indian Communists had come under severe criticism within India because of their sectarianism and the corrective they then prescribed was a soft line towards the bourgeois, i.e. nationalist Congress Party.²³ The Communist Party of India in 1935 began to work for an anti-imperialist united front identifying with bourgeoisie nationalism. In practice this became a 'united front from below' with the Communist Party of India in alliance with the Congress Socialist Party-a nationalist democratic formation inside the Congress.²⁴ This was largely facilitated by the new policy announced at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935.²⁵ The policy of denunciation of Gandhi, the congress and the nationalist movement was partly changed as result of the policy of the United Front as advocated by the Seventh congress.²⁶

The new Comintern line was further clarified and developed by Rajni Palme Dutt and Bradley, the British Communists in an article entitled 'The Anti-imperialist People's Front in India' published in February 1936. This article, known as the famous 'Dutt-Bradley theses, felt that the Indian National Congress could play a role in organising an anti-imperialist People's front in India. It stated 'The first need for the powerful advance of the Indian national movement is to organise the common struggle against British imperialism. This is the indispensable condition for the successful fight against the existing and ever sharpening reaction and oppression. It is evident that all ele-

ments including from among the liberals who are prepared to break with. Imperialism and accept the programme of the national struggle, are welcome to the common front.²⁷ So far as the Indian National Congress is concerned the thesis specifically stated that the Congress can play a great and foremost role in the task of realising the anti-imperialist people's front.

The Dutt-Broadley thesis changed the previous Communist line of total antipathy to the Congress. It cleared the decks for the Indian Communists to join the Congress Socialist Party and thereby to influence the Congress policies. It suggested that the Communists, leftists, Congressmen, Congress socialists, trade unionists should all join this united front of anti-imperialism. In accordance with the advice of Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley, utilised the Congress Socialist Party for that purpose. Through the influence of Jaya Prakash Narayan in the Congress Socialist Party, who had become an intellectual adherent of the Communist International during his stay in the United States as a student, and of Nehru and Bose in the Congress, who also were impressed by the achievements of the Soviet Union, the doors of the Congress Party were thrown open for the Indian communists in 1936. The Congress socialist Party also adopted a resolution providing for the admission of Communists to its membership.²⁸ As the Communist Party of India was then an illegal party, this decision was not given any publicity. As a result of this, Communists joined the Congress Socialist Party and thereby gained admittance into the Indian National Congress.

A number of prominent Communist Party of India leaders joined the congress and were given vantage positions. Sajjad Zaheer, for instance, was made a member of All India Congress committee, Namboodripad became Joint Secretary of the All India Congress Socialist Party and P.Sundarayya, A.K.Gopalan, P.Ramamurthy, Dr. M.A. Ashraf, Dinker Mehta and Soli Batilwala were put in charge of their important offices in the Congress Socialist Party²⁹. From inside the Congress, the Communist Party leaders gave Communist orientation to Congress Working Committee resolutions. From inside the, Congress Socialist Party, they endeavoured to seek control of the Socialist organisation for the purpose of bringing the workers, farmers and students in to the fold.³⁰ Their influence with the Congress Socialist Party increased so much that when in early 1938 M.R. Masani the then Congress Socialist Party Chairman criticised at the annual conference in Lahore, the Soviet Union for its dictatorship and the dubious policies it was pursuing in Europe and the other Congress socialist Party leaders.³¹ Ashok Mehta, Rammanohar Lohia and Achut Patwardhan spoke of the danger of Communist infiltration within the Party.³² But in September 1939, the Second World War began in Europe, and the attitude of the Communist Party of India adopted towards that war convinced the Congress Socialist Party leadership that the Communist Party of India was more loyal to the Soviet Union and was much less interested in what happened in India. It was at that stage that the Congress Socialist Party's National Executive expelled all Communists from the party and ended the "United Front" with the Communist Party of India.³³

