

**"PEOPLE'S WAR" AND STATE RESPONSE :
THE NAXALITE MOVEMENT IN TELENGANA, INDIA (1970-93)**

by

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the interaction between the emergence and development of a radical peasant movement--the naxalite movement-- in Telengana, India and the state response during 1970-93. The thesis contends that the movement has essentially been a violent expression of a socio-economic problem that has been endemic in rural India. It has resulted from the existence of glaring inequalities in wealth and social status between the rural rich and poor which have developed under specific historical influences during the modernization process. In the post-independence period governmental policies, ostensibly aimed at development, far from correcting the problem, have led to further uneven distribution of economic and political benefits. Throughout the period, the ideological and organizational influence of the communist parties has provided the necessary basis for mobilizing forces against the state. The state has responded to the movement through policies of both persuasion and coercion, although the latter have been more visible and dominant. The Indian state (both at the centre and state levels), with its commitment to liberal democracy on the one hand and Gandhism and socialism on the other, has been put on the defensive for its unconscionable neglect of agrarian socio-economic reforms, its overall failure to bring about social justice and its disregard of human rights and civil liberties. The thesis tries to bring out the theoretical significance and the dynamics of the peasant struggle as well as the dilemmas inherent in the state response.

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Glossary

AICCCR : All-India Co-ordinating Committee of Communist Revolutionaries

APCCCR : Andhra Pradesh Co-ordinating Committee of Communist Revolutionaries.

APRCC : Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee

Adivasi(s): scheduled tribes or forest people.

Arrack : country liquor

Beedi : country cigar

Banjar lands : waste lands

CPI : Communist Party of India

CPI(M) : Communist Party of India (Marxist)

CPI(ML) : Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)

DAKMS : Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sanghatan

Dalams : squads

Deshmukhs : revenue officials

Dora : landlord

Girijans : hill people

Goondas : thugs

Jagirdari System : a pre-independence system of land tenure wherein large tracts of land and taxing rights were given to a feudal subordinate in recognition of loyalty and service.

Jagir : land owned by the Jagirdar

Jagirdar : owner of the land

Jotedar : land owner of West Bengal

KAMS : Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sanghatan

Kamma : an affluent land-owning community in Andhra Pradesh

Pattas : land deeds

Pattadars : owner of land deeds

Poramboke land : waste land

PWG : People's War Group ; a naxalite movement operating in Telangana

RCS : Ryutu Coolie Sangham; agricultural labourers' association

Ryutu : cultivator

Ryotwari System : a system of land tenure wherein state owned land was distributed among the peasants and revenue periodically collected from them by a government revenue official.

Sanghatan : association

Sangham :association

TADA : Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act

TDP : Telugu Desam Party

Vetti : bonded labour

Zamindari system : a colonial land tenure system prevalent in coastal districts of AP during the pre-independence period. In practice, it is just like the jagirdari system of the Telengana area.

Zamindar : owner of land.

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Chapter 1 The Rise of People's Movements and State Response: Some Theoretical Concepts

"The People's War Group, the political wing of the naxalites, has defied every attempt of the various state governments in Andhra Pradesh to put an end to its illegal, and sometimes, violent activities."

Deccan Chronicle, 20 April 1991.

"Mystery Killings by the Police: The Andhra Pradesh police are infamous for what are internationally known as extra-judicial killings. Killings in police custody and in fake 'encounters' are common practices of AP police."

APCLC Report, 21 June 1987.

"Naxalite Writ runs unchecked in Andhra : The gruesome killings by the People's War Group of Naxalites has lit the fuse for a political time-bomb in Andhra Pradesh."

Economic Times , 10 September 1989.

"The AP police can kidnap, kill, rape or maim anybody, anywhere, anytime."

Sunday Observer, 10 September 1989.

The political scene in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh has been turbulent for the past 25 years. Alternating reports of insurgent terror or of the state's "counter-terror" dominate newspaper headlines every other day. The historical roots of the contemporary naxalite¹ movement can in fact be traced back to the tribal insurrection that broke out in Naxalbari, a village in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal in 1969. That movement was effectively put down by the state within two years. Subsequently, similar movements erupted in other parts of the country, notably in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh (AP).

The movement in AP first occurred in the Srikakulam district. By 1969, the Srikakulam naxalite rebellion was also crushed by the state through the use of force. However, this did not signal the end of naxalism in AP. In the early 1970s, the movement

¹In this thesis the terms "naxalite" and "naxalism" will follow the Indian usage which is synonymous with "Maoist" and "Maoism". Indian authors tend not to capitalize the terms.

found new life in the Telengana region of the state. To the present day, the naxalites have continued a campaign of terror in the countryside in Telengana. In fact, the northern Telengana districts of Warangal, Karimnagar, Nizambad and Adilabad are regarded as naxalite strongholds. Naxalite influence has also spilled over to the neighboring states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. Naxalites operate in these areas, organizing and leading 'people's movements' on land, wages and other issues which are of concern to the rural poor. Though initially these efforts have been undertaken through peaceful methods, the radical rhetoric and confrontational tactics of the naxalites and the panicky reaction by landed and business interests have often resulted in the escalation of confrontation into violence. The entry of the state police in turn has produced a violence/counter-violence chain reaction. In such escalated circumstances, the naxalites have taken to terrorist activities like blowing up trains, buses and other government owned property, kidnapping of government officials and ruthless killing of police, landlords and forest officials.

The state, on the other hand, has resorted to equally violent methods in dealing with the naxalites. It has treated the naxalite movement as primarily a law and order problem, not giving adequate attention to the socio-economic causes of the movement. The state has been accused of adopting highly coercive methods which undermine liberal democratic values and respect for human life and liberty. It has resorted to extra-legal methods in confronting the movement. Extra-judicial killings, rape and torture of persons in police custody, illegal detentions and harassment of innocent people have become increasingly common in Andhra Pradesh. In fact, state violence has become such a common phenomenon that many who are sensitive to human rights and civil liberties now fear that state terrorism may have become part and parcel of the system of governance.

The dialectic of violence between state and society in political conflict situations is not a phenomenon unique to Andhra Pradesh. Such violent interaction between state and society is widespread in other parts of India also. The Indian government's methods of containing violent secessionist struggles in Punjab, Kashmir and the north eastern states are all instances of the state's resorting to excessive and indiscriminate force in response to challenges from below. Even in so-called western liberal democratic nations, governments resort to coercive tactics in response to violent challenges to their authority. What then makes the naxalite case different?

The naxalite phenomenon in India, unlike the ethnically or religiously driven separatist movements, is primarily a socio-economic movement. It is an expression of a deep social malady arising from glaring economic disparities and the severe social and economic deprivation of certain large segments of the rural population. In other words, where it occurs, it is essentially a struggle for socio-economic justice. The movement, in one sense, points at the failure of the Indian state to secure to its citizens a just social and economic order. This dimension lends the struggles a credible moral legitimacy, putting the state in an embarrassing dilemma about the nature and scope of its response. On the one hand, it should sincerely address the redistributive justice problem, particularly in the agrarian sector. On the other hand, it cannot afford to let violent challenges threaten its legitimacy even when the cause behind the challenge is morally valid. It is these complex considerations that set the tone to the debate about the proper extent and limits of the state response to naxalite-type challenges.

This thesis seeks to explore the dynamics of interaction between the emergence and development of the naxalite movement in Telengana and the state in AP. To this end, the thesis focuses on two levels of analysis. First, it examines the reasons why a revolutionary movement broke out in Telengana. Such an exercise will involve the

analysis of the pre-conditions for such revolutionary movements and that of the actual background to the naxalite movement in the state. The analysis will include the perspectives of insurgents at the grassroots level, i.e. those who are participating in the struggle. Here, particular emphasis will be laid upon the ways in which the naxalites came into confrontation with the state, the people and resources they mobilized and the methods and tactics they pursued.

The second task of analysis focuses upon the state. It analyses the causes of and motivations behind state repression. It also brings out the strategies and methods the governments, of both AP and the centre, have followed in dealing with the movement. And finally, the implications of such responses will be examined.

There are several theoretical dimensions to the study of revolutionary violence. While some theories focus on the insurgency side of the conflict, emphasizing the causes of revolutionary upsurges, others deal with the counter-insurgency dimension explaining state behavior. For our purpose we will consider theories from both the categories. Theories that analyze the causes of revolutionary movements and of anti-state violence will focus on three levels of analysis, that of the society, the state and the individual. Further, state violence will also be explained through models focusing on structural, situational and dispositional levels of analysis. Although these two theoretical sections may seem to be unconnected on face, they are both inseparable in the study of revolutionary conflict. For our case study of the Telengana Naxalite movement, these theories provide useful tools in exploring the dynamics of the struggle between the naxalites and the state. Unlike uni-dimensional studies of political conflicts which explain only causes for rebellion or revolution, this approach will help in systematically analyzing causes for political conflict from both perspectives--that of the dissidents and that of political authority.

Theories of Revolution

At the outset, it should be made clear that the concerns of this study have little to do with what constitutes a successful revolution. The purpose is less ambitious in that it is limited to exploring factors that give rise to violent revolutionary types of movements. As mentioned before, three theoretical perspectives of analysis can be identified to explain the phenomenon of revolutionary movements. These are first, Barrington Moore's socio-structural theory, which attributes changes in social structure as the necessary precondition for a revolution-phase to follow. The second is Chalmers Johnson's disequilibrium theory, which relates revolution to primarily political factors. Finally, there is the perspective of Charles Tilly which lays emphasis on individual psychological motivation and related organizational mobilization as the causes for rebellion.

According to Moore, a revolution is a fundamental and often violent change in a social structure which may be instituted from above or below. Revolutions occur in traditional societies when they are already undergoing some form of transformation towards modernization. In other words, purely static societies seldom experience revolutionary changes. The political outcomes of revolution are essentially shaped by the nature of social structures which in turn are created by relations between the three social classes--peasants, landed aristocracy, and industrial capitalist class. Moore's typology of revolutions which explains the coming of democratic regimes in England, France and America, the origins of fascism in Germany and Japan and the rise of communism in Russia and China, is based on an understanding of the relations between the three social classes.

The most relevant aspect of Moore's writings on revolution to this study is his analysis of the rise of peasant revolutions in Asian countries where agriculture is the

dominant mode of production. In highlighting the causes of peasant revolutions, Moore focuses on the rise of agrarian capitalism which is the intermediate stage in the process of transformation from feudalism to industrial capitalism. His contention is that it is the absence of a commercial revolution in agricultural production and of thoroughgoing modernization of the countryside coinciding with the overall absorption of the nation's economy into the capitalist world system, that is the primary cause for peasant revolutions. In other words, the persistence of pre-modern forms of production in a capitalist economic system can create social tensions that manifest in the form of rebellion of thus far marginalised classes.

.....[T]he most important cause of peasant revolutions has been the absence of a commercial revolution in agriculture led by the landed upper classes and the concomitant survival of peasant social institutions into the modern era when they are subject to new stresses and strains.²

The reason for the absence of commercial revolution in agriculture, according to Moore, is linked to the social structure of the society which is marked by a weak landed aristocracy that fails to develop a really powerful commercial impulse within its own ranks and is traditionally tied to the peasant class in an exploitative relationship.³ The net result of the co-existence of pre-modern social and economic institutions alongside the capitalist economy is that it places intolerable burdens on the peasant. While he continues to suffer from the exploitative features of the old order, he is now subject to new exploitative methods of pumping the economic surplus away from peasantry.⁴

Analyzing causes for communist-type peasant revolutions in Russia and China, Moore emphasizes the existence of an ineffective and corrupt landed gentry in the pre-

²Barrington Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), p. 477.

³*Ibid.*, p. 460.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 473.

revolutionary decades, trying to maintain its style of living by extracting large surpluses from the peasantry, in a world changing under the impact of industrial capitalism.⁵ Although Moore agrees that similar conditions exist in India, he contends that the transformation of the peasantry into a unified revolutionary class there is inhibited by the existence of a highly stratified social structure--the Indian caste system, which prevents the development of peasant solidarity. Hence, the prospects for revolution are thwarted. I will argue that Moore seems to have exaggerated the conservative potential of Indian social structure in undermining revolutionary fervor. Peasant struggles throughout the course of Indian history are also a reality. Yet, perhaps Moore's contention is useful in explaining the reasons for the failure of these struggles to culminate into a revolution. Moore's thesis is still relevant because of its identification of the social structural conditions for generating situations of insurrection; as the Telengana evidence shows, the existence of these in the Indian rural milieu very largely reflects Moore's analysis.

Chalmers Johnson's theory of revolution is, at first, quite difficult to differentiate from Moore's socio-structural theoretical construct. Like Moore, Johnson defines revolution as a form of social change.⁶ Broadly, Johnson's theory also suggests that the causes for revolutionary change are closely related to societal factors. He argues that revolutions occur when a society's state of equilibrium, which is marked by a comfortable synchronization of values and environment, is disturbed and the society becomes disequibrated. Johnson's theory differs quite significantly from Moore's in highlighting the role of the society's political elite who seek to retain the system or manage its maintenance at an altered level of equilibrium. In either case the aim, whether conscious or unconscious, is the avoidance of the loss of hegemony by the elite. Though Johnson does not explicitly say so, the political elite in his analysis corresponds to the governmental

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 460.

⁶Chalmers Johnson, Revolutionary Change (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), p. 1.

order (which is so even in neo-Marxian theory). Thus, while Moore's emphasis on the societal factors affords us with one level to analyze, Johnson's according a significant role to the political elite offers us a second level of analysis. Further, this aspect is of particular importance to the case under study--the naxalite case-- as the evidence reveals that the political elite in India (at both state and centre) have not only failed to maintain the system's state of equilibrium but are to an extent responsible for creating disequilibrium in the social system.

Johnson's theory begins with the assumption that a healthy social system is normally in a state of equilibrium, with its 'values and environment' in harmony with one another.⁷ When a society is in a state of equilibrium, it absorbs routine or evolutionary changes and adapts itself by making necessary adjustments to either its structure of values or its environment, without disturbing the equilibrium. Under such circumstances, a society is 'immune' to revolution.

However, on certain occasions, the social system moves out of equilibrium, i.e. its values and social environment become desynchronized. It is under such circumstances that a society becomes prone to revolution. What then causes a social system to move into a state of disequilibrium? Johnson contends that radical structural changes in society (as opposed to gradual and evolutionary changes) which are consciously induced either from within the social system or from outside, are primarily responsible for a society to lose its equilibrium. He offers a classification of four major sources of change that can lead to a revolutionary situation in any society: 1. exogenous sources of value change, or changes that occur outside the system, such as the effects of revolutions in neighboring countries; 2. endogenous sources of value change caused primarily by the play of internal forces; 3. exogenous sources of environmental change including changes which occur in

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 62.

response to external factors like importation of technology from abroad and; 4. endogenous sources of environmental change or changes that result from technological innovations within the system, for example, the introduction of railways.⁸

In Johnson's theory, while a disequilibriated social system produces a revolutionary situation it is not however a sufficient pre-condition for a revolution. According to him, political elites in a society play a very important role in making or unmaking a revolution. They can in fact prevent the outbreak of a revolution by first recognizing the signs of disequilibrium in the society and then by developing policies that will help in resynchronizing the values and environment of the system.

It isup to the vested leadership of a system to develop policies that will result in resynchronization; for example, changed values may demand a revised arrangement for land distribution,.....whether resynchronization or revolution occurs depends in large measure on the abilities of the leaders.⁹

Johnson argues that once the disequilibrium in the system is identified, the course of action open to a society's political elite ranges from a conservative change to elite intransigence. The latter would mean a completely irreconcilable and uncompromising posture.¹⁰ A conservative change would serve the purpose of bringing about a structural change in the social system so that the values and the environment get resynchronised and violence can be effectively avoided. Elite intransigence, in contrast, would include such policies, intentionally pursued by the elite, that only serve to exacerbate the disequilibrium. In Johnson's theory, elite intransigence constitutes the second step towards revolution.

⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 67-72.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 96.

