



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

History

WELFARE MEASURES OF RAJAJI MINISTRY 1937-1939 A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

During his two year reign (1937-1939) as premier of the Madras Presidency he took several path breaking initiatives. These include: removing restriction on davits for entering Hindu temples, easing debt burden of farmers, compulsory introduction of Hindi in educational institutions, and introducing prohibition.

INTRODUCTION:

The emergence and growth of the Justice party fulfilled the ambition of enlightened non-Brahmin leadership power within a short span of about sixteen years (1920-1936) They effected social reform measures particularly for the upliftment of downtrodden sections. Several among the Dravidian leadership earned the goodwill and acclamation of the people. They even outwitted the nationalist plank which gained momentum under the leadership of Anie Besant and there by arrested the Political leadership of the Brahmins. It naturally reduced the stature of congress movement. Periyar Ramaswami took advantage of the situation and campaigned against political order However the civil Disobedience Movement Launched under the leadership of Gandhi coincided with the disgust of people on Dravidian rule by rich and affluent section. The congress dubbed the Justice party as a group of zamindars and submitted itself to the level of a party of common people. The announcement of elections in 1937,therefore placed the nationalists a frontal seat in the political vehicle where in C. Rajagopalachari gained political clout and become the premier of madras for two years (1937-1939)

Congress Ministry of 1937-1939

The Government of India act of 1935 abolished diarchy in the provinces and introduced provincial autonomy it introduced significant changes in the constitution of the provincial Government. Legislative The council of ministers. Which was made, responsible to the legislature, was to administer provincial subjects. However, their power were subjected to constitutional safeguards and Governor's special responsibilities. In the election held for the Madras legislature on 18 February 1937 the congress party swept the polls and emerged as the sole representative body of the people. The Justice party which was the regional rival party of the congress hoped to undermine the strength of the congress in the election; But failed. In July 1937 the congress formed the Ministry with C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) as the premier Rajaji in particular felt that the congress should, take office in 1937 to carry out Constructive reforms rather than allow Nehru and socialists to control the English and thereby divert it from nationalism to a class war. His ministry committed itself mainly to the implementation of social reforms such as temple entry for Harijans measures for the abolition of Zamindari system and to provide welfare measures to the workers in the Industries etc. Not with standing all opposition the congress party won support owing to its role in the national Movement while the other parties became weaker and weaker. However the outbreak of the second world war cut short the life of the congress Ministry and brought to a stand still most of the welfare measures initiated by it. Prohibition The congress ministries may enforce immediate prohibition by making education self-supporting instead of paying for it from the liquor revenue. This appear a starting proposition, but I hold it. Perfectly feasible and eminently reasonable.

In September 1938 when the Munich decision was announced, Rajaji was in the switch to dryness of a new District. Temple Entry Legislation He knew that as a first step in this direction temples had to be thrown to the so-called untouchables his Government was

doing opinion on this revolutionary measure. The atmosphere was far more conducive than ever before with the progress of the Temple-entry campaign in Malabar district and cochin state. The Executive committee of all India Harijan sevaksangh requested the Governments of Madras and cochin to declare open all Hindu temples within its Jurisdiction to the Harijans But the Madras Government was responsible to the people the presidency who represented all classes and creeds. Temples could be thrown open to Harijans only by the Trustees either of their own accord or at the instance of the savaranade votes who would visit particular temples of course, the provincial legislatures could bring about this reform by passing needed legislations. With some reason. That are interfering in the Hindu religious dispute and backing the sanatanist Brahmins as against the harijans and their sympathizers .

Amelioration for Depressed classes:

The Government helped this caste to acquire also house sites by bearing half the costs itself and by collecting the balance in easy installments. Considerable extand of land was reserved for and assigned to addition to the unreserved area for which also they could apply. There were co-operative Societies, they could obtain loans for agricultural and general purposes and secure leases of government lands. An Advisory committee, was set up in each district co-ordinate the work of the District committees.