While the Congress Party was on a war path with the British rulers and was endeavouring to drive them out of the Indian soil, the Communist Party of India began to advise the Indian people to cooperate with the British, only because the Soviet Union was in alliance with them. It dubbed the congress, Congress socialist Party and Forward Block as "fifth columnist".³⁴ A couple of months after the end of the war, Jawaharlal Nehru strongly attacked on 24th October 1945, the Indian communists in a public speech, saying that the cause of Communism had suffered most at the hands of the Communist Party of India.³⁵ declaring that "the role of the Communist Party had made all nationalists its 100 percent opponent"³⁶ and adding that "when thousands of Indians staked their all for their countries' cause the communists were in the opposite camp which cannot be forgotten"³⁷

In December 1945, the Congress Working Committee expelled all Communists from the Congress Party and issued a directive

to provincial Congress committees to debar them from holding any office in Congress organisation. This action was taken after the consideration of a special report presented by Nehru, Patel and Govind Vallabh Pant, which said that the main policy of the communists had been opposition and obstruction to the policy and programme of /congress for a considerable time.³⁸ when in June 1947 Lord Mountbatten announced his plan for the transfer of power to Indians, the communist Party of India apparently following the Moscow line, considered that plan as "---the culmination of a double-faced imperial policy which sets in motion disrupt the popular upsurge, obstruct the realisation of real independence, throttle the growth of democracy and destroy the unity and integrity of India."³⁹

In the background of various shifts and changes that took place in the Indian Communist movement based on the directions of the Communist International, the growth of Communism in Andhra Pradesh should be analysed.

Communism in Andhra had its origins in the freedom struggle. During the satyagraha movement of 1930-32, many young men courted imprisonment. During their imprisonment they came into contact with the revolutionaries,(who were imprisoned in Madras State Jails) like B.K.Dutt, Kundan Lal, D.K.Sinha, Siva Varma and Kapoor who were undergoing life imprisonment in connection with the Lahore conspiracy case.⁴⁰ These contacts with the revolutionaries convinced the Andhra young men that only through a people's revolution independence can be achieved for the country. Of those who were influenced by the Bengal revolutionaries mention may be made of Maddukuri Chandra Sekhara Rao, Katragadda Nararyanarao, Garapati Satyanarayana, Alluri Satyanarayana Raju Jonnalagadda Ramalingaiah, Puchalapalli Sundarayya, Gadde Lingaiah, Madduri Annapooranaiah, Chalasani Jagannadha Rao, K.Balaramaiah, T.V.Chalapati, Kosaraju Seshaiyah, Kruthiventi Kutumba Rao,Bhayankara chari, Kanuri Ramananda chowdary and Chundi Jagannadham.

After the Russian revolution, vague socialist ideas began to spread among the young intelligentsia. Soon after Gandhi's suspension of Satyagraha movement in 1934, young people began to evince keen interest to study the Russian revolution and the teachings of Marx and Lenin. The young welcomed these ideas with energy and enthusiasm. Andhra was no exception to this general trend. Youngmen like P.Narasimha Murthy, P.V.Raghavaiah, P.V.Sivaiah, Nanduri Prasad, a Rao, Chandra ramalingaiah, Chandra Rajeshwararao, and Katragadda Narayana rao who had gone to Benaras for higher education also helped to circulate communist literature among the progressive young men of Andhra State. Gadde Lingaiah started Adarsha Grandha Mandal and edited the Jorunal 'Prabha'.Gorky's 'Mother', the 'Communist Manifesto' which were translated into Telugu by Puchalapalli Sundaryya were published by the Adarsha Grandha Mandal.⁴¹

The Communist movement in Andhra developed as a sequel to the nationalist movement. Initially, the communist movement in Telangana region was a social movement which was directed against Nizam rule. Andhra Maha Sabha led by the Communist Party of India was a militant organisation which focused the language problem as well as the socio-economic problems of the people of the Hyderabad state. The Communist Party of India could launch the anti-Nizam struggle against feudal and capitalist oppression.