The political elite may also opt for policies that lie between these two extremes of conservative change and total intransigence. For example, they could adopt policies that are 'barely adequate' or policies that demonstrate incompetence by the elite.¹¹ The former type of policies would have the effect of resynchronizing values and environment without altering the old structure of the social system. One of the examples cited by Johnson in this regard is "the policies of loosening of norms of social mobility in order to co-opt into the elite the actual or potential leadership of a group of organized status protesters."¹² Incompetent policies of the elite, on the other hand, are those policies that do not properly address the problems a disequibrated social system faces. They may not be so much the products of anti-social intentions of the elite as they are of lack of accurate information. Whatever may be the reasons for the incompetence of the policies of the elite, they only result in further desynchronization of the social system, making it vulnerable to revolution unless the elite acknowledges its own incompetence and decides to step down.

In sum, Johnson's theory lays out the different strategies that the political elite of a society may pursue which would influence the possibilities of a revolution. While disequilibrium in the social system resulting from a desynchronization of values and environment is the essential pre-condition for revolution, the activities of the political elite are both a cause and a consequence of the disequilibrium. As already mentioned before, conscious policies of structural change pursued by the leaders, i.e. endogeneous sources of value and environment change, are a major source of disequilibrium. The subsequent actions of the political elite in response to the disequilibrium condition may further exacerbate the condition and finally lead to a revolution.

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 98.

An attempt to link socio-structural and political factors to non-sociological, especially psychological factors like human agency and motivation is made by Charles Tilly. Tilly does not dismiss the importance of socio-structural and political factors (discussed by theorists like Moore and Johnson) as pre-conditions for revolutions. In fact, the influence of these factors is acknowledged and also well integrated into his theoretical model. However, his contribution to the understanding of causes for revolution lies primarily in his "motivation to mobilization" approach. Therefore, we will focus on this aspect of his theory.

Along with purely social psychological theorists like Davies and Gurr, and many others who argue that revolutions are shaped by the development of a revolutionary impulse within the psyche of the individual, Tilly gives importance to human intentions as a source of revolutionary behavior. According to him, "the revolutionary moment arrives when previously acquiescent members of that population find themselves confronted with strictly incompatible demands from the government and from an alternative body claiming control over the government or claiming to be the government."¹³ Though Tilly takes people's motivations and aspirations seriously, he differs from the social psychological theorists in that he contends that revolutions are not the outcome of "the blind irrationality of crowds but are purposive, political and organized collective actions." In other words, Tilly gives importance to organization which to him is crucial to the transformation of people's anger into revolutionary political action. While there could be any number of causes motivating people to revolt, until motivation results in mobilization no action will result.

For Tilly, the intervening variable between peoples' motivations and mobilization is the development of a level of organization. Tilly outlines three conditions for the growth

¹³Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution (London: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1978), p. 192.

of an effective organization of challengers to the existing power holders. Firstly, a split in the existing polity must develop, giving rise to alternative contenders for control over the population. This would force the masses to either support the status quo or choose the revolutionary organization. Secondly, the challengers must inspire the support and commitment of a significant segment of the population. Thirdly, the contenders must have access to the instruments of coercion and choose an appropriate warfare technique. It is only after having met these conditions that contending political groups can be effectively mobilized against the existing power holders.

If Tilly's theory is interpreted in more pragmatic terms, he is clearly referring to the need for a revolutionary party which would in essence be a unifying structure representing the common identity among the challengers. The rise of the CCP in China during the revolutionary years is a good example of the growth of an organization of contenders. With regard to our case study, the influential role played in India by the various communist parties, the CPI and CPI(M) in the initial years and the CPI(ML) since the 1970s, in leading the naxalite movement in Telengana is evidence of the importance of the organization in revolutionary movements. On the whole, Tilly's social psychological perspective will help us in analyzing causes for the naxalite movement from a micro-level perspective which is very often overlooked by major theorists of the neo-Marxian school.

Theories of counter-insurgency and state violence

Having outlined the three theoretical models of revolution, we will now examine theories that analyze violent state behavior in situations of political conflict. This study seeks to explore the different factors that influence the use of violence by the state in situations of political conflict. The study of political conflict in the field of comparative politics has for long focused only upon the insurgency side of political conflict. Most scholars dealing with this subject have been pre-occupied with analyzing causes for

rebellions and revolutions. The other side of political conflict, which involves the study of state violence and political repression, has been largely ignored. Since the 1980s, however, with the growing concern about human rights and their violation by governments, the study of state violence and repression has gained significance. Even today, this aspect of comparative politics remains a relatively new and developing field. Hence, the literature reviewed in this section does not have the benefit of a variety of sources and theoretical models which the earlier theoretical section had.

The broad framework of this section is borrowed from Ted Gurr's theoretical essay--"The political origins of state violence and terror: A theoretical analysis."¹⁴ Gurr begins by defining state violence/terrorism as a policy or strategy chosen by a society's elite for dealing with actual or anticipated opposition arising out of situations of conflict created by interactions among elites and their opponents.¹⁵ Then Gurr goes on to explain why elites use coercion as an instrument of rule. He offers a three-fold classification of variables that influence the use of force by the state: 1. structural, 2. situational and 3. dispositional variables. Gurr's classification itself is based on a study of several grand theories of political conflict which offer different explanations for the occurrence and persistence of state violence. Gurr's essay attempts to classify these diverse explanations of the phenomenon into three broad categories in order to make meaningful analysis of the problem possible. In other words, Gurr offers a synthesis of what has already been said about the causes for state violence. In the following pages we will explore the three variables that explain causes for state violence from three different perspectives.

From a structural perspective, the most important cause for state violence is "those that define elite's relations with their opponents and determine or constrain their

¹⁴Ted Gurr, "The political origins of state violence and terror--A theoretical analysis," in Stohl and Lopez (eds.) Government Violence and Repression (Connecticut : Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 45-67.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 45.

response options."¹⁶ The factor that defines the relationship between a society's elite and non-elite (challengers) is the internal social structure of the society and the elite's position in it vis-a-vis the challenger.

The social structure of a society and the relations between the various classes play a crucial role in determining the extent to which a regime will use force as a means of social control.¹⁷ Gurr's contention in this regard is that social heterogeneity and inequality are the main factors that condition the use of violence by the state. In societies that are highly stratified along ethnic, religious or class lines, social cohesion tends to be low and the society's elite are more likely to resort to violent methods to bring about compliance with the regime's policies and for overall social control.¹⁸ Gurr asserts:

...[I]t seems almost universally true that the ruling classes in highly stratified societies are ruthless in their use of violence to suppress threats to their domination. Underlying the frequent resort of elites to violence in heterogeneous and stratified societies is probably a lack of empathic identification between elites and non-elite.¹⁹

It seems therefore that social distance between elite and non-elite, arising from either ethnic or religious or class differences, "makes it psychologically easier to dehumanize and murder opponents."²⁰

The second theoretical perspective for analyzing causes for state violence concentrates on situational variables. Situational variables, as the term suggests, would include those factors that would have a direct effect on the decision-making calculus of the

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁷This factor has been emphasized by many scholars dealing with the subject of state terrorism and violence. See Herbert Kelman, "Violence without Moral Restraint," *Journal of Social Issues*, 29 (1973), pp. 26-61.

¹⁸Ted Gurr, "Political origins," p. 58.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 58.

²⁰Herbert Kelman, cited by Gurr. p. 58.

elite and would force the elite to make the most prudent and rational choice in a given situation.²¹ Therefore situational variables are those immediate causes --political traits of challengers (status and strategies)-- that compel a society's political elite to make use of violence as a means of confronting challenges to its authority. It is Charles Tilly's resource mobilization approach that emphasizes these situational variables in explaining causes of state repression.

Tilly's explanation for political repression rests on the contention that "governments respond selectively to different sorts of groups and to different sorts of actions."²² The traits of challengers will determine the extent to which a regime will use force. First of all, the extent of the political threat posed by a challenger will influence the use of force as a means of suppression by the elite. If the challenger's objective is to overthrow the existing regime, and the number of people involved poses a significant challenge and finally, if the challengers rely on violent methods to achieve their objectives, in such situations the elite are likely to choose violence as a policy choice.²³ Secondly, if the challengers have a fairly large degree of sympathy and support in the public, the elite are further compelled to use force to confront them as fear will be the most effective method of deterring the public from supporting dissidents.²⁴ Thirdly, a politically marginalised group of challengers (in the Indian case, tribals) is more likely to be suppressed through violent means than those who have access to political involvement. And finally, the use of guerrilla tactics by challengers is the most compelling factor leading the elite to use force. This is because the hit-and-run characteristics of guerrilla war and

²¹Ted Gurr, "Political origins," p. 62.

²²Charles Tilly, From Mobilization to Revolution (London : Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1978), p. 106.

²³Ted Gurr, "Political origins," p. 51.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 52.

the inaccessibility of the terrain in which the guerrillas operate make it difficult for the government to combat the challenger through conventional security means.²⁵

Finally, the third theoretical perspective--the dispositional perspective, emphasizes factors that make the use of violence an acceptable or justifiable alternative. Gurr asserts that justifications for state violence are shaped by an elite's direct experience of violence or its successful use in other similar situations elsewhere. "Successful situational uses of state terror in polarized societies are likely to lead to institutionalized terror and to the preemptive use of terror to maintain political control."²⁶ Again, democratic principles and institutions have a deterring effect on the elite use of violence as a means of political control.²⁷ It is a universal truth that authoritarian regimes are generally more inclined to use violent methods of political control than democratic regimes. In democratic nations, accountability to the people makes compromise in conflict situations through peaceful means a more acceptable strategy.

A Framework for Analysis

We have, so far, examined some theories on revolution and state violence. The significance of these theoretical formulations, however, lies in their relevance to the case study. The purpose of these theories is to give meaningful explanation to the empirical facts. What, then, do these theories seek to explain? The relevance of the theories is tied to the main problem of this thesis which is to study the dynamics of the interaction between the emergence and development of a people's movement and the state. The two sets of theories--those on revolution and those on counter-revolution and state violence, which were discussed in the chapter, serve two different objectives. The theoretical

²⁵Walter Laqueur, "The Character of Guerrilla Warfare," in Lawrence Freedman (eds.) *War* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 323-329.

²⁶Ted Gurr, "Political origins," p. 55.

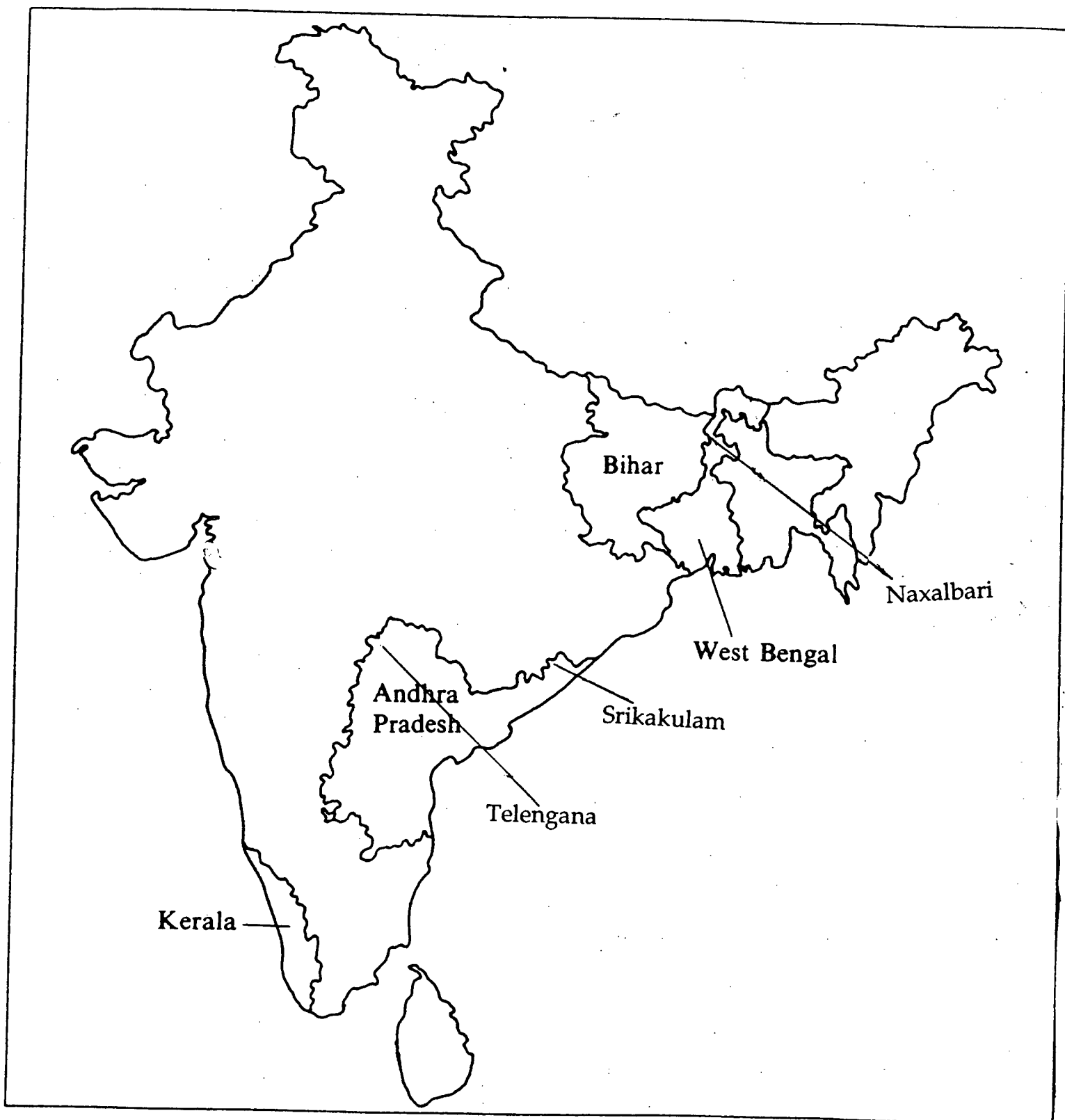
²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 57.

perspectives on the causes for revolutionary movements, will afford us insightful ways of looking at the causes for the emergence of the naxalite movement. The theoretical perspectives enable us to see whether the pre-conditions for the growth of an environment for revolutionary struggle existed in the situation under study and to what extent the purported pre-requisites mentioned in the various theoretical formulations can be discerned in the birth and growth of the naxalite movement. In particular, we will attempt to find out : 1) What is the nature of social structure in Telengana and in what way has it influenced the growth of a peasant revolutionary movement? 2) What has been the role of the state and the political elite in AP that may have effected the development of the movement? and 3) To what extent have political movements, other type of grassroots organizations, and political parties in Telengana contributed to the germination and growth of the people's movement?

Similarly, theories on counter-revolution and state violence will provide some variables to analyze state response to the naxalite movement. The following questions, derived from the structural, situational, and dispositional variables, will help in explaining the forces that shaped the nature of state response: 1) What is the nature of the social structural relationships between the political elite and the challengers in AP? 2) To what extent does the nature of the naxalite challenge shape the state behavior? 3) In what way have earlier experiences of the state with similar violent challenges influenced their policies in confronting the naxalites?

Through the application of theory to facts, the thesis will argue that the naxalite movement in Telengana is an expression of a socio-economic problem, that has been endemic. It has resulted from the existence of glaring inequalities in wealth and social status between the rural rich and the poor. In the post-independence period, the government had not only failed to correct the problem but to a large extent is also

responsible for worsening the situation. The rising hopes and expectations of the poor during the post-independence times, resulted in a flood of frustration. The manifestation of the radicalism and violence, however, could not have occurred were it not for the presence of a radical ideological environment fostered by decades of communist ideological influence in the area. In other words, the ideological and organizational influence of the Marxist-Leninist parties worked as a catalyst to trigger a revolutionary movement. The state, in turn, although occasionally acknowledging its failure to handle the problem of rural poverty, continued to neglect the problem by not seriously implementing land reforms. Instead, it sought to tackle the naxalite challenge through repression. The state's unconscionable neglect of agrarian socio-economic reforms for political reasons and its excessive reliance on force have eroded the legitimacy of the state, putting it on the defensive, both for its failure to bring about social justice and for its disregard for human rights and civil liberties.