Peasant Upliftment:

Rajaji was the first to bring the Debt Relief Act to help poor indebted agriculturists who were suffering under the stranglehold of usurious money lenders. Originally in 1937, an ordinance was contemplated to call a moratorium in regard to agricultural debts, but this was abandoned later. Instead a Debt Relief Act was passed on a comprehensive scale in march 1938 with the following objectives: to scale down the debts of agriculturists, to reduce the rate of Interest on their future debts and to writer off the arrears of Rent due to zamindars Jamis and other landlords upto the end of march 1939 debts amounting Rs. 2,86.67 677.0.4 were scaled down by courts to Rs. 1,52,09 419.3.4. A sum of Rs. 50 lakhs was set apart in the budget for 1939-40 towards the grant of loans to agriculturists to pay off the scaled down debts. To facilitate the debtors to pay off the debts as scaled down in the Agricultural it is Relief Act, Debts Conciliation Boards were setup for each revenue division under the Debt conciliation Act of 1936 credit facilities for the agriculturists were increased also by the reorganization of co-operative credit societies for securing reasonable price for agricultural produce. The Government also increased the guarantee of the debentures of the central land mortgage Bank to Rs. 200 lakhs.

Labours Troubles:

Much of the problem that Rajaji was confronted with had been the result of his own innovative measures but problems came from other sources also. The grauest problem that caused him considerable depression throughout this lenure of two years and three months was that of the labour. Though he was not responsible for the labour troubles.

V.V. Giri Minsiter for labour and industries having regard to his

previous career as labour leader did everything possible to forge a good relationship between the employers and the employed. His utterances emphasized the methods of conciliation and arbitration. Even while drafting a somewhat revolutionary Bill he had the good sense to place the broad outline of his proposals before a joint meeting of the representatives of employers and employees for comments and modifications. Evidently Giri wanted to encourage frequent and cordial exchanges between the workers and their employers with such a man as the labour Minister, congressmen and industrial workers hopefully looked forward to a new era of labour relations when police brutalities and intervention in industrial disputes would become things of the past. To nib this trend in the bud and to bring about some harmony between the labour and the capital the Government issued a communiqué in October 1937 to the effect that the ministry would strongly disapprove of any strike unless all other methods of representation had failed.

The directive hardly satisfied the labourers. The gulf between them and their employers remained as wide as ever notwithstanding the establishment of courts of enquiry and arbitration. In many cases the employers succeeded in creating the impression that while they were just and reasonable the labourers were not and so they had to be firm in handling them. Rajaji's attitude towards labour complicated the situation. And Giri stood in awe of the premier. Rajaji identified himself with employers when labour unrest began particularly in the textile mills of Madurai, Coimbatore and Madras city he wanted the labourers to forget their unions if they expected the Government to consider their requests. Rajaji did not take into account the fact mill owners were also unhelpful in reaching an agreement. There were mill owners who had even employed ruffians to keep the labourers under control.

Anti-Hindi Agitation:

Anti-Hindi agitation was staged vehemently in different parts of the Presidency. The outbreak of the Second World War on 3 September 1939 and the involvement of India in the War raised objections among the Congress Party circles. The latter decided to withdraw from the Ministries in the Provinces. Taking advantage of this trend, Rajaji resigned his ministry on 29 October 1939. After the resignation of Congress Ministry, Governor James Hope of Madras took charge of the administration. He organized National War Fund and published a weekly called Madras War Review both in Tamil and English. He launched an intensive propaganda in support of the allied powers and collected a sum of Rupees two crores as war fund.

CONCLUSION:

There existed in Madras politics two political viewpoints of different goals when elections were ordered under the Act of 1935. The Justice party, which enjoyed political power under the Act of 1919 had done several social measures for the upliftment of the backward and depressed classes. Outside the power centre Periyar E.V. Ramsamy worked as a crusader against the Congressites dubbing it as a party of position through the medium of Hindu, Dravidian political activists felt that Hindi can be a popular subject for the Brahmins in towns and cities and not to the illiterates in the rural side. Due to this confrontation of interests Rajaji's ministry moved towards opposition from the socio-political justifications.

Endnotes:

1. Madras Administration Report, 1939-1940 Government of Madras
2. Two years of Congress Rule in Madras 1937 – 1939
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