The Andhra Communist Party was officially organised in September 1934. Its first conference was secretly held at Kakinda in 1935, where Sri.P.Narasimhamurthy was elected as the Secretary of the Andhra Communist Committee. Besides Puchalapalli Sundarayya, Chalasani Vasudevarao, Katragadda Narayanarao, Uddamaraju Ramam, and Khambhampati Satyanarayana were the founder members of the Communist Party in Andhra Pradesh.⁴²

It was from the Congress Socialist Party that the Andhra Communist movement drew its early cadre. Even in the early days of the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, Puchalapalli Sundarayya

toured Andhra area extensively and held meetings with many party workers to explore the possibility of found a secret unit of Andhra Communist Party. Already by that time youth Kisans and worker's unions were established in the districts of Guntur, Krishna, Nellore, East Godavari and West Godavari districts.⁴³

The first major struggle of the Communists came in 1931 when they organised a 1500 mile march to Madras city to rouse the peasants against the agrarian system that was followed by the British Government. It was led by Jonnaladgadda Ramalingaih, Chundi Jagannadham, Chalasani Vasudevarao, Pullela Shyamsunder Rao, K.S.N.Murthy and Ch.V.Rao.⁴⁴ The march drew participants from 525 villages. Its purpose was to create a new consciousness among the peasants. As the Andhra region had marginal industrialisation, the communist Party of India realised the importance of organising the agricultural labour into rural unions. Communists were the first to seek the support agricultural labourers in building mass movements. The Communist Party made rapid progress between 1937 to 1939 in the Andhra region. Consistent with the decision taken by the national leadership of the Communist Party of India many young Communist activists joined the Congress Socialist Party ranks and some of them were even elected to the State Congress Committee. Puchalapalli Sundarayya became one of the members of the All India Congress committee.⁴⁵

The Communists while remaining in the Congress Socialist Party, 1936 onwards, continued to organise youth, students, Kisans, agricultural labourers and women. They carried on these activities mainly in the districts of Nellore, Guntur, Krishna and the two Godavari districts. It is not out of place to refer that due to the efforts of these young and enthusiastic communists that K.Narayanarao was elected to the Madras State Assembly in the 1937 general elections.⁴⁶ Being banned by the Government (1934, consequent to the Meerut conspiracy) communists set up several front organisations such as Kisan sabha, Trade Unions to spread the philosophy of the Communist Party. In all the above referred districts party committees were formed.⁴⁷

Communist Party of India cells were organised in many villages covering the districts of Krishnam, Guntur, Nellore, East Godavari and East Godavari. Despite the ban on the party several secret journals were circulated among the members of the cells to educate them on public issues of national and international importance.⁴⁸

Forced by the anti-fascist war situation and faced with the anti-war campaign launched by the Congress, the British Government lifted ban on the Communist Party in 1942. Communists came out legally and directly plunged into the battle against fascism. While ceaselessly campaigning for the release of the Congress leaders and for the formation of Nationalist Government, they took up the day to day issues of the people., " conducted agitations, led deputations, organised demonstrations and held meetings on such issues as supply of agricultural implements, repairs of tanks, roads and canals, against hoarding and corruption. They led a number of agricultural labour struggles and "the grow more food" campaigns. In these forms wide support was mobilised for the working class demands and the party led some of the strike struggles successfully".⁴⁹

The war years witnessed a tremendous growth of the Communist movement in Andhra Pradesh. Despite the communist Party's isolation from the mainstream of the national movement at a time when the Congress launched "Quit India" in 1942. Communists, nevertheless, stood to again, partly because of the British Government's decision to allow the communist Party of India to function legally and to enlist its support to the national War Front. Congress leaders' imprisonment mostly helped the Communist Party as its leaders rushed to fill the vacuum in the All India Trade Union Congress, The All India Kisan Sabha, the All India Students federation and other Congress led mass organisations.⁵⁰

The result being that despite its isolation from the peak of the

national movement Communists were able to increase their strength. Communist Party of India membership in Circars and Rayalaseema districts rose from 1000 in 1942 to 8,000 in 1946.

During the war period Andhra Communist leadership successfully articulated the grievances of the people with remarkable effectiveness and intervened on their behalf on a number of occasions to secure administrative justice from the Government. The Communist Party of India "fought on the economic, political and social issues of every section of the toiling people. On students demands for supply of white paper, kerosene at controlled rates, against detentions, on such women's demands as equal property rights, provision of separate sanitary facilities in villages, for maternity and welfare centres. For the strict implementation of Anti Child marriages Act, for educational facilities, on middle class issues against high house rents, housing scarcity, etc."⁵¹ It was this constant and ceaseless work on popular issues and close ties with the people through thick and thin that enabled the Communist party to rally one lakh people at the all India Kisan Sabha held at Vijayawada in 1944, and in the next year fifty thousand to the provincial Kisan Sabha conference at Tenali.⁵²