Map I : India

Chapter 2

The Naxalite Movement : Origins and Development

The ongoing naxalite movement in the Telengana districts of the state of Andhra Pradesh is only a part of the broader phenomenon of peasant insurrectionary movements in India. This movement has important precedents both within and outside Andhra Pradesh. The immediate backdrop to the Telengana naxalite movement is the Srikakulam tribal armed struggle of the late sixties. 1970, the year that witnessed the closing chapters of the Srikakulam struggle, also marked the beginnings of the manifestation of the movement in Telengana. Though not geographically adjacent, the facility of access through forest regions and eastern mountain ranges (the Eastern Ghats) enabled leaders and cadres of the earlier movement to influence and partly initiate the latter. The Srikakulam leadership also influenced the movement in Telengana through strategies of struggle. As we will see in the following pages, leadership is the crucial factor that became a common link to both movements and yet, at the same time, was responsible for creating considerable differences between the two, particularly with regard to the tactics of struggle to be adopted.

The more distant but very relevant backdrop to the Telengana struggle is of course the Naxalbari movement. The extent to which communist China regarded the outbreak of the naxalite insurrection as the vanguard of communist revolution in the third world can be illustrated by Peking's radio broadcast just on the eve of this movement-- "This is the front paw of the revolutionary armed struggle launched by the Indian people."²⁸ The Naxalbari movement, beginning in the late 1960s, spearheaded all insurrectionary type peasant movements in India thereafter, for, in terms of ideology and leadership, this movement became the guiding light to similar struggles elsewhere in the country.

²⁸Sumanta Banerjee, India's Simmering Revolution (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1984), p. 82.

This chapter provides a brief historical survey of the two movements--the Naxalbari struggle and the Srikakulam insurrection. This will provide the relevant context for understanding the struggle in Telengana. More importantly, this study will show how and why the earlier movement got shifted to Telengana, after its failure in Srikakulam.

The Naxalbari Uprising (1969)

Shortly after the formation of the United Front coalition government headed by the CPI(M) in West Bengal in March 1967, a large-scale peasant uprising began in Naxalbari, a village in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal. In fact, this uprising was led by a militant faction of the CPI(M) which was dissatisfied with the shedding of the revolutionary commitment by its leadership. In this context, a brief reference to the split in the Indian communist movement is necessary. This split divided the party--the CPI-- in 1964 into pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese alignments, the CPI and the CPI(M), which ideologically also implied commitments to modest and radical revolutionary positions respectively. The CPI(M) was squarely identified as being pro-Chinese and Maoist in its ideological commitment. However, even the CPI(M) did not totally identify itself with the concept of radical revolutionary transformation, committed as it was tactically to the parliamentary method of transformation. The Indian communist movement as a whole had long accepted the parliamentary path to political power though ideologically they 'reserved' the option of going back to the revolutionary strategy if the parliamentary experiment were to prove a failure. It was this realistic operational creed of the CPI(M) that created a sense of betrayal among some of its more radical members. Ever since the formation of the CPI(M), the radical faction led by an already prominent leader, Charu Mazumdar, kept warning the leadership of the CPI(M) of "revisionist" tendencies. Thus, the Naxalbari episode became a context for the outward expression of differences within the CPI(M)'s cadres.

This brief discussion of the divisions within the Communist movement in India affords a better understanding of the actual event -- the Naxalbari movement. The episode which marked the birth of the naxalite movement in India began in 1967 when the dissident faction of the CPI(M) under the leadership of Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal organized peasants in a mass movement for the occupation of land owned by the *jotedars* (big landlords) in the village of Naxalbari. Soon, approximately 15,000 to 20,000 peasants formed "Peasant Committees" in and around Naxalbari to organize and launch armed struggles for the occupation of land belonging to the *jotedars* and cancellation of false debts imposed greedily by moneylenders and landlords.²⁹ In realizing their objectives the peasant activists, armed with traditional weapons such as bows and arrows, and spears often took to annihilation of oppressive landlords. Within a few months, i.e. by May 1967, villages under the three police stations of Naxalbari, Kharibari and Phansidea became the strongholds of the rebels where the *Kisan Sabhas* or peasant committees set up parallel governments to administer the villages.

Meanwhile, the events in Naxalbari proved to be embarrassing to the CPI(M) which headed the United Front government in West Bengal as some of its members were involved in extra-constitutional activities. For the CPI(M), an acceptance of office in a conventional parliamentary setup meant an obligation to respect legal procedures. The extra-legal methods adopted by the peasant committees compelled the CPI(M) to treat them as an apparent breakdown of law and order in the countryside and react in ways appropriate to meet the challenge. Thereafter, the United Front leadership took a strong position opposing naxalite activities. A major police action was launched in Naxalbari to quell the movement. The intensity of police action forced the naxalite activists to go underground and launch their peasant revolution from the jungles of West Bengal. However, by mid-July, a large section of its leadership fell into police hands and

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 87.

consequently several followers surrendered. With this, an apparent lull occurred in the movement in Naxalbari. The government also softened its response and with a view to further relax tensions released some of the arrested leaders. The movement could not regain its earlier intensity even though the leaders were released. However, it had a wider impact in some other parts of the country. Srikakulam district in Andhra Pradesh provided the most fertile ground for its growth in subsequent years as we will discuss later.

The Naxalbari uprising set the stage for new political developments in West Bengal. This incident created tensions within the members of the newly elected United Front government in West Bengal that resulted in the government being voted out of office in December of 1967. However, in 1969 the party came back to power with a large increase in its electoral support. This coincided with the release of the militant leaders of the CPI(M) who were active in the movement. Soon, the leaders of the militant faction--- Kanu Sanyal and Charu Mazumdar, announced the formation of the CPI(ML) (Marxist-Leninist). Charu Mazumdar outlined the main points of the party's program:

The only way to achieve liberation from the existing reactionary system ...is resolutely to overthrow by armed force the four enemies--US imperialism, Soviet social-imperialism and their lackeys in this country, the comprador-bureaucratic big bourgeoisie and the feudal landlords....But so far the so-called communist and other Indian political parties have refused to undertake this revolutionary task.... The Indian left parties have kept the movement strictly within the bounds of laws which are based on exploitation and dragged down in the mire of economism, reformism and parliamentarianismThe CPI-ML is convinced that Indian Communists must reject the hoax of parliamentarianism in order to bring out an immediate revolution through people's revolutionary war.....liberate the rural areas through armed agrarian revolution and encircle the cities, and finally liberate the cities and complete the revolution in the Indian nation.³⁰

³⁰Marcus F.Franda, Radical Politics in West Bengal (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), pp. 172-3.

The differences and dissensions within the rank and file of the CPI(M) were not limited to the West Bengal state unit. Other state and local units of the CPI(M) began to follow suit. The radical faction of the Andhra Pradesh state unit of the CPI(M) broke away to form the APCCCR (Andhra Pradesh Coordinating Committee of Communist Revolutionaries). In later years, differences of opinion between the members of the APCCCR with regard to the strategies of struggle to be adopted resulted in division of the APCCCR and the formation of CPI(ML) by its more militant members.

Coming back to the scene in West Bengal, after 1969 the leaders of the newly formed CPI(ML) attempted to rekindle the old flames of the movement. This time the party adopted a two-fold approach in leading the struggle. On the one hand, it attempted to educate and organize college youth to popularize the movement in the urban areas, while, on the other hand, party cadres worked along with the peasants and landless agricultural laborers in the countryside to arouse the political consciousness of the peasants in order to develop the movement in the rural areas. This period saw the spread of naxalite activity to the urban scene resulting in a sort of urban terrorism, particularly in Calcutta. Incidents of naxalite violence such as attacking clubs, recreational halls and civilian trains, or annihilation of small traders and businessmen were reported. However, the state police forces came down with a heavy hand on the urban naxalites and their naxalite activity in the cities was completely put down before it could gain any momentum. Naxalite activity even in the countryside could not gain its earlier magnitude and intensity. In 1971, the Congress returned to power at the centre. More forceful interventionist initiatives of the central government further contributed to breaking the backbone of the movement.

Having outlined the events surrounding the uprising at Naxalbari, let us now examine the reasons why the rebellion occurred. While conducting an inquiry into the Naxalbari incident, the West Bengal State Secretariat of the CPI(M) stated --"behind the peasant unrest in Naxalbari lies a deep social malady--malafide transfers, evictions and other anti-people activities of jotedars and tea gardeners."³¹ In other words, the actual causes of the movement were recognized to be socio-economic. In addition to these, some of the events that occurred after the CPI(M)-led United Front took charge of the governance of the state contributed to the explosion of the movement. In the following pages I will analyze first, the long-standing socio-economic conditions in Naxalbari that precipitated the growth of a crisis situation in agricultural development and second, the immediate causes for the upsurge.

The Indian agrarian situation had reached an impasse in the 60's :

By the beginning of 1967, it was evident that the country was facing a food shortage of about 10 million tonnes. The official food review placed before Parliament on 27 March 1967, warned that a "serious situation may develop on the food front in the remaining months of the year." This bleak prophecy came true when on 18 April that year, the Bihar Government had to declare one-third of the State as a famine area....Bihar was followed by Madhya Pradesh where 18 districts were declared famine areas on 8 August.³²

The food shortage was a clear reflection of a crisis in agricultural development in India. This crisis situation was a by-product of a number of changes that occurred in the modernization process which the colonial rule set in motion and was continued with more vigor by the Indian government after the transfer of power in 1947.

³¹Sumanta Banerjee, India's simmering revolution , p. 89.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 2.

The most telling impact of British colonial rule on Indian agriculture was the introduction of capitalist farming. British agrarian policy deprived cultivators of their customary title to ancestral property which they had under the *ryotwari* system of the Mughals. The role of traditional *Zamindars* (landlords) was transformed into that of a landlord who charged exorbitant rents, which were set to meet British revenue needs from small and middle class peasants. Thus, pre-capitalist modes of production were subjected to the burdens of capitalism.³³ Landlords who were unable to collect rents from their tenants sold their land to rich peasants who reorganised agricultural production primarily for commercial purposes. In sum, British agrarian policy led to a polarization of agricultural classes. On the one side were dispossessed small peasants who were reduced to the status of agricultural labourers as they lost rights over their piece of land due to their inability to pay high rents demanded by landlords. On the other were the newly emerging, numerically very small group of rich peasants who produced not for personal or local needs but for commercial purposes.

The modernization process set in motion by the British was continued by the Indian government in the post-independence era. The government introduced a new strategy to increase food production through the introduction of scientific and technological innovations in agricultural production. The "Green Revolution," as this strategy was popularly known, undoubtedly led to an dramatic increase in agricultural output. India's food grain output increased to a 100 million tons as a result of this strategy. However, the green revolution did little to help lessen the growth of economic disparities in the countryside. In fact, it hastened the polarization process with the introduction of machines which led to the displacement of a large number of agricultural labourers. In addition, it generated further tensions in the social relations between the two

³³T.J. Nossiter, Marxist State Governments in India (London: Pinter Publishers Ltd, 1988), p. 114.

classes as it aroused new expectations among the poor while the benefits were unevenly distributed. As Chester Bowles, the former US Ambassador to India, observed :

[T]he dramatic increases in food outputmay lead to sharp disparities in income which in turn may create an expanding sense of economic and social injustice.³⁴

Thus, state policies in both colonial and post-independence times had created vast economic disparities in the Indian rural scene. This situation was as true of Bengal it was of the rest of north India. Why should Naxalbari, then, provide the stage for the uprising? For this we turn to the specific conditions prevailing in the West Bengal region. Three factors seem to play a crucial role in this regard: first, the impact of policies of the state government; second, the leftist traditions in West Bengal; and third, the tribal elements in the social fabric of Naxalbari.

Some of the events that occurred in response to the election of a left wing government helped in accelerating the revolutionary process. The CPI(M) took over office with a commitment to undertaking serious land reforms. This proposal itself caused panic among the landowners and their immediate response to the election of a CPI(M)-headed United Front was that they all attempted to protect their lands from redistribution. The fear that the agricultural labourers working on small portions of their land for a considerable period of time, might soon become emboldened to demand legal proprietorship of those parts, made land-owners immediately get rid of all sharecroppers who worked on their plots. This resulted in large scale evictions in the countryside that worsened rural poverty.

To an already restless situation where people were getting agitated on issues of land and wages, was added the role of the communist cadres. Charu Mazumdar, still a

³⁴Sumanta Banerjee, India's simmering revolution, p. 11.

leader of the CPI(M) in West Bengal, was dissatisfied with the way in which the United Front government addressed the agrarian question in the state. According to him

..any movement on the fundamental demands of the peasantry will never follow a peaceful path.....To establish the leadership of the poor and landless peasants, the peasantry should be told in clear terms that their fundamental problems can never be solved with the help of any law of this reactionary government.³⁵

Soon after the United Front took over the governance of the state, Charu Mazumdar and his followers organized a peasant conference in Darjeeling district calling for the "ending of monopoly ownership of land by the landlords, redistribution of land through peasants committees and organization and arming of the peasants in order to destroy the resistance of landlords and rural reactionaries."³⁶ The communist cadres working among the peasants and tribals were largely responsible for raising the ideological consciousness and for organizing the tribal peasants into a political force.

Finally, the social fabric of north Bengal had influenced the developments in Naxalbari. The three main bases of the uprising---Naxalbari, Phansideoa and Kharibari, were inhabited mainly by tribals of the Santhal, Oraon and Rajbanshi communities. Many of them worked as sharecroppers on the tea gardens. Thus, they were the most hard-hit victims of the agricultural commercialization process. Unlike peasants from the non-tribal and plains areas who were tied to norms of social hierarchy, the tribals shared a more egalitarian social order. Thus, they were more amenable to the horizontal solidarity required for radical protests.

In sum, the Naxalbari region of West Bengal represents a microcosm of rural India of that period. However, it also had its own particularities which influenced its regional

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 84.

politics. As mentioned before, the uprising in Naxalbari was crushed with relative ease by the United Front government by 1969. However, short-lived as it was in terms of its actual duration in Naxalbari, its long-term impact has been very intensive, both in West Bengal and other parts in the country. In West Bengal, it was under the impact of this struggle that the United Front government initiated serious land reform policies. Following the violent insurrection, Harekrishna Konar, the land revenue minister, exhorted landless peasants to occupy land illegally owned by landlords. When 300,000 acres of land got "redistributed" in this way, the government passed legislation legalizing the "property transfers." The impact of the movement was also felt at other levels. It lent a new lease of life to insurrectionary ideology and agrarian struggles in other parts of the country. Between 1967 and 1971, the movement found expression in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Kerala. Of the three, because it provides the main backdrop to the ongoing peasant insurrection in Telengana, I will discuss the Andhra Pradesh tribal peasant struggle in Srikakulam briefly.

Srikakulam Naxalite Movement

The immediate successor of the Naxalbari movement was the Srikakulam naxalite rebellion. In fact, in terms of its origins, this struggle could even be regarded as almost contemporaneous to the Naxalbari movement itself. Just a few months after the uprising in Naxalbari, the tribal areas of Srikakulam District in Andhra Pradesh witnessed an armed rebellion that took the form of a guerrilla movement aimed at the overthrow of state power. Here too the movement was led by the break-away faction of the CPI(M). The Parvatipuram Agency area in the Srikakulam district covers about 300 square miles of tribal habitation. Among the inhabitants were the Savara and Jatapu tribes, commonly referred to as *girijans*--the hill people.

The movement in this tribal pocket was characterized by a series of incidents that began in the 1950s. Initially, they were of a non-violent nature. Tribals organized themselves into *girijan sanghams* (hill people societies) under the direction of a group of local teachers who were working among the tribals, to demand better wages and fight against illegal eviction by the landlords and harassment by forest officials. The *girijan sanghams* initially worked to raise the socio-political consciousness of the tribals and to give them increased confidence in their own capabilities to fight effectively for the improvement of their lives. During 1957-67, the *girijan sanghams* mobilized tribal peasants on a number of issues such as abolition of forced labour, reclamation of tribal lands from landlords and other non-tribals and securing free and easy access to forest lands. The methods of struggle adopted by the tribals were direct and confrontational though non-violent in nature, ranging from activities like silent protests to strikes and marches.

The movement would have passed off as any other law and order problem or at best a local uprising by marginalised people, if it had not been for the effort of the CPI(M) state unit in supporting the cause of the tribals. The activities of the *sanghams* attracted the attention of the newly formed APCCCR. Its two most prominent leaders, T. Nagi Reddy and Chandra Pulla Reddy, journeyed to Parvatipuram and persuaded the leaders of the tribals, two local teachers named, Satyanarayana and Kailasam, to join with them. From now on, the movement began to be directed under the authority of the APCCCR. Soon it began to catch national attention. The national level organization of the dissident faction of the CPI(M)--AICCCR, which later formed the CPI(ML), headed by the leaders of the Naxalbari movement, Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal, began to take interest in the struggle in Srikakulam.

Thus, the struggle in Srikakulam was being directed by three groups of communists--first, Vempatu Satyanarayana and Adibhatla Kailasam, the local leaders in Srikakulam; second, T.Nagi Reddy and Chandra Pulla Reddy, leaders of the APCCCR; and third, Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal, the leaders of the national level organization, the AICCCR. It is important to note that in spite of a broad agreement about the overall ideological goal of all the parties involved--the local, the state level and the national level, there were significant differences among them with regard to the immediate strategy that was to be adopted in leading the struggle in Srikakulam. The AICCCR stressed the need for an armed struggle for the seizure of political power. They believed that the country was ready for a "revolutionary mass upsurge" and demanded that militant struggles be carried on "not for land, crops, etc. but for seizure of state power."³⁷ The Andhra group on the other hand was much more cautious in its assessment of the revolutionary situation in the country. The strategy of the Andhra group was to slowly build towards armed struggle against the state by first organizing mass seizures of land and other such immediate steps. They advocated the development of a strong mass movement as a necessary prerequisite to the seizure of state power. It would appear that the Andhra group was more committed to a Maoist type of seizure of power in the rural areas by the slow spread of insurgency than the Bengal group was eager to undertake. As for the local leaders and revolutionaries of Srikakulam, inspired by the armed struggle in Naxalbari, they were in favor of the strategy enunciated by Charu Mazumdar and other leaders at the national level. They began to circumvent the state level faction and communicated directly with the leadership at the national level.

It is in this context that the significance of an incident that converted the nature of the Srikakulam movement from what was largely a non-violent one into a violent insurrection can best be appreciated. On 31 October, 1967, a girijan conference was held

³⁷Charu Mazumdar, "One Year of Naxalbari Struggle", Liberation (October 1968), p. 27.

at Modenkhal, a village near Srikakulam. Some *girijans* on their way to the conference were assaulted by landlords and two tribal peasants were shot dead by agents of the landlords. Soon the radical faction of the Communist Party came out in support of the tribals. The local communists were already involved in organizing the tribals into guerrilla squads called *dalams*. Thus, a nonviolent struggle for better wages and improved living conditions was transformed into a struggle for seizure of state power. The first phase of the process was characterized by attacks on landlords and money lenders by the tribals. Their preparatory strategy was to gather arms to wage war and also to expropriate hoarded food grain, money and other valuables. The second phase of the struggle, more ideologically driven than the earlier phase, was characterized by a strategy of annihilation of class enemies such as landlords. Finally, the naxalites came into direct confrontation with the state apparatus and attacks on police were made. Reports stated that at least 49 policemen were killed by the naxalite guerrilla squads. The movement began to spill over to other areas in the neighboring state of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

The intensity of the insurrection's escalation can be seen from the fact that within one year the state authorities were forced to take strenuous measures to contain the explosive situation. A joint police force of the three states was deployed to suppress the movement. However, the inability of this joint police force to effectively crush the naxalites forced the Andhra Pradesh state government to take more serious steps. The entire district of Srikakulam and other neighboring areas were declared to be "disturbed areas" under the Andhra Pradesh Suppression of Disturbances Act. This act gave the police extraordinary powers to use lethal violence to crush the movement. In addition, two battalions of Central Reserve Police were sent to in Srikakulam. With more than 3500 police personnel deployed to fight against the force of only 300 hard core naxalite guerrillas, the movement was effectively crushed in a year.

A comparative study of the Naxalbari and Srikakulam uprisings reveals interesting similarities between the two cases. The most noticeable resemblance is the involvement of 'tribal peasants' in both uprisings; also, the area of disaffection was mainly forest covered hilly regions in both cases. As in Naxalbari, in Srikakulam too the causes were primarily socio-economic. A government-sponsored study noted --"Chronic poverty and destitution have become the patterns of tribal life."³⁸ Alienation of agricultural land, ever growing debt and loss of access to traditional forest products were the main problems confronting the tribal peasants in Srikakulam. Another study observed : "By the time of the naxalite rebellion, only about one-third of the tribals owned land."³⁹ The tribals' loss of land and also their ever mounting debt were results of the agricultural commercialization process which had sharply increased the value of cultivable land. Landlords from the plains and moneylenders, eager to grab land from the tribals, offered credit to the tribals on a land mortgage basis; credit became a bait and land began to slip out of tribal hands. In spite of government's efforts, as half-hearted as they were, the alienation of tribal lands to non-tribals could not be prevented. In addition, the tribals also suffered because of the limitation imposed by government rules intended to preserve forest land. In implementing these rules, government servants resorted to various kinds of harassment that resulted in depriving tribals of their access to minor forest products which previously constituted a part of their income. Loss of land and inaccessibility to forest resources thus reduced the tribals to the status of agricultural labourers, working for either very meager wages or more often as bonded labourers, subject to harassment and exploitation by landlords and moneylenders aided by the actions of local officials.

Causes relating to ideological support structures and causes relating to leadership in Srikakulam are also very similar to those in Naxalbari. The infiltration of communist

³⁸Leslie J. Calman, Protest in democratic India: Authority's response to challenge (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), p. 21.

³⁹Quoted in N.S.Reddy, Communism in Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad: Cauvery Publications, 1989), p. 80.

cadres into these areas undoubtedly played the most significant role in instigating the armed rebellion. As has already been mentioned earlier, it was the influence of the local communist leaders that transformed what was basically a local protest into a social movement with an ideology and a political goal. The Srikakulam struggle had ideological support from two other sources : the AICCCR at the national level and the APCCCR at the state level. The Srikakulam struggle being a successor to the Naxalbari insurrection can be said to have had the double advantage of lessons learned from the previous experience and also direction in ideology and practice from different levels of leadership. Another cause specific to Srikakulam is that the area had a tradition of militancy. The tribal belt in this area was closely associated with a major insurrection in the 1930s. Subsequent generations of tribals were influenced by legends of this tribal insurgency. During the colonial period, the tribals in this area, under the leadership of the nationalist guerrilla leader Alluri Sitaram Raju, waged a war against the British. This is referred to in AP history as "*Manya-pituri*" i.e. agency-rebellion. The causes for this tribal insurgency were partly inspired by nationalism and partly by demands for tribal upliftment. Again, during the communist insurrection in Telengana in 1946-51, this area served as a retreat for communist rebels following the entry of the Indian army into Hyderabad state in mid-1948. It is also believed that the tribals of this region helped the communists and joined the guerrilla squads to fight the Indian army.⁴⁰ It is these factors that contributed to the relatively longer struggle and greater intensity of the movement in Srikakulam.

The impact of the movement was twofold. First, the movement was responsible for the introduction by the state government of an array of socio-economic reforms for the alleviation of tribal poverty. In 1970-71, the state government allocated Rs.3,274,000 to the Srikakulam District for the upliftment of the tribal economy. In addition, cooperative societies, like the Andhra Scheduled Tribes Cooperative Finance and

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 100-119.

Development Corporation Ltd., were started in order to relieve the tribals of their debts and also provide them with funds for cultivation.

Second, the movement created further divisions within the cadres of the communist revolutionaries in Andhra Pradesh. As mentioned before, the movement was being directed by two communist groups--the AICCCR, which had by that time formed itself into a new party, the CPI(ML) and the APCCCR, which was the break-away faction of CPI(M) Andhra unit. The strategies and tactics of both the groups were quite different. While the CPI(ML) called for a immediate seizure of state power, the APCCCR came out with an alternative plan which stressed the importance of developing mass movements for raising the political consciousness of the peasantry. The local leaders in Srikakulam who were more directly involved in organizing and leading the struggle were more inclined toward the AICCCR's plan of action proposed by Mazumdar in preference to the strategy proposed by the state level APCCCR led by T. Nagi Reddy and C. Pulla Reddy. By the end of the Srikakulam episode the differences between the two groups became even more evident. Dissatisfied with the way the struggle in Srikakulam was organized, some of the members of the APCCCR, including the three prominent leaders-- T.Nagi Reddy, Chandra Pulla Reddy and D. Venkateshwara Rao -- withdrew from the scene and formed their own party which was know as the Andhra Pradesh Revolutionary Communist Committee (APRCC). The APRCC began to organize people's movements on their own elsewhere in Andhra Pradesh. The remaining members of the APCCCR who believed in a more militant ideology aligned themselves with the Charu Mazumdar group and formed the CPI(ML) Andhra Pradesh state unit.

There are indeed some striking similarities between the Naxalbari and Srikakulam movements which can also be related to the theories discussed in Chapter 1. The socio-structural conditions in these regions, the negative effect of governmental policies on the

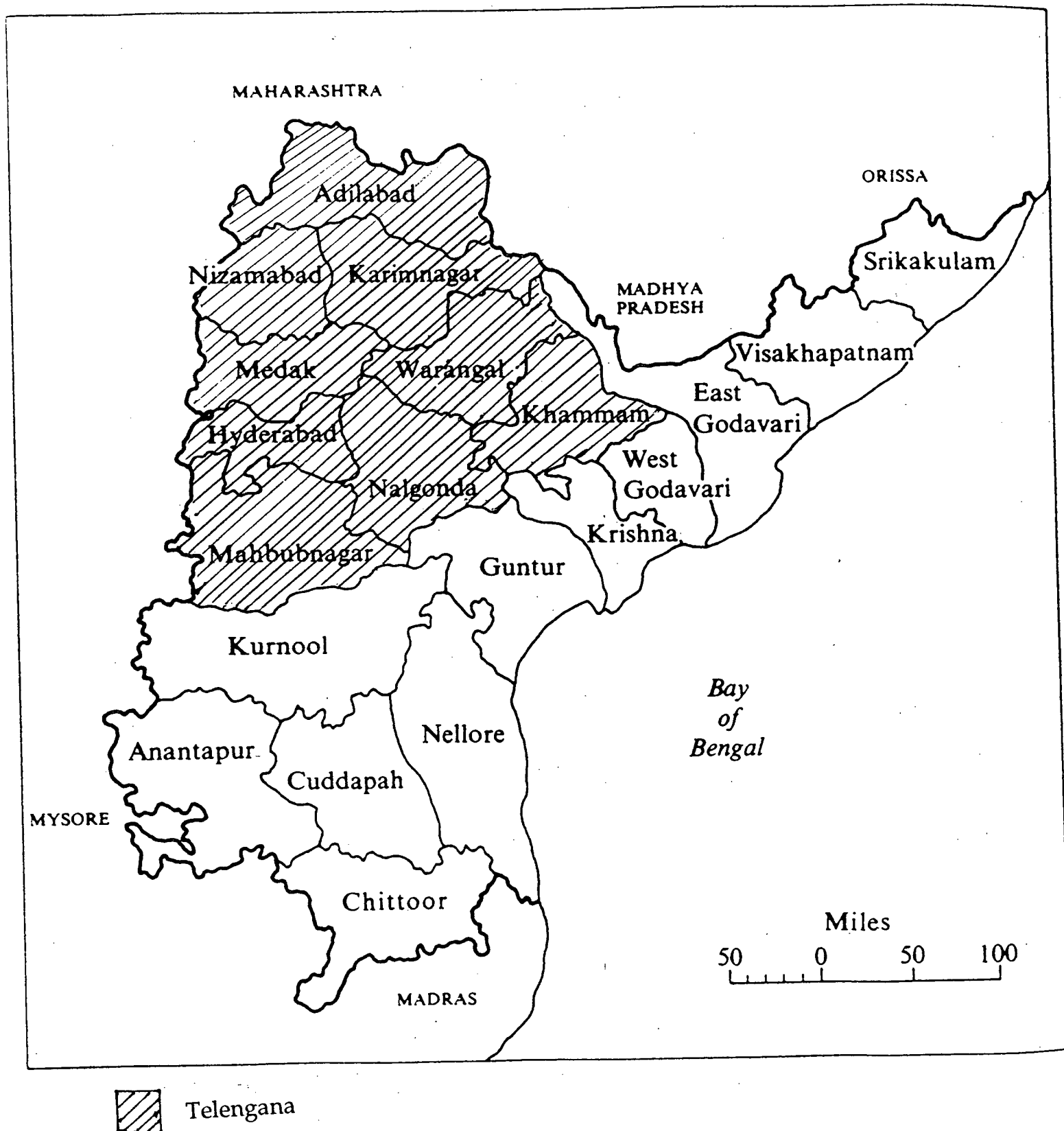
tribals and the infiltration of communist cadres which are the underlying causes for the rise of revolutionary movements in these areas have close resemblance to the three theoretical models of revolution. Moore's theoretical model for the causes for revolutions which focuses on social structure and contends that revolutions occur when pre-capitalist modes of production are subject to burdens of capitalism is relevant in the context of both Naxalbari and Srikakulam. As has been discussed, it was the under the impact of forces of commercialization that tribal peasants in these areas got reduced to the status of tenants, sharecroppers and landless labourers. Thus, poverty and social exploitation by landlords and money lenders became the underlying causes for the movements.

Similarly, Johnson's theoretical model for revolutions is also of some value in analyzing the causes for the movements in Naxalbari and Srikakulam. For Johnson, the political system and the political elite are the important variables in analyzing causes for revolutions. In the case of Naxalbari and Srikakulam, we see that the role of the state, had a negative impact on the lives of the tribals. It is as a result of improper and untimely implementation of land reforms in West Bengal and government policies for preservation of forests that subjected tribals to exploitation by corrupt government officials and that created a disequilibrium in the tribal society. Further, when the disequilibrium went uncorrected by the political elite, it manifested in rebellion.

Finally, Tilly's 'mobilization and organisation' theory provides another important dimension for understanding the Naxalbari and Srikakulam movements. This theory, unlike the other two, examines micro-level causes like the organizational influence of a radical party for the rise of revolutionary movements. The influence of the Communist Party, the radical faction of CPI(M) is most telling in both the regions. It is under the ideological and organizational influence of the CPI(M) cadres that an essentially local protest turned into a political movement with a revolutionary ideology.

The broad resemblance of the conditions in Naxalbari and Srikakulam and their correspondence with some general theories suggests the presence of a pattern in the emergence of the naxalite movements. Further, as we will see in the following pages, these conditions were also present in Telengana. Hence, it can be argued that the movements in all three areas were not merely three separate events. Instead, they were diverse expressions of a larger phenomenon which resulted from specific socio-economic and political conditions.

Map II : Andhra Pradesh



Chapter 3**The Telengana Naxalite Movement : 1970-1993 (Part I)**

Over the past twenty-five years, the countryside in Telengana, the northern part of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, has been witnessing an armed rebellion. Thousands of young men and women, inspired by Maoist revolutionary ideology, have taken up arms to put an end to what they call an exploitative socio-economic order and to overthrow the existing state power. The main objective of their struggle is to bring about a peasant revolution according to the Chinese model in India. These revolutionaries are organized and led by the most radical faction of the Indian Marxist-Leninist party (CPI ML), which is popularly known as the People's War Group (PWG). Historically, the roots of the contemporary PWG-led movement in Telengana lie in the Srikakulam naxalite rebellion of the late 1960s. The Srikakulam rebellion, in turn, is considered to be a continuation of the Naxalbari peasant struggle. Therefore, the current movement in Telengana is also regarded as a yet another expression of the naxalite phenomenon.

Beginning in the early 1970s and continuing since, the Telengana naxalite movement is perhaps the most long-drawn revolutionary people's struggle in Indian history. Over the years, the movement has grown both in intensity and magnitude and has become the most dominant aspect of the social and political life in northern Andhra Pradesh. The movement is perceived as a serious challenge to the law and order situation in the state. However, the larger significance of the movement lies in the fact that it is a socio-economic movement manifesting itself in a revolutionary political form. Although it is derivative of the Naxalbari movement and the Srikakulam struggles, the Telengana naxalite struggle has nevertheless acquired a character and identity of its own. This chapter is a case study of the Telengana naxalite movement. It seeks to inquire into the causes and nature of the movement. More specifically, it will attempt first, to analyze why the movement has developed in the Telengana region; second, to describe the nature of

the movement and how it progressed over the years; and finally, to draw parallels and contrasts between the Telengana naxalite movement and the naxalite movements of the late 1960s.