In 1939 Communist oriented leaders, members of the Comrades Association, Chandragupta Chowdary, V.D.Deshpandey of Maharashtra parishad joined together to form Hyderabad communist committee. The first political classes, to give ideological orientation to the cadre were taken by Chandra Rajeswara Rao.⁵³ The leading members of the Communist Party of Hyderabad State were Ravi Narayana Reddy, Makhdoom Moinuddiin, Raj bahadur Garu, Hemadri, D.H.Desai, Vattiokota Alwar Swamy, Baddam Yella Reddy, S.Ramanadham and Devulapally Venkateshwar Rao. They were in close touch with the Andhra communist leaders Sundarayya and Rajeshwar Rao who played an important role in the formation of the Communist Party in Hyderabad State.

The ever growing activities and the increasing influence of the Communists were a source of worry to the Congress leaders. In order to checkmate the influence of the Communist Party, Congress leaders, particularly, N.G.Ranga organised rival Kisan, Students and workers organisations.⁵⁴ Congressmen got embittered against communists, who supported the war efforts of the allies i.e. (British, Italy and Japan). Raids were organised on party offices, attacks were made on individual party members and important leaders and the party rallies were disturbed. A drama 'Vengamma' was written and performed with a view to discredit the communist party in general and Puchchalapalli Sundarayya in particular.⁵⁵ Communists were expelled from Congress in 1945.

Despite all this, the results of the 1946 elections showed that the communist Party was the biggest and the most influential party after the congress in Andhra, though only one communist candidate Pillamarri Venkateswarlu was elected to the legislature. This may be due to the fact that no other political party with a considerable mass base had emerged to challenge the congress in elections.⁵⁶

Besides working for the rights of the working class and peasants, in order to politicise them the party organised burrakathas, veedhibhagavatams, during the anti fascist phase of the war. Hundreds of squads and drama troops functioned all over the state. Through party journals like Navasakthi, (1937-39) Prajaskthi (1942-46) efforts were made to inform the party leaders the day-to-day national and international events, besides instructing them on party ideology and programmes. The Prajasakthi publishing house alone accounted for the publication of more than three hundred books in Telugu on politics, economics, culture, history and literature.⁵⁷

In 1956 the first Visalandhra Communist Conference was held at Hyderabad on July,8th, 1956, in which the units of Andhra and Telenagana were merged into one and elected Chandra Rajeswara Rao as the Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Communist Committee. The thirteen member executive Committee included, besides Rajeswar Rao, 1.P.Sundarayya, 2.M.Basava Punnaiah, 3.M.Chandrakekhara Rao, 4.Moturi Hanumantharao,

5.R.Narayana reddy, 6.B.Yella Reddy, 7.D.Venkateswara Rao, 8.T.Nagi Reddy, 9.Makhdoom Mohinuddin, 10.K.L.Narasimham, 11.Y.V., Krishna Rao and 12.T.Sathyanyaraya⁵⁸

Another factor that contributed to the growth of communist movement was the repressive measures adopted by the Congress Ministry of Madras State against the Communists. The Public safety Ordinance used by the Prakasam Ministry to suppress the peasant uprisings of Munagala raised the popularity of the Communists as they ceaselessly championed the cause of the peasants and campaigned for the abolition of the Zamindari system. Thus, commented a staunch nationalist telugu weekly: "With the mercy of the British Government the communists who were underground till now had come out openly. They have started holding public meetings, demonstrations and rallies everywhere with full police protection. They have taken advantage of Quit India movement and the subsequent August events which resulted in large scale detention of the Congress leaders, to improve their own mass base. They attracted young people and propagated among them the victories of the Russian revolution, organised Kisan meetings under the red flags and finally instigated the workers to go on strikes.⁵⁹ Finally, the linguistic patriotism of the Communists had also won them some popular support. The Visalandhra cause championed by them made the communist movement popular till the formation of the Andhra State in 1953.