The Growth of Naxalism in Telengana and the Formation of the PWG

In Chapter 2, the emergence in AP of two distinct groups of communist revolutionaries at the end of the Srikakulam naxalite movement --the CPI(ML) and the APRCC--was discussed. Both groups of communists played an important role in leading the struggle in Telengana. However, it was the APRCC that initiated the struggle there. The question as to how the naxalite activity spread to the Telengana region has much to do with the APRCC's tactical line. After its withdrawal from the scene in Srikakulam, the APRCC made efforts at conducting peasant movements in different parts of AP. Its actions were based on a theory of uneven development. According to the APRCC, "India with its size and socio-cultural diversities presented not just one but different stages of development of a revolutionary situation."⁴¹ From this theoretical standpoint, the APRCC classified areas on the basis of regional variations into three groups: 1) areas with active struggles, 2) areas with party organization and inactivity as far as the movement was concerned, and 3) areas with no organization and no activity. The leaders of the APRCC --T.Nagi Reddy (TN), D.Venkateshwara Rao (DV) and Chandra Pulla Reddy (CP)--toured parts of AP to propagate the line of "graduated and protracted struggle." Of the three regions of AP--Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telengana, at first, the coastal and Rayalaseema districts were tested for revolutionary potential. However, the APRCC was unable to start any militant mass movements here. These areas were more useful in getting financial support for the party. The party's attempts at starting mass movements met with more success in the Telengana districts. As the APRCC began to organize movements in Telengana, differences in ideological and methodological position between

⁴¹Shantha Sinha, Maoists in Andhra Pradesh (New Delhi: Gian Publishing House, 1989), p. 167.

its leaders started to plague the movement. While CP and his followers insisted on a more militant approach in leading struggles, very much akin to that of the CPI(ML), the other two leaders --TN and DV continued to assert the APRCC's original tactical line of "graduated and protracted struggle." In 1970, the APRCC split into two distinct groups, one under the leadership of CP and the other led by TN and DV.

Meanwhile, the CPI(ML) Andhra unit, after the complete withdrawal of struggle in Srikakulam, also started to concentrate its efforts on Telengana. The most significant development on this front of the naxalite movement was the breaking up of the CPI(ML) at the national level. After the death of the party ideologue Charu Mazumdar in July 1972, the party disintegrated into myriad groups and factions. The major reason for the split in the party was the differences with the party's high command, Charu Mazumdar. The failure of the Naxalbari and Srikakulam movements proved the ineffectiveness and still more the disastrous nature of the 'adventurist line' propagated by Mazumdar. The rumbling of discontent with the tactical line of the party that began with the closing of the Srikakulam chapter finally resulted in the breaking-up of the party immediately after his death. The party at the national level split into two camps, the pro-Charu and the anti-Charu factions. The anti-Charu faction was led by Asim Chatterjee and S.N.Singh and the pro-Charu group was represented by Mahadev Mukherjee.

The implication of this split for the naxalite groups in AP was that it led to the breaking up of the CPI(ML) Andhra committee also. The group that had the largest following was the faction led by Kondapalli Seetharamaiah, which was pro-Charu in its ideological and tactical position. This group joined the pro-Charu camp at the national level and together they formed the Central Organising Committee (COC). The CP group united with the anti-Charu S.N.Singh group to form the Provisional Central Committee, while the TN group joined the anti-Charu Moni Guha group to form the Unity Committee

of Communist Revolutionaries of India {UCCRI(ML)}. It is interesting to note that all three linkages with respective national level factions proved to be short-lived. By 1980, all three groups in Andhra resumed an independent existence. Many other tiny groups emerged through further splits and dissensions. But none of them could pose a serious challenge to the domination of the first three. Of the three, the group led by Kondapalli was the most powerful. Until 1980, this group functioned under the banner of the COC even though the alliance with the national level faction was long broken. In 1980, this group formally came to be known as the People's War Group (PWG) and since then it has represented the mainstream of the naxalite movement in AP. Before an attempt is made to study the nature and different aspects of the naxalite movement led by PWG in Telengana, it is important to analyse why the movement has occurred in this part of the state. Therefore, we will now examine the historical and political influences and other particularities in the Telengana region which have precipitated the rise of a people's movement here.

The Roots of the Naxalite Movement in Telengana

The Telengana naxalite movement is primarily a socio-economic movement and therefore the roots of the movement are also essentially socio-economic in nature. A look at the conditions in Telengana even as late as the 1990s, presents a grim picture. Glaring economic inequalities, feudal social relations, an ever growing army of agricultural labourers and overall economic underdevelopment of the region are striking. The economic and social dimensions of exploitation in this region were summed up in the following words:

While the Telengana region itself is known as a backward area, still more backward are the Karimnagar and Adilabad districts. The striking factor in these districts is the extent of concentration of land in the hands of the top few which gives the landlord a social and political power which enables him to reign unchallenged. A cursory glance at

the still prevailing social customs alone is sufficient to understand the degree of feudal exploitation. The social norms of behavior which the landlord imposes have to be scrupulously followed, whereby a peasant cannot wear white clothes, he cannot wear chappals (footwear) in the presence of the landlord and cannot send his children to school.⁴²

Further, the proportion of agricultural labourers in Telengana is one of the highest in Andhra Pradesh. In the districts of Adilabad, Karimnagar and Warangal the number of agricultural labourers living below the poverty line was as high as 95.8 per cent whereas in other parts of AP it is recorded to be between 50 and 60 per cent.

The living conditions of the poor peasants in Telengana while no doubt oppressive and miserable, are not too different from those experienced by people in other parts of rural India where revolutionary type movements have never occurred. Hence, socio-economic deprivation alone may not be an adequate reason to account for the manifestation of a revolutionary peasant struggle in Telengana. What then could adequately account for the occurrence of this prolonged revolutionary struggle? I will argue here that three factors have played an important role in this regard. First, the social structure of the Telengana region; second, the role of the political system and the political elite; and third, the organizational capacity of the communist parties operating in Telengana. Each of these factors will be examined in greater detail in the following pages.

Social Structure of Telengana

Keeping in mind Barrington Moore's thesis that the revolutionary potential of a society develops during the modernization process in traditional societies when pre-capitalist modes of production are subject to the burdens of capitalism, I will analyse the

⁴²C.V.Subba Rao, "Resurgence of Peasant Movement In Telengana", Economic and Political Weekly, November 17, 1979, p. 1869.

effects of modernization on the social structure of Telengana, in both pre-independence and post-independence periods.

Nature of Social Structure in Pre-independent Telengana

In the pre-independence period the state of Hyderabad was a princely state ruled by Muslim princes---the Nizams. Telengana, where Telugu was spoken, was the most important of the three major linguistic regions of the Hyderabad state, the other two being the Marathwada (Marathi speaking) and Kannada areas (Kannada speaking). During the colonial period, unlike many other princes who had by then merged their territories into the British India, the Nizam of Hyderabad along with a few others enjoyed an independent status as a ruler although at the cost of subservience to the British. Under the overarching paramount power of the British, the State of Hyderabad was subject to 'indirect rule' whereby the foreign policy and defense of the state were controlled by Britain and the internal administration of the state left to the native ruler, the Nizam. It was this arrangement which was largely responsible for retaining some of the traditional or native features of the state. This was in contrast to the rest of AP which was under direct British rule where to a greater extent the traditional systems and structures were replaced by more modern ones.

The agrarian structure in Hyderabad has been described by a noted sociologist, D.N.Dhanagare, as "a page from medieval feudal history."⁴³ Two main forms of land tenure were prevalent here--the *ryotwari* and the *jagirdari* systems. The *ryotwari* areas were also known as the *diwani*, or government owned lands. These lands were legally occupied by registered occupants called *pattadars* (owners of a deed). The actual cultivation of the land was done by small peasants to whom land was leased out by the *pattadars*. These peasants had no rights over the land they cultivated and could be evicted

⁴³D.N.Dhanagare, Peasant Movements in India 1920-50 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 183.

without notice. Revenue from the ryotwari areas was collected by hereditary revenue officials called *deshmukhs*. The *deshmukhs* were paid a yearly salary on the basis of their past revenue collections. This only forced them to impose heavy taxes on the *pattadars*, who in turn extracted huge amounts from the peasants. The *jagirdari* system of land tenure which covered more than forty per cent of the total area of the princely state was a more traditional system than the *ryotwari*. Under this system large areas were granted to the Nizam's noblemen in return for their services. The *jagirdars* were to maintain a small army to render military service to the Nizam in times of need. The *jagirdars* enjoyed hereditary rights over their *jagirs* (lands), and it was in the person of the *jagirdar* that judicial, police and administrative powers were vested. They had the legal authority to collect taxes from their *jagirs*, which they used mainly for personal needs and partly for the maintenance of army and other administrative structures in the *jagirs*.

Thus, in the pre-independence period both systems of land tenure, more so the *jagirdari* system, subjected the peasant to the political and social authority of the *deshmukhs*, *pattadars* and *jagirdars*. Their power and influence permitted them to grab land by fraud and reduce even owners to the status of tenants and landless labourers.⁴⁴ Surprisingly, the agrarian situation in the coastal districts of AP was not all that different. The *zamindari* and *ryotwari* systems of land tenure prevalent in this part of present-day AP had also created a large agricultural labour class though not in the same proportions as in Telengana. Thus, we must ask, what other factors were special to Telengana which sharpened the class contradictions in this region?

The commercialization of agriculture which began in the late nineteenth century brought about significant changes in rural India, as already mentioned briefly in the context of Naxalbari. Its impact, however, was not uniform. In coastal Andhra, owing to the

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 183.

introduction of modern transport and communication facilities by the British, commercialization of agriculture was accompanied by urbanization and occupational change. The five important towns of Andhra -- Vijayawada, Rajamundry, Guntur, Machilipatnam and Kakinada -- developed in this period. New opportunities in employment in secondary and tertiary occupations were opened. As a result, an urban middle class gradually evolved. These developments "contributed to changes in the traditional status hierarchy by injecting the element of economic mobility in the social ranking system."⁴⁵

In Telengana, meanwhile, commercial farming was not complemented with a corresponding growth of towns or transportation and communication facilities. This can be attributed to the more traditional nature of the state of Hyderabad which was relatively backward in modern technology. As a result, the modernizing influence of commercialization on social structure was not felt. The feudal social structure and social relations of the pre-capitalist order continued unchanged even with the onset of capitalism. But, the economic relations between the landowners and landless labourers changed in significant ways under the impact of commercialization. Profit became the main consideration in agricultural production and landlords became more disposed to extract the maximum labour from the agricultural labourers at the minimum cost. Thus, the process of agricultural modernization undermined "traditional norms of agrarian relationships based on exchange of mutual benefits."⁴⁶ By the opening years of the twentieth century, the agricultural labour class in Telengana became subject to the exploitative character of commercial farming without benefiting from the corresponding

⁴⁵G.Ram Reddy, "The Politics of Accommodation : Caste, Class and Dominance in Andhra Pradesh." in Francine Frankel and M.S.A.Rao (eds.) Dominance and State Power in Modern India (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 274.

⁴⁶Francine Frankel, India's Green Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p.198.

changes in social status hierarchy that commercialization and modernization can bring about.

The economic depression of the 1930s further aggravated the class contradictions in rural Telengana. It is reported that land alienation among tribals and small peasants increased greatly in the years between 1910 and 1940. It is against this background that the Telengana peasant insurrectionary movement of 1947-49 broke out. This movement was the first major experiment of the Communist Party of India (CPI) in insurrectionary revolutionary strategy. It was led by the CPI and more or less followed the then ongoing Mao-led revolution in China. Many prominent landlords in Telengana were targeted as 'class' enemies and 'people's courts' were used to render summary justice at night when cadres of landless peasantry were mobilized by local communist leaders to make forays into big villages and establish their control. From dusk to dawn some pockets of Telengana came under the insurrectionists, while in the day time, the whole of Telengana was subject to the marauding Muslim *razakars* (private militia) of the Nizam of Hyderabad who by then was very reluctant to join the Indian union. As is well known it was this state of affairs that led to India's first police action in Hyderabad resulting in the integration of Hyderabad into the Indian Union. Thus, the Telengana peasant struggle had considerable sway in the late 1940s, providing as it were a latent legacy to the present ongoing struggle.

Influence of post-independence developments on social structure

I will now examine the impact of the developments in post-independence period on the social structure and relations between the various classes in rural Telengana. The most significant development on the agrarian front in this period was the introduction of technological innovations in agricultural production to increase food output. This strategy, popularly referred to as the "green revolution," laid emphasis on the use of high-

yielding seed varieties, fertilizers, pesticides and tractors in the agricultural production process. The general overall effect of green revolution on India was that it had led to a substantial increase in agricultural output. However, the impact of green revolution was not uniform in all areas. The implications of this strategy for the socio-economic profile of Telengana are crucial for our understanding of the Telengana movement.

The area that benefited most from the green revolution was the 'wheat belt' of northern India which covers the states of Punjab, Harayana, and parts of Uttar Pradesh, which, even before the introduction of green revolution, were known to be agriculturally productive regions. Owing to the profitability of agriculture, the peasants in these areas, both rich and middle class, were seriously involved and were more willing to invest in agricultural production. Therefore, when the methods associated with the green revolution were introduced, the peasants in these areas took up agriculture on capitalist lines and became a class of enterprising commercial farmers.

In AP, in contrast, large scale mechanization of agricultural production did not occur.⁴⁷ The landlords and rich peasants in this region were not willing to invest much in agricultural production on their own, seeking only the inputs for irrigation which the state provided through its irrigation projects. The main effect of the green revolution, however, was that because of the introduction of modern irrigation projects by the state, larger tracts of land were brought under cultivation and new cash crops were introduced. This had the effect of increasing the demand for agricultural labourers. With increased employment opportunities, the bargaining power of agricultural labour was greatly strengthened. The most important benefit of this increase in demand for agricultural labourers was that in addition to the opportunity of gainful employment it also gave the

⁴⁷See Marguerite S. Robinson, Local Politics: The law of the fishes (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).

agricultural labour a sense of social and psychological freedom. This is well brought out by Frankel in her study of the effects of the green revolution on West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. She argues:

With greater opportunities for work, casual labourers can now earn as much and more than permanent labourers. The landless no longer need to seek the protection of a permanent patron-client relationship in order to ensure their livelihood. On the contrary, they are in a position to choose their employer and even bargain over terms. This increase in bargaining power is reflected in new forms of social interaction which concede the independence and dignity of agricultural labourers.....Landowners grumble at these trends, yet seem reconciled to the erosion of old status relationships and their replacement by new contractual agreements based on mutual satisfaction of both sides.⁴⁸

Frankel, in her case study of West Godavari district, relates the social and psychological freedom earned by the agricultural labourers to their poor response to the efforts of the communist parties in organizing and leading peasant movements here.

It must be noted, however, that the social benefits of increase in demand of agricultural labourers did not have the same effect on all categories of landless labourers. It is the 'casual' labourer as against the 'permanent' and 'bonded' labourer who has benefited most in this deal. The reason for this is obviously the absence of any previous agreement or any other sort of obligation of the casual labourer towards a particular employer, in contrast to the tied down situation of the bonded labourer. In Telengana, the social and psychological benefits of the green revolution were denied to the majority of landless labourers as bonded labourers were relatively larger in number in Telengana owing to the past feudal social structure. Perhaps it is this denial of social freedom that has made the agricultural labour class in Telengana more susceptible to adopting more radical and violent means for fulfilling their demands.

⁴⁸Francine Frankel, India's Green Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 73-74.

In sum, the social structure of the Telengana region is a representative of the semi-feudal and semi-capitalist order. As a result, the poor peasants of this region were subject to two forms of exploitation. First, under the impact of commercialization they suffered from the economic exploitation of the capitalist system. Secondly, due to the persistence of medieval feudal social institutions in the modern era they also suffered from the social exploitation of the feudal order. Thus, the social structure of the region had resulted in sharpening class contradictions in this region.

Political Factors

In consideration of Johnson's theory of a disequibrated political system and the role of the political elite in it, we will now examine certain politically driven changes in AP that could have had the effect of desynchronizing the values and social environment in the society, making the region vulnerable to revolutionary-type movements. Two political factors have played an important role in this regard. The first is the politics of land reforms in the state and the second is the process of political accommodation in AP.

The Politics of Land reforms

Since independence the Indian government has undertaken several land reform measures to reduce economic disparities on the agrarian scene. The land reforms initiated by the state can be classified into three types: 1) legislation for the abolition of intermediaries; 2) legislation for tenancy reforms and; 3) land ceiling legislation.

The abolition of intermediaries was the first major step of the state in the direction of land reforms. Under this piece of legislation feudal systems of land tenure such as the zamindari and jagirdari systems were to be completely abolished. The Andhra Pradesh Estate Abolition and Ryotwari Tenure Amendment Act of 1948 led to the dissolution of

the jagirdari system in Telengana and ryotwari tenure was established throughout Hyderabad State. The abolition of the jagirdari system undoubtedly put a formal end to an outright feudal setup. Illegal extraction of revenue by jagirdars was completely stopped. However, the actual benefits of the jagirdari abolition did not reach the poor peasants. In Telengana, the jagirdari abolition had resulted in the dissolution of a class of wealthy landlords and the emergence of rural middle-level landlords.⁴⁹ It is in this context that the *Reddy* caste's rise to political power occurred in Telengana. Under the rule of the Nizams, some of the Reddys were holders of jagirs. From 1950 onwards, with the abolition of jagirs, these Reddys merged with the medium landlords. In this manner, a broader and firmer base was acquired by the Reddy community to project its political power. This development coincided with the inauguration of electoral politics and the rise of the Congress Party to power for the first time in the erstwhile state of Hyderabad. The Reddy landlords of Telengana continued (and still continue) to dominate the Congress Party in the region ever since, i.e. even after the merger of the Telengana region into the larger AP state in 1957.

{Under the Nizam} there were Reddi holders of jagirs....but Reddis were not prominent in administration or in politics....The Reddis were always landlords--whether with large, medium or small holdings--but under the Nizam their power until the 1930s was localised and outside the capital. With the police action and the abolition of jagirs, the powerful Reddis to emerge were the medium landlords.⁵⁰

Tenancy reforms were the second set of land reform measures undertaken by the state. These reforms were meant to protect tenant cultivators from unnotified evictions and exorbitant rents imposed by landlords and to ensure security of tenure to the tenant cultivator. This legislation, introduced as a package of legislative measures, sought to

⁴⁹Robinson, *Local Politics*, p.51

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.51.

convert ordinary tenants into a class of protected tenants. In AP an act to this effect -- Andhra Pradesh (Telengana area) Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act, was passed in 1950. Forty-five percent of the tenants in Telengana became either owner-cultivators or protected tenants as a result of this act. But, it must be noted that this act was first implemented in the 1950s, soon after the Telengana peasant uprising, when the influence of the CPI was still strong in Telengana. But, when the Congress Party came to power in 1950, the power of the Communist Party got reduced and the rural elite began to exert their influence once again. Many landlords challenged the act in the law courts and this resulted in delays in implementation. The inordinate delays resulting from the litigation allowed many an unscrupulous landlord to escape the rigors of this law and to evict unprotected tenants.

The third category of land reform legislation is that relating to land ceilings. Soon after independence the Indian government recognized the need to redistribute land in rural India in order to break up concentrations of land ownership and also to ensure employment and a reasonable standard of living to all. A model version of such laws was recommended by the central government and several state governments enacted legislation on such lines. In AP, the Andhra Pradesh (Telengana area) Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act imposed limitations on the maximum area an 'individual' could own.

Of all the categories of land reforms, the land ceiling laws have always been the most controversial and difficult to implement. Litigation has been only one of the villains of the piece. Lack of political will compounded by the compulsions not to upset the interests of political support structures and vested interests is another significant factor. A contemporary editorial in the state's premier daily newspaper brings out this point well:

The latest to join the list of states where the land ceiling laws have come into force is Andhra Pradesh. The process of implementation of the law in the state started on January 1 this year (1974). The state, however, has not taken over the land declared surplus. That is because there are legal hurdles. The ceiling laws have a provision that the aggrieved parties can go in appeal or revision or otherwise seek redressal of their grievances at all stages of implementation. The state government finds that the provision makes the task of taking possession of surplus land a time consuming affair. But here a doubt arises: can judicial intervention be the major reason for tardy implementation? It cannot be, especially after the 25 constitutional amendment for protecting the series of land ceiling laws. The centre has given clear directive to the states in the past to enact suitable legislation before the end of December 1972. In spite of that, several states have been going on extending the time limit for filing declarations of land holding, thereby providing more than ample opportunity for *benami* (proxy) transfers..... it is lack of political will that is responsible for this state of affairs.⁵¹

In Andhra Pradesh landlords have always been a very powerful pressure group. With quite a few of them in positions of political authority in the state, the landlord lobby has been slowing down legislation and the implementation of land reforms. In fact, a few months after the implementation of the ceiling laws began, a group of eight hundred landlords from the state met the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi and appealed for a reexamination of land ceiling laws.⁵² Although in this case the landlords' attempt failed, the influence exercised by this group was still considerable in contributing to delays and circumventions in the implementation of the act.

The wide array of land reform measures initiated by the state brought about several notable changes in the agrarian structure in Telengana even though the problem of rural poverty could not be efficiently handled. The jagirdari abolition reforms had only benefited the landlords and rural elite. The tenancy and land ceiling laws, which could have, if properly implemented, improved the conditions of the poor and landless peasants,

⁵¹Deccan Chronicle , April 2, 1975.

⁵²Deccan Chronicle , May 1975.

remained only on paper. However, the major impact of these state policies was that of raising the expectations of the people. Also, the few minor changes that were brought about as a result of these reforms had the effect of emboldening the masses to demand further changes in their conditions of living. Given the magnitude of the agrarian problem on the one hand, and the absence of political will and administrative and judicial impediments on the other, the state was unable to meet the demands of the people. Thus, the Telengana naxalite movement could in one sense be regarded as a revolution of rising expectations of people leading to a flood of frustration.

The Process of Political Accommodation in Andhra Pradesh

It is well known that because of the intense attachment to tradition, change or transformation in Indian society has been a very slow process. This extends to the formulation and implementation of public policy relating to socio-economic transformation also. The preference for what is usually termed as 'evolutionary' as opposed to 'revolutionary' methods of change has been one of the hallmarks of Indian policies. The government has deliberately adopted ameliorative and incrementalist measures in preference to radical policies. As a result, there is a string of continuity in social structures of the past without major alterations in the power distribution among various groups in society. This process has been at work in AP as well. It has been observed that "of the various techniques employed, the politics of accommodation displayed the greatest potential to ensure the continuity of the dominant groups and to prevent a breakdown in the social system."⁵³

In modern times several groups of people like the backward castes, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes have started to demand power in social, economic and political spheres. In response to the growing aspirations of these people the governing

⁵³G.Ram Reddy, "The Politics of Accommodation," p. 263.

parties and for that matter all political parties followed a policy of wooing them by offering their leaders important positions and other resource benefits in society. The discontent among the various sections of society was absorbed without necessarily altering the existing power structures. In AP too, the Congress for a very long time and the Telugu Desam Party since its rise to power twelve years ago, followed this method of political accommodation. A good illustration occurred during the early years of Congress rule. The Congress Party had successfully won over the Muslim community, despite strong anti-Congress feeling among the Muslims, by getting Muslim leaders elected to the state legislative assembly and including prominent Muslims in the ministry. The Muslims' anti-Congress feeling resulted from the way in which the Hyderabad state was integrated into the Indian union following the police action in 1948. During this phase many Muslims were disposed to support the Communist Party as an alternative to Congress as in the early 1950s in AP, the Communist Party was the only serious opponent to the Congress. The Congress adopted a policy of political accommodation by offering certain benefits to the Muslims to enlist their support to the party. The Telugu Desam Party, when it later arose as a force in AP politics, continued the same broad political style of governance.

Therefore, it can be argued that the policies of different political parties reflect the overall 'evolutionary' and 'incrementalist' nature of the change intended for the Indian society. And, when it came to the stage of implementation, these policies proved even less capable of bringing about changes. In fact, in later years, the basic objective of the policies was reduced to "contain discontent short of the point at which it could raise an effective challenge to the underlying distribution of power."⁵⁴ Such policies of the government had, in the first place, prevented the coalescence of the different groups as they encouraged competition among the leaders of each of the groups. This only

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 266.

increased frustration. In the second place, these policies led to a political vacuum at the grassroots level as the leaders of the disadvantaged groups were absorbed into the system while the position of the rest remained unchanged. The discontent among the people and the political vacuum resulting from the lack of political accommodation has provided ample opportunity for grassroots parties to exploit. The broad support base of the Marxist-Leninist parties in rural Telengana is clearly a reflection of such a process at work.

The political system of AP, both with regard to the implementation of land reforms and methods of political accommodation, failed to respond to the growing values and aspirations of the rural masses. There was uneven development--economic and political--within the system. The changing and rising consciousness of the masses coupled with the political elites's intransigence had resulted in a political disequilibrium thus making the system vulnerable to revolutionary unrest.

Organizational Development of Naxalite Groups and the Role of the Communist Parties

Keeping in mind Tilly's thesis on the importance of organization in mobilizing people for revolution, we will now examine the role of the communist parties in AP that contributed to the organizational development of naxalite groups in the state. The CPI in AP was first formed in the 1930s. Initially, it operated only in the British-ruled areas of AP--the coastal districts and Rayalaseema. In time, it also entered the state of Hyderabad but functioned covertly under the banner of the Andhra Maha Sabha (AMS) which itself was a socio-cultural rather than a political movement. The Maha Sabha's program included the demand for according the Telugu language a prominent place in the Nizam's dominion and greater opportunities for education and employment among the majority (non-Muslim) community and in general, liberalization of the despotic nature of the

Nizam's rule. This broad agenda enabled the communists also to identify themselves with the AMS for the cultural mobilization of the Telugu speaking Andhras and the demand for political liberalization afforded them ideal strategies to pursue while at the same time keeping their real ideological image latent. It was not until 1943 that the CPI could gather substantial support in the Hyderabad region.

In terms of leadership and support base the CPI operated differently in the two regions of AP, that is, the areas under direct British rule and those under the Nizam. In the former, the CPI established strongholds among the rich and middle class peasantry. The leadership was drawn from the *Kamma* community, which is a relatively affluent agrarian caste. There is a sociological dimension to this. If the Congress as a (by the 1940s) half century old nationalist movement could be interpreted as a power base for aspiring groups to mobilize and exploit, the communist movement could be interpreted as a rival power base for other groups. In AP, the Congress-Communist divide had a substantial correspondence with the caste divide, as between Brahmin-Kamma communities in Andhra. In later years, the Congress-Communist divide is understood in terms of the Reddy-Kamma divide as the Reddys replaced the Brahmins as the dominant group in the Congress. Thus, "the Kammas, who were geographically concentrated in the delta districts, were originally drawn to the Communist Party partly as an expression of opposition to the dominant Brahmin elite who controlled the Congress Party leadership. Later, when the more numerous Reddys succeeded the Brahmins as the dominant group in the Congress Party, many ambitious Kamma politicians decided to remain in the Communist Party, converting it into a vehicle for political competition with their traditional Reddy rivals."⁵⁵

⁵⁵Frankel, India's Green Revolution, p. 77.

In Telengana, on the other hand, the Communist Party could draw support from the agricultural labour class only. The absence of a substantial middle class and glaring economic inequalities are the foremost reasons that account for such a trend in Telengana. Also, the lack of political freedom under the rule of the Nizam had further deterred the small middle class from openly supporting the Communist Party. The agricultural laborers whose conditions of existence were already poor and had little to lose, by way of economic security and socio-political freedom, had become more vulnerable to communist ideology and therefore became a strong support base to the Communist movement in Telengana.

The communist parties have played the important role of mobilizing the discontent of the rural masses in Telengana. The CPI played this important role during the Telengana peasant movement of the 1947-49. In fact, as already mentioned, this movement was the first major experiment of the CPI in insurrectionary revolutionary strategy. Even during the revolutionarily passive years in post-independence Indian history, i.e. the period between 1950 and 1967 when the communist movement, by then represented by two parties--the CPI and the CPI(M)-- became committed to parliamentary democracy, the Communist parties continued to play an important role, although in a different way, in Telengana politics. During these years, the communist parties remained a next to the Congress in terms of electoral performance. In this way they voiced the interests of the rural poor in the state legislature. The birth of a revolutionary party--the CPI(ML), by the closing years of the Naxalbari and Srikakulam rebellions and its effort in organising the peasantry in Telengana, once again rekindled the revolutionary zeal among the rural poor in Telengana.

Chapter 3

The Telengana Naxalite Movement : 1970-1993 (Part II)

Nature of the Naxalite Movement in Telengana

The naxalite movement in Telengana has had three dimensions: it is a social, economic and political struggle. In its most ostensible form, the movement can be characterized as a peasant struggle centering around socio-economic issues. The movement in Telengana has concentrated on problems of agricultural labourers and tribal peasants and on issues concerning land, wages and oppressive feudal extortions. In this aspect, the movement has been aimed against feudal landlords, commercial forest contractors and corrupt government forest officials. But, the fact that the movement was initiated, controlled and led by a radical wing of a communist movement in India, the CPI(ML), lends an ideological and political dimension to the struggle. The movement in Telengana is led by the revolutionary PWG, which right from the day of its inception to the present time continues to hold on to its objective of the revolutionary overthrow of the existing state power. The political resolution document of the party declares: ".....as a part of destroying the world imperialist system and winning victory in the world socialist revolution the immediate task in our country is to mobilize all the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal forces and overthrow the government of the big bourgeois and big landlord classes which have colluded with the imperialists and successfully complete the people's democratic revolution."⁵⁶ Given this as the main objective, the nature of the naxalite movement in Telengana can be characterized as a political struggle against the forces of the existing state--the police, the army, bureaucracy and the elected government.

In pursuing its goal of socio-economic and political transformation, the PWG has adopted different methods and tactics of struggle. On the one hand it has exploited the available constitutional and legal opportunities in organizing mass movements. It is

⁵⁶Political Resolution: Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) (People's War Group), 1984.

through the mobilization of the masses that the naxalites pursue their goal of socio-economic transformation. In Telengana, the PWG had been active in leading mass peasant movements for the eradication of bonded labour and for the redistribution of land, increasing wages and improving the working conditions of agricultural labourers. In recent years, the naxalites have also been concerned about women's issues. In the early 1990s, the women's wing of the naxalites has organized an anti-liquor campaign in the rural areas of Telengana. Apart from agrarian and tribal problems, the naxalite movement has also absorbed into its agenda the problems of the working class. The PWG has formed strong trade unions in some of the industries in rural Telengana including the Singareni Collieries (with Singareni Karmika Samakhya), Regional Transport Corporation (RTC), Post and Telegraph employees, Kagaznagar paper mill and slab stone workers. Recently, the trade union activities of the PWG have spread to the industrial belt in and around Hyderabad city.

The naxalites, on the other hand, also use Marxist-Leninist methods like 'annihilation' of landlords, as well as other actions against the state through illegal armed underground networks. Particularly, since 1985 the PWG has attacked individual police officers in a systematic manner. Also the PWG has undertaken widespread arson and destruction of public property. The procurement of high-grade weaponry and training in guerrilla tactics including expertise in mine laying and the use of other improvised explosive devises has made the PWG a formidable force in Telengana.

The movement is still in a fluid state and it is still too early to write the history of the movement. Therefore, I will focus on the socio-economic dimensions of the naxalite struggle, emphasizing issues concerning agricultural labourers, the tribal population and rural women. The political dimensions of the movement will be examined through a study of events of naxalite violence which were intended as a challenge to state power.

Socio-Economic Struggles

Peasant issues

One of the most important episodes of the Telengana movement is the Karimnagar peasant struggle. A commentary on this struggle points out : "The peasant struggle of Karimnagar is an important chapter of Indian agrarian revolution. Both in maturity and depth it has surpassed the Naxalbari flare-up and the Srikakulam struggle from which it has learnt many lessons."⁵⁷ The movement first started in 1972 in the Sircilla and Jagtial talukas of Karimnagar district. The CPI(ML) which entered this region in the same year organised agricultural labourers into groups which were called Ryutu-Coolie Sanghams (RCS). Initially, the CPI(ML) cadres started night schools for educating the rural poor in order to make them realize, some say indoctrinate them about, the atrocities and injustices that were being heaped upon them by the landlords and rural rich. In time, the RCS were mobilised for the occupation of *banjar* and *porambok* (waste and uncultivable) lands, which were till then illegally held by the landlords. The landlords reacted by confronting the activities of the RCS with hired professional *goondas* (thugs). Thus, the conflict between the peasants and landlords ensued. In the view of the naxalites, the ground work essential for class struggle was completed. The masses were ideologically prepared, the class enemy was identified and the masses were mobilised to confront the enemy. The CPI(ML) cadres had become more actively involved in the struggle and had adopted ever more militant means of confronting the landlords. Several landlords were 'annihilated' and land was forcefully occupied and redistributed among poor peasants. The initial success of the land distribution program encouraged the RCS to take up struggles on other issues as well.