Although Communism gained the favour of the people in Andhra Pradesh elsewhere especially in the States of Karla and West Bengal, World Communism itself was going through some changes. The question of Sino-Soviet schism has its impact on Communist Party of India also since it was already dogged by factionalism within the party because of rightist and leftist and also from the 1950 onwards a process of gradual change in the Communist Party of India with regard to its class approach and evaluation of class alliances took place and it also try to situate itself in the constitutional framework of Indian democracy. The impact of Sino-Indian border conflict and its importance cannot be overestimated. But still efforts were made to sink the differences within the party. Indeed it took great efforts to avoid a split in the Communist Party of India at Vijayawada. These events have been commented up on by E.M.S.Namboodripad in his book Revisionism and Dogmatism in the CPI.⁶⁰ As we can understand from this book, the party leadership wanted to bury differences because of forthcoming General Elections of 1962. One month before the election, Ajoy Ghosh, who had kept together the various factions within the party for more than one decade died. S.A.Dange the spokesman of the right wing took over the newly created post of the party Chairman, while E.M.S.Namboodripad became General

Secretary. But in February 1963, the latter resigned his post. He stressed that he does not subscribe to a pro-Chinese policy.⁶¹

However the Chinese aggression in October 1962 forced the party leadership of the Communist Party of India to take a clear position, which fully disturbed the precarious balance in the party. The pro-Peking wing had, however, already established a secret parallel party secretariat in November 1962 and made the preparations to go underground if need arose. Finally the intra-party conflicts reached the point of no return and from then onwards the communist Party of India split into two known as Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist). While broadly this was the course of events which ultimately brought about the split, it is not the complete story for at every step a combination of local factors played a very important role.

The popularity of the Communists in Andhra Pradesh was based on the powerful peasant struggle in Telangana area which they had launched in the forties and the other broad people's moment it led in the Andhra part of the erstwhile Madras Province. In fact, so high was the prestige accorded to the party in the immediate post-Telangana Armed struggle period that in the 1952 elections it gained significant electoral victories both in the Andhra as well as Telangana areas. This euphoric state, however, did not last very long and following their election success in 1952 there was a continuous and steady erosion of their support base. A series of factors were responsible for this down fall, the most crucial one being the neutralisation by the Congress of the independent cultivating class of rich peasants which had been the party's back bone thus far. By abolishing the jagirdari system and by various tenancy and land ceiling laws the Congress Government, created a situation wherein it was no longer possible for the big absentee landlords, the jagirdars and the deshmukhs to continue in the manner they had done earlier. At the same time these radical legislations still left enough room for the rich peasants to manoeuvre and retain the interests. All this coupled with the fact that the Visalandhra⁶² questions on which the Communists had rallied much support was rendered superfluous with the creation of a separate Andhra State reduced the Communist party to a situation wherein they could no longer maintain an aggressive stance against the Congress. By a series of moves the Congress had managed to pull the rug from under their feet. In the elections that followed after 1952 the performance of the party was dismal and at the time of the split it had been reduced to a non-entity incapable of influencing any government decision.⁶³