⁵⁷K. Balagopal, Probings into the Political Economy of Agrarian Classes and Conflicts (Hyderabad: Perspectives, 1989), p. 35.

The Telengana region is predominantly a dry farming area and a particular type of tree -- the tendu tree, whose leaves are used in the manufacture of indigenous cigarettes called *beedi*, forms a significant part of the local produce. Beedi leaf picking constitutes an important source of income for the poor, particularly in the dry season. The poor pick beedi leaves and sell them to commercial contractors at the extraordinarily low rate of 2 to 3 paise per bundle. Not only are the beedi-leaf pickers severely underpaid but because of the feudal social relations still prevalent in Telengana, they have to give away a few bundles as gifts to the contractors. In the year 1970, the RCS began organising struggles for an increase in payment for beedi leaves. The government soon recognized the crisis situation and reacted by nationalizing the beedi trade. Now, a government official replaced the contractor in trading with the poor. The only effect of the nationalization was "on the one hand, to make the forest department bear the brunt of the beedi pickers' agitation, leaving the contractor setting pretty, and on the other to make room for plenty of corruption."⁵⁸ Although severe repression followed, the beedi leaf pickers' struggle continued in a non-violent yet aggressive fashion. Substantial gains were also achieved as a result of this agitation as the wages of the pickers increased by 60 per cent.

The beedi leaf pickers' struggle brought to the forefront the need to fight against feudal oppression. The RCS took up issues relating to feudal oppression and exploitation. *Vetti* (bonded labour) is a widespread practice in rural Telengana. It involves the rendering of free services and gifts to the village landlords by the poor, particularly the lower castes. People of all professions--barbers, washermen and agricultural labourers, were forced to render unpaid services to the landlords. Apart from this, the village poor had to offer ritual gifts like sheep and other cattle to the *dora* (landlord) on festival days and other important occasions. In short, the practice of *vetti* represents the social

⁵⁸K. Balagopal and M. Kodandarama Reddy, "Forever 'Disturbed': Peasant Struggles of Sircilla-Vemulavada", *Economic and Political Weekly* (November 27, 1982), p.1898.

authority and domination of the landed community over the other lower caste communities of the village. With the support of the RCS, the village poor began to resist the demands of the landlords.

Till 1975, i.e. before the imposition of the Emergency by Mrs. Gandhi, under which all sorts of anti-government movements (even liberal democratic opposition) were crushed, RCSs were formed in Nimmapally, Konaraopet and Veernapally villages in Karimnagar. The declaration of Emergency led to a setback in the activities of the RCS. The then Chief Minister of the state, Jalagam Vengal Rao, mobilised the powers afforded by the Emergency to crush the movement. The Emergency was a god-send for state authorities, but the RCS continued to work secretly in organising less violent struggles for better wages and against feudal practices. Unlike in Naxalbari and Srikakulam, the naxalite activities here followed a more cautious and practical method of dealing with intense repression. At a time of severe repression, the anti-feudal struggles served as alternative tactics for expansion and consolidation of the movement, in preference to direct political confrontation.⁵⁹ Also, it is during this period that the support base of the naxalite movement expanded considerably. Many college students and urban and rural youth got attracted to the RCS activities and joined the fold of the naxalite movement.

The lifting of the Emergency in 1977 enabled the movement to revive itself. In fact, in the post-Emergency period it assumed a more aggressive profile. The coming of the first non-Congress government at the center after both the leftist and rightist political forces united in a broad coalition and fought the Congress Party on the theme of Mrs. Gandhi's record of repression, brought new hope for civil liberties. As will be discussed later, the new central government appointed a spate of commissions to inquire into the repressive measures taken by the Congress government at the centre and in the states

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 1898.

before and during Emergency period. With the availability of greater freedom in the immediate post-Emergency period, the RCS workers came out openly. In fact, during this period the RCS increased both in number and strength, spreading to several villages.

In August 1977, the CPI(ML) organised a meeting in Konaraopet, a village in Karimnagar. Here, a large number of RCS workers and agricultural labourers were mobilised to join a procession to meet the then governor of AP, Sharada Mukherjee, who was visiting a nearby town. They wanted to submit a petition with a list of their grievances to her. Ostensibly, to prevent any untoward incident, the police force in the region attempted to disperse the crowd by beating the people. Apparently, in the ensuing clash, the police resorted to excessive force which further enraged the onlooking crowds who were sympathetic to the processionists' demands. The crowd retaliated, caught the head of the police force, the Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), and threatened to kill him. The situation was brought to the notice of the governor who then rushed to the place, assessed the situation on the spot and asked the DSP to apologize to the people for excessive use of force.⁶⁰ This incident reflects how the state authorities overreacted to the protest activities of the RCS. To the naxalite leaders, on the other hand, this incident proved a heroic event; not only could they humble the police but they could also obtain the intervention of the head of the state, the governor, on their behalf. For some time, the RCS activities accelerated. Meetings protesting police brutality were organised openly by the RCS. By 1978, the struggle between the RCS workers and the police reached a peak and in October, Sircilla and Jagatial were declared as 'disturbed areas'. The disturbed areas proclamation gave full rights to the police to put down the peasant struggle even through very violent means. Thus, while the discrediting of the AP state's policy

⁶⁰Sircilla Ryothanga Poratam- Purvapapalu in Telugu (Hyderabad: C.P.I. (ML) Janashakti Publication, 1994)

immediately after the Emergency did enable the naxalites to gather some strength , this phase soon declined when the state proclaimed the 'disturbed areas' act.

The main achievements of the Karimnagar peasant struggle were that it had brought about fundamental changes in the social life in rural Telengana. The feudal social practice of vetti was, more or less, completely abolished. Further, the wages of agricultural labourers and beedi leaf pickers had increased substantially.

Tribal Issues

Tribals and tribal concerns have always been an important element of the naxalite struggle, right from the days of the Naxalbari rebellion. In recent times, the PWG has taken up the issues of tribals of the Dandakaranya forest region which runs over large parts of north Telengana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. The PWG has good organizational strength and a wide network spread in the five forest divisions of the Dandakaranya region--Adilabad (in AP), Gadchirole (in Maharashtra), Balagat and Bastar (in MP), and East Godavari (in AP). The naxalite *dalams* (squads) have gained control over segments of the tribals in these regions and organised them into squads under the banner of Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sanghtans (DAKMS) to lead struggles on issues of concern to tribal people.

One of the most popular tribal movements led by the naxalites is in the tribal district of Bastar. Bastar has an overwhelming tribal population of 68 percent compared to the all-India figure of 7 per cent. Also, it is one of India's richest forest regions in terms of mineral wealth and other forest resources like teak and sal. Greater resource availability signifies a higher degree of commercial exploitation. In the post-independence period several private and government industries and developmental projects have been started in this region to utilize the available resources in the best possible manner. It is

reported that between 1956 and 1981, a total of 1,25,483 hectares of forest land was transferred to various development projects. By 1989 there were 40-odd small-scale saw mills and 62 wood-based factories in the district as well as large scale bamboo growing enterprises and bamboo supply operations for big privately owned paper mills in AP and the Birla-owned Orient paper mills in Shandol (in MP). In addition, in the 1980s, half the sal wood for railway sleepers produced in the country came from the Bastar region.⁶¹ These 'developmental indicators' conceal the extensive damage done to the environment. The region underwent massive environmental degradation with severe effects on population. The impact of these developments has been summed up in the following words:

Commercial exploitation of the forest wealth has brought with it massive displacement of the people and wanton destruction of the natural eco-system. Industrial projects are unrelated to local needs and levels of development; as a result the people have been deprived of their traditional livelihood and are provided with no real alternative employment, while widespread ecological destruction accompanies each such project.....⁶²

As in other tribal regions, commercialization and industrial development in this region resulted in heavy losses to the tribals as they were deprived of their ownership of forest lands and also accessibility to minor forest resources. It is against this background that the naxalites started to organise the tribals into groups to lead struggles against private contractors and government agents. The process of mobilization by which the naxalites built up their support structure and their achievements in the cause of the suffering tribals was brought out in one of India's most popular weekly journals:

.... lopsided socio-economic development of the district caused by indirect exploitation through environmental destruction and direct

⁶¹Bastar: Pro-Imperialist Development Strategy Versus People's Struggles (All India People's Resistance Forum: November 1993), p.16

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 5.

exploitation through cheating and duping, has provided an ideal setting for the naxalites to take root in the area. They probably understood the tribal psychology better and with their idealism, free of corruption or any other vested interest, could easily win the confidence of the simple tribals. For instance they supported the illegal encroachment of forest land and organised some campaigns of encroachment themselves; they repeatedly brought to the fore the issue of tanks and the need to maintain them in a systematic manner for irrigation; they openly opposed the Bodhghat project: they punished corrupt officials, they made tendu leaf contractors increase the wage rates; and they held health and education programs among tribals. All these they conducted through their front organization, Dandakaranya Adivasi Kisan Mazdoor Sanghatan (DAKMS), which carried out legal activities like demonstrations and agitations.⁶³

Since 1980, the tribals are being organised to resist exploitation and lead struggles on various issues under the leadership of the DAKMS. Initially, the DAKMS organized struggles for increases in wages and higher rates for the collection of minor forest produce. The most significant perhaps was the struggle for better rates for the collection of tendu leaves which has successfully continued to this day, pushing rates up from 3-8 paise per bundle to 30 paise today. Another major achievement has been in the matter of securing title deeds for the cultivation of forest land, gathering forest produce for government forest land and for cattle grazing rights. The DAKMS groups had been very successful in their fight for the tribals. Equally important was the effort they made in reducing the harassment of tribals by forest officials and police, which had become endemic in the tribal regions. The DAKMS have also been putting up strong opposition to the establishment of industries or projects that are not in any way related to the needs of local people. In other words, the DAKMS have been propagating the need for a 'people-oriented' development. The DAKMS have also been protesting that funds earmarked for development should be spent on social and educational infrastructure, i.e. schools, dispensaries etc., rather than on roads and communication facilities which are supporting commercial exploitation by outsiders. Similar movements for protection of tribal rights

⁶³The Illustrated Weekly of India, September 3, 1989.

are being development by the DAKMS in the neighboring tribal districts like Gadchiroli, Adilabad, Koraput and East Godavari.

The most significant impact of naxalite activities in the tribal areas is that it has educated the tribals about their rights and enabled them to assert them in an effective way. It has also, to a large extent, put an end to the exploitation by the money lenders and government forest officials. Significant increases in the wages of tribals have also been achieved as a result of the naxalite movement in these areas. The tribals areas in turn provided the naxalite movement with a strong support base. Also, in later years, when police repression against naxalite activists intensified, these areas served as secure hideout for the naxalite guerrillas.

Women's issues

The naxalite movement in its earlier phases never took up issues specific to women. Although women participated in the Naxalbari and Srikakulam insurrections, issues exclusively related to women did not form a part of the naxalite agenda. It is only in the Telengana phase of the naxalite movement that women and women's issues have gained prominence. Two types of women's organizations have emerged within the fold of the naxalite movement: 1) the Mahila Sanghams (MS) which concentrate on problems of rural women in the plains areas, and 2) the Krantikari Adivasi Mahila Sanghatans (KAMS) which is an organization of adivasi or tribal women of the Dandakaranya region. Initially, both these organizations have been actively involved in struggles based on socio-economic issues organized by the RCS in the plains areas and the DAKMS in the forest regions. In fact, the growth of Mahila sanghams can be traced back to the Karimnagar peasant struggle itself. It is reported that about 20-30 Mahila sanghams were formed in Karimnagar villages as early as the pre-emergency period (1972-75). However, these naxalite-sponsored women's groups started concentrating almost exclusively on womens

issues by the 1980s. It is necessary to reiterate the point that in this aspect the Telengana naxalite movement's contribution is new, in that the earlier radical communist insurrections adopted a rather conservative Marxist position on women's issues. Surprisingly enough, it is tribal women who initiated the struggle against discrimination and oppression under the leadership of the KAMS. In a paper presented by the KAMS at an all-India seminar on "women's liberation and class struggle," the objectives and policies of the KAMS movement were highlighted:

....The policy of the KAMS is to struggle for equal respect and status to women on par with men. But, this is a long drawn process. The social and economic relation and the relations between the man and woman and a radical development in their relations comes about through struggles alone. That means any radical change in the thinking of men and women is only possible in their equal participation in the struggle for social revolution. That is why the KAMS would formulate its strategy and tactics in the era of New Democratic Revolution linking the problems of women."⁶⁴

The KAMS has organised struggles on economic as well as social issues. On the economic front, they have fought for equal pay for men and women and have achieved a remarkable success on this issue. As a result, the wages of women increased from Rs.5-6 a day to Rs. 22-32 per day. The main focus of the KAMS struggle, however, has been against social oppression of women. The tribal social structure in Dandakaranya, even more than in other parts of the country, relegated women to an inferior position in the social hierarchy. Polygamy, still in vogue among tribals, a rigid dress code which prevented women from covering themselves above the waist, and a marriage custom wherein '*kanyasulakam*' (literally, a maiden's price), which led to a commodification of women, had all contributed to undermining the status of tribal women. Through their participation in KAMS, the tribal women began to resist these forms of social oppression. Finally, the adivasi women of Dandakaranya played a role equally important to that of men

⁶⁴Dandakaranya Women's Movement (All India League for Revolutionary Culture: October 1993) p.3.

in leading mass movements. Therefore, women were also subject to similar police repression as men were. Resisting the repressive measures of the police and paramilitary forces has become a part of the KAMS movement

While the KAMS has been concerned primarily with emancipation of tribal women, the naxalite women's groups in the plains areas have focused on more general issues. The 'anti-alcohol' movement launched by the Mahila Sanghams in rural Telengana in 1990 is regarded as one of the most popular struggles ever waged by the naxalites. In fact, it is because of this movement that the PWG has regained a certain degree of good will among the general public which it lost due to its indulgence in unfettered violence in recent years. It is recognized that many problems of women in the rural areas stem from excessive consumption of cheap alcohol (*arrack*) by their men, which has led to untold abuse of women and children in families. The easy availability of liquor in the rural areas has only perpetuated and compounded this problem. The AP state government had been pursuing a liberal licensing policy towards alcohol dealers in view of the revenue resources that it produced. In turn, this has created a mushrooming of country liquor shops in the rural areas. Under the leadership of the Mahila Sanghams, the women started a movement for a complete ban of country liquor shops in Telengana. In the first few months the Mahila Sanghams organised marches and distributed pamphlets protesting the evil effects of alcohol consumption. These activities were not confined to villages alone. Posters and pamphlets with effective slogans condemning the consumption of alcohol were distributed even in Hyderabad city. One such slogan read--"Break the bottle before it breaks your home." After some initial ground work, the women started a more aggressive campaign. They got a number of alcohol shops forcefully closed. The number of liquor shops in one particular town was reduced from 864 to 300 as a result of this movement. In instances where the arrack shop owners were adamant and continued to

keep their business running, the Mahila Sangham women surrounded the shops in protest and prevented customers from entering.

In time, this movement gained immense strength and other organizations of the PWG also became involved in it. Soon the confrontation between the shop keepers and protesters turned violent. Several instances of PWG naxalites setting liquor shops ablaze were reported from rural areas between 1990 and 1991. One such incident took place on 13 October 1990 in Mulkanur--a village in Karimnagar district, where an arrack depot was burnt down by PWG extremists. The government reacted, on the one hand by adopting coercive measures to stop the apparently unlawful activities of the naxalites. On the other hand, however, it understood the legitimacy of the struggle and actually extended its support to the women's movement at least in rhetoric if not in its policies. Interestingly enough, the TDP which has come to power in 1994 for the second time has imposed a total prohibition on the sale and consumption of alcohol throughout the state. This fact is in one sense indicative of the influence the naxalite struggle has had on public opinion in the state. It could also be interpreted as the state's attempts to reduce naxalite influence on this issue.