REFERENCES

1. Basham, A.L., A cultural History of India—oxford, 1975, p 25 | 2. Brecher, M. The New States of Asia: A Political Analysis, London, 1963, p 22 | 3. Cited in J.C. Bagal, History of the Indian Association 1876-1951, Calcutta: 1953 p 8 | 4. Quoted in Parvate, T.V., Gopala Krishna Gokhale: A Narrative and Interpretative Review Of his Life, Ahemdabad, 1959, p 164 | 5. Owen, H.F., "The Nationalist Movement" A Cultural History of India, (Ed) by Basham A.L.Oxford, 1975 p 392 | 6. Muzaffar Ahmad, The Communist party of India and its Formation Abroad, Calcutta, 1962, p 41 | 7. Dange, S.A. Gandhi vs. Lenin —, Liberty Literature Co. 1921 | 8. The Socialist Party he founded (December 1917), was converted into the Communist Party of Mexico, the first Communist Party outside Russia | 9. M.N. Roy, M.N. Roy's Memoirs. Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1984; p. 3 | 10. Ibid | 11. Ibid. p36 | 12. Muzaffar Ahmad, Myself and the Communist Party of India, pp-41617 and Adhikari (ed) Documents Vol. III A, pp 155-66 | 13. Sankar Ghosh, Socialism and Communism in India, Bombay, 1971, p 296 | 14. Sardesai, S.G., India and the Russian Revolution, Delhi-1967, pp 49-50 | 15. Pattabhi Rama Rao, P. "1929 Meerut Conspiracy: Its Role in the National Movement" in Visalandhra (Telugu Daily, 30th March 1981 | 16. Sankar Ghosh, Op.Cit. p 297 | 17. History of the Communist movement in India, Vol.I Left Word Books-New Delhi, 2005, p 174 | 18. Sankar Ghosh, Op.Cit. p304 | 19. History of the Communist Movement in India, Vol.I Op.Cit. p 174 | 20. Pattabhi Rama Rao. P. Op.Cit. | 21. History of the Communist Movement in India, Vol.I. Op.Cit. p 226 | 22. Quoted in D.C.Gupta, Indian Government and Politics, New Delhi, 1988, p 549 | 23. Ranadive, B.T., "Communist role in India's Independence"—Social Scientist, 136, September 1984, P8 | 24. Pattabhi Rama Rao, P. Op.Cit. | 25. Sankar Ghosh, Op.Cit. p.304 | 26. Ibid | 27. Seshadri, K. "The communist Party in Andhra Pradesh" State Politics in India (Ed) by Iqbal Narain, Meerut, 1967, p 391 | 28. Bhupendranath Dutt, Studies in Indian Social Polity, (1st edn, 1944,) Calcutta, 1983 p 31 | 29. Ranadive, B.T. Op.Cit. p 20 | 30. Roy, M.N. Memoris, Allied, Bombay, 1964 p 395 | 31. Shashi Bairathi, Communism and Nationalism in India: A Study in Inter Relationship-1919-47, New Delhi 1987 | 32. Sinha, L.P., The Left-wing in India 1919-47, New Publishers, Muzaffarpur, 1965, p15 | 33. Subodh Roy, (ed), communism in India, Calcutta 1971 p 41 | 34. Sumit Sarkar, Modern India, New Delhi, 1983, p 249 | 35. Gupta, D.C., Op.Cit p 549 | 36. Ibid | 37. Ibid | 38. Ibid | 39. Ibid | 40. Communist September 1956, p.2 | 41. Venkateswarlu, V.Nellore zillacomunist vudyamam-amaraveerulu-poratayodulu, (Telugu) Prajasakti Book House, Hyderabad, 2013, p 31 | 42. Balarama Murthy, Y. Origin and Growth of Communist Party in Andhra Pradesh- Prsaritha (Telugu Quarterly) April-June 1975 Pp6-8 | 43. Ibid | 44. Ibid | 45. Ranadive, B.T. Op.Cit p52 | 46. Ibid | 47. Seshadri, K. Op.Cit. p 300 | 48. Harikishan Singh Surjeet, March of the Communist Movement in India, Calcutta, 1998 pp28-32 | 49. Sundarayya, P., Telangana Peoples Struggle and its Lessons, Calcutta, 1972, p 140 | 50. Bhabani Sen Gupta, Communism in Indian Politics, New York, 1972 p 60-62 | 51. Sundarayya, P., Op.Cit. P 146 | 52. Ibid. p 148 | 53. Narayana Reddy, Ravi, Heroic Telangana, New Delhi, 1973 p 31 | 54. Chary, A.S.R., The Naked Face of Anti-Communists in Andhra, Hyderabad, 1946, pp8-10 | 55. Ibid. -Vengamma was a vulgar satire depicting the Copmmunist leaders as gamblers, Womanizers and swindlers of party funds. | 56. Election Commission of India, web site. " eci.nic.in/ " | 57. Sesh Navin .Ch. Fifty years of Communist periodicals, Hyderabad, 1973, p 21 | 58. Narayana Reddy, R. Op.Cit. p 31 | 59. Krishna Patrika, Vijayawada, 1945, January 27. | 60. Namboodripad, E.M.S., Revisionism and Dogmatism in the CPI, New delhi, 1963 p 32 | 61. Ibid | 62. Communist Programme for happy Visalandhra, Cross roads, 19th October, 1951 | 63. Balarama Murthy, Y. Op.Cit. p 16 |