So far, various aspects of the socio-economic dimension of the naxalite struggle have been examined. The study reveals the broadening nature of the movement absorbing into its fold the various socially oppressed groups such as peasants, tribals and women. In terms of tactics and strategy, the PWG generally relied on mass line tactics in leading these socio-economic struggles. Although in advanced stages of struggle, neglect of mass line and adoption of more individualist and violent methods is evident, the overall pattern of leading socio-economic struggles has been one of first exploring all available legal avenues and then ultimately going beyond lawful means to achieve set goals. However, there is yet another dimension to the naxalite movement wherein the struggle has taken the

form of clearly illegal and deliberately violent activities aimed directly at the state apparatus and not so much in pursuit of specific socio-political goals. In other words, this aspect of the naxalite struggle relates to its direct confrontation with the state as an end in itself. This could be called the political dimension of the movement.

Political Struggles

In compliance with Mao's theory of agrarian revolution for the capture of political power through guerrilla warfare tactics, the PWG has been involved in large-scale violence and destruction of public property with the objective of weakening state power. The PWG has been at perpetual war with the state right from the time of its inception though, as observed before, tactical variations did occur in so far as it pursued less than total revolutionary tactics. Since 1985, the PWG has increasingly exhibited its contempt towards the lawfully elected government and its apparatus in an more aggressive and conspicuous manner. With the acquisition of high grade weapons and a high degree of sophistication in guerrilla tactics, the PWG poses a formidable challenge to the existing state power. It has, on several occasions, struck powerful blows at state power.

One of the most gruesome incidents of naxalite violence was the burning of a second class (economy class) compartment of a passenger train at a small station lying between Hyderabad and Warangal. It is estimated that about 80 people were burnt alive as a result of this barbaric act of the naxalites. Even civil liberties organisations which are known to be naxalite sympathizers openly condemned this inhuman act. By it, the PWG lost much good will of the general public which it previously had. Ironically, the PWG leaders themselves realized the grave mistake committed by their cadres. In the week following this incident, the PWG high command gave a public apology in the press for the unthinking act they committed. It can be said that this incident made the PWG more careful and cautious in choosing their subsequent targets of attack. Since then, the PWG

has largely targeted police forces, government officials and leading political figures in the state. On February 3, 1989, the PWG killed 7 police personnel and injured several others in Rajur, a village in Adilabad district. The PWG's access to sophisticated weapons, and the near professional planning involved can be gauged from a newspaper report of the incident:

The road by which the jeep carrying the policemen was going had been mined, reportedly by the People's War Group. Only one of the three mines planted along the road exploded, throwing the police personnel into turmoil. And the naxalites, armed with AK 47 rifles opened up and killed the trapped victims.⁶⁵

Even more significant are the links that the PWG seem to have acquired with international terrorist organizations. It is widely reported that the PWG had developed contacts with the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam), the well known terrorist organization fighting for a separate Tamil state in Sri Lanka. It has roots in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu neighboring AP. Thus, apart from ideological ties with other leftist insurrectionary groups in Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh in India, the PWG has been forging links with non-ideologically associated terrorist movements. Yet another instance of a strike against a target symbolizing the state was the kidnapping of a DIG (Deputy Inspector General) of police in broad daylight in the very centre of Hyderabad city on 27 January 1993. Mr. Vyas was a reputed senior police official, especially connected with anti-naxalite operations in areas central to naxalite activity. What is remarkable in his killing is the fact that it came quite a considerable time after he was transferred from the anti-naxalite operations to a "softer" position in the city.

Police are not the only victims of naxalite fury. Since 1989, the PWG has targeted people's representatives also. Such a practice was concentrated in subdivisions of the

⁶⁵Deccan Chronicle, February 3, 1989.

districts where naxalite operations were very intense. One of the more publicized of these acts is the kidnapping and murder of the Mandal Praja Parishad (a unit of local government) president, Malhar Rao. The naxalites had kidnapped the MPP president with a hope that the ruling Telugu Desam Party would concede to their demands of releasing imprisoned naxalite comrades. As the government did not succumb to the demands of the naxalites, the latter, apparently not willing to lose face, went to the extent of liquidating the victim. Another case of naxalite kidnapping which received even greater public attention was the kidnapping of a tribal MLA and seven government officials in the Koyyur forest of Vishakapatnam district of AP on 30 January 1993. The MLA belonged to a scheduled community and the seven young officers belonged to the prestigious Indian Administrative Services (IAS). The kidnappers demanded the release of naxalite prisoners held in local district jails. A dramatic series of incidents marked the period of stand-off between the naxalites and the government. The government, on the one hand, arranged for an airlift of paramilitary forces into the concerned areas for possible intervention to save the kidnapped persons. On the other hand, it rushed a prominent leader of the APCLC, K.G. Kannabhiran to negotiate with the captors in the jungle areas. In the end, the freeing of the kidnapped came only after the demands of the rebels for the freeing of some of the jailed naxalites was arranged.

Since the early 1970s, the PWG has been active in Telengana, organising and leading people's movements. Over the years, it has broadened the scope of its struggle, absorbing into its fold various socio-economically oppressed groups. In the initial years of its operation, i.e. in the 1970s, it concentrated its efforts mainly in organising struggles of agricultural labourers and tribal peasants. These struggles were aimed against oppressive landlords and rural elite. In the 1980s, it has taken up issues of tribals of the Dandakaranya forest belt, which runs over parts of the three states-- Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, thus enlarging its scope and area of operations. Here the

PWG has fought against commercial and industrial exploitation of tribal economy. Finally, in the 1990s, rural women's issues came to form part of its agenda.

What is important to remember is that while different important concerns were added to the program of action as mentioned above, the PWG did not deviate from its commitment to political struggles throughout the entire period. The movement on this front has intensified particularly since the mid-1980s. Some regard this as excessive, so much so that in recent years, criticisms have been leveled against PWG for its neglect of specific socio-economic ends and for its disproportionate pursuit of political struggles ends in themselves. People sympathetic to the movement argue that the PWG has been forced to pursue insurrectionary strategies as a response to the escalation of state violence against its cadres. In other words, the pressure of state repression did not allow the PWG to review and rethink its strategy. Others contend that it is alienation from its basic ideology that has resulted in the transformation of the naxalite struggle from a people's movement into a justified banditry.

The Telengana Naxalite Movement : A Comparative Perspective

Interesting parallels can be drawn between the Telengana naxalite movement and the naxalite struggles of West Bengal and Srikakulam, both with regard to underlying causes and outward manifestation of the movements. The most striking factor is the similarities in the social structure of the three regions . All three areas, at the time of the out break of the insurrections, were undergoing the process of transition from traditional to modern societies. Commercialization of agriculture had in different degrees, already made its inroads. It was under the impact of such trends in capitalism's advance in rural and particularly tribal areas, that the peasants and tribals in these areas were reduced to the status of landless labourers. As attested in a recent study also: "The general nature of the tribal problem involving the monetisation and commercialization of tribal economy,

land alienation and forced labour, and penetration of unscrupulous plains men and money lenders was the same in all three areas."⁶⁶ Thus, high proportions of socio-economic exploitation of the poor and landless were visible in all the three regions.

The second factor common to all the three movements is the role played by the state in aggravating the problems of rural poverty, directly or indirectly. In Naxalbari and Telengana, the state governments, the Congress in AP and the CPI(M) in West Bengal, took office with a commitment to undertake serious land reforms to alleviate rural poverty. Paradoxically enough, the immediate effect of the proposals was that the landed classes in both regions, fearing that agricultural labourers working on portions of their land for long periods would claim ownership rights under the new land reform laws, resorted to eviction of sharecroppers who worked on their plots. While this in itself was enough to make the intended land reform effort rather infructuous, the drive for implementation, after the passage of legislation, suffered from lack of commitment among the bureaucracy. Further, the state governments, especially in AP, could not implement the land reform statutes due to judicial impediments also. In Srikakulam, some of the state government policies, far from mitigating, had contributed to the miseries of the tribals. The rules imposed by the government for the positive purpose of preservation of forests, soon became impediments to the tribals' access to forest produce, depriving them of an important source of livelihood.

Finally, in all the three regions the influence of the Communist Party is most telling. The break-away faction of the CPI(M) had a strong hold in Naxalbari, Srikakulam and Telengana. It is under the ideological and organizational influence of this communist faction that the general discontent and frustration of poor peasants and tribals got

⁶⁶Shantha Sinha, Maoists in Andhra Pradesh, p. 168.

mobilized and transformed into a revolutionary movement with an ideology and political goal.

The nature of the movement in Telengana also reflected a resemblance with the earlier manifestations. The ideological base is the most significant element of continuity. The PWG and other groups leading the movement in Telengana trace their lineage to the Indian Marxist-Leninist movement led by the CPI(ML) and claim to be proponents of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. The theoretical structure of the PWG and other naxalite groups is based on the ideological formulations of the fathers of the Indian Marxist-Leninist party--Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal. Thus, the naxalite groups today continue to hold on to the objective to "bring out an immediate revolution through people's revolutionary war.....liberate the rural areas through armed agrarian revolution.....and finally liberate the cities and complete the revolution in the Indian nation."⁶⁷

In addition to commonness of ideology between the Telengana movement and the earlier naxalite movements in Naxalbari and Srikakulam, parallels between them can be drawn on other issues also. The fact the movement in Naxalbari and Srikakulam, and Telengana concentrated in areas which were thickly forest covered and where tribal population was concentrated indicates a similarity in the physical and demographic terrain of the movements.

Thus, considering the broad similarities in the causes of the movements and also the ideological continuity, the Telengana movement can indeed be regarded as a part of the wider naxalite movement in the country. However, as mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the Telengana movement has acquired a distinct character and identity of its

⁶⁷Marcus F. Franda, Radical Politics in West Bengal, pp. 172-3.

own. The movement in this phase has undergone significant changes from its earlier phases. First, the contemporary movement lacks the homogeneity and central control of its predecessors. In the earlier phases struggles were directed mainly by one group of revolutionaries -- the leaders of the CPI(ML), Charu Mazumdar and Kanu Sanyal. Although in the Srikakulam insurrection other groups like local and state level organizations were also involved, there was a broad consensus of purpose and a clear hierarchy in the relationship among all the groups. In Telengana, more than one group of revolutionary socialists got involved. After the death of Charu Mazumdar in 1972, the CPI(ML) at the national level got split into myriad groups and factions. Since then no single group has represented the mainstream of the naxalite movement even at the all-India level. Also, the different groups and factions that emerged had little organizational connection with one another. They differed on issues concerning the degree of violence, methods of mobilizing the masses, and other issues in leading the struggles. In Andhra, some of the notable groups in the broad rubric of M-L movement are the CP group, UCCRI(ML) under the leadership of TN and DV and PWG of Kondapalli.

Second, there is a marked change in the strategies and tactics of struggle. Unlike Naxalbari and Srikakulam, in Telengana the importance of 'annihilation' as a strategy of struggle has been greatly reduced. Instead, emphasis is laid on developing mass movements of the rural poor on issues of land and wages. A recent study on the present state of naxalism in India points that "...the immediate objective of the movement has been scaled down from that of launching guerrilla war against the state to a more practicable task of building the militant struggles of the rural poor over a vast areathe old tactics of all-out armed offensive in isolation from mass movements have been

discarded."⁶⁸ This has been largely the in Telengana, although it must be acknowledged that the PWG does resort frequently to very violent methods.

Thirdly, the movement in Telengana has the advantage of a broad support base. The movement has sympathisers and supporters among urban middle class intellectuals, writers and students. The rural support base of the movement, which has already been discussed in considerable detail, involved not just tribals but poor peasants, agricultural labourers and women. These diverse groups sympathetic to the movement have formed various associations to extend support to the cause of the naxalites. The most important of such associations is the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC), an association formed by urban based middle class intellectuals and professionals. Initially, the APCLC was concerned with the protection of civil liberties in the state and in this context, it openly condemned the tough stand of the state on the naxalites. But, in recent years, the APCLC has become a sympathiser of the naxalite movement and voices the cause of the naxalites from a different platform. Similarly other associations such as the Revolutionary Writers Association (RWA), the Radical Students Union (RSU) and Jana Natya Mandali (JNM), a cultural troupe spreading the ideology of the naxalites through the media of dance, song and drama, lend a certain legitimacy to the naxalite struggle in Telengana.

⁶⁸Tilak D. Gupta, "Recent developments in the naxalite movement." Monthly Review, September 1993, p.14.

Chapter 4

The State and the Naxalites

Social movements, particularly radical social movements like the naxalite movement are socio-political in nature for they strive for social transformation through political change. Hence they are directed against existing political structures like the government in power. State and state actions therefore constitute an important component of the study of social movements. Further, in movements that involve a degree of violence, the role of the state becomes all the more significant. Universally, the state is the monopoly holder of coercive power in society and responsible for the protection of its territory and people from external invasion and internal rebellion. The state is free to use its coercive authority when and where it may perceive the need to do so. In situations of open challenge to its authority, as in the case of the naxalite movement, the state naturally claims the legal power to use its coercive authority. While in former times this was perceived as natural and unobjectionable, in more modern times the use of coercive authority is countered by claims of civil liberties groups. These groups contend that the state has an obligation to respect the rights and liberties of all its citizens, even those who either from the very start reject or later withdraw their loyalty to the state. All these interwoven complex considerations endow the study of state response to radical insurrectionary type social movements with a special significance .

Apart from these general reasons, there are other factors that are more specific to the Andhra Pradesh study. Most importantly, in AP, it is the response of the state to the naxalite movement that brought to the forefront the question of human rights and civil liberties. It is widely held in public opinion, especially in left-leaning circles that the state has over-used coercive measures in tackling the naxalite problem. The apparent indifference of the state to civil liberties, in fact, has resulted in a movement for human rights and civil liberties. The growth of this movement coincided with the rise of similar

expressions of concern at the national and international levels. The civil liberties movement in AP and similar movements for civil liberties generated by events in Punjab and Assam gave a tremendous boost to the human rights movement in the country as a whole. The establishment of the National Human Rights Commission under the chairmanship of Justice Raganath Mishra in 1993 is in essence a result of pressure from local and state level human rights and civil liberties organizations.

This chapter will study the nature of state response to the naxalite movement. After an overall description of the various non-coercive and coercive measures pursued by the different state governments in AP in response to the naxalite challenge, we will attempt to identify some general patterns and trends in state behaviour and analyze the causes behind these dominant trends. Finally, the implications of state response to the human rights and civil liberties movement in AP will be studied.

Nature of State Response

The policy of the Andhra Pradesh state government towards the naxalites can best be described as a "carrot and stick policy." Successive state governments have followed a two-pronged approach in dealing with the naxalites. While on the one hand, the state offered various incentives by way of socio-economic benefits to the naxalites in order to draw them back into the mainstream of social life, on the other hand, it resorted to using severe repressive measures to put down naxalite activities. The state response can therefore be discussed in the broad categories of non-coercive and coercive policies. It must be noted that the state policies have varied significantly over the past 20 years. Major policy changes corresponded with changes in the ruling party in the state legislature. Therefore, the two broad categories of coercive and non-coercive policies will be further sub-divided into three chronological phases: first, the period between 1970 and 1983, when the state government was headed by the Congress(I) under the leadership of

J.Vengal Rao and later M.Chenna Reddy; second, the period from 1983 to 1989 which was marked by the rise of the first non-Congress party, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), to power in AP; and third, the period from 1989 to 1992, which witnessed the return to of Congress(I) now headed by M.Chenna Reddy.

Non-Coercive Measures

After the outbreak of the naxalite rebellion in Srikakulam in 1967, the Andhra Pradesh state government turned its attention towards socio-economic reforms in an attempt to alleviate rural poverty in the state. These reforms show that the state government did in fact recognize socio-economic deprivation as one of the causes behind the Srikakulam tribal uprising. When the naxalite struggle broke out in the Telengana districts in the early 1970s, the state government, then ruled by the Congress(I) under Chief Minister J.Vengal Rao, introduced some socio-economic welfare measures in the affected areas. During this phase (1970-1983), the state adopted mainly a 'preventive approach' towards the spread of naxalite influence. Just as in Naxalbari and Srikakulam, the state did not show any sympathy towards the naxalites and continued to look upon them as a bunch of criminals indulging in unlawful activities and used force to put an end to the naxalite movement. However, it also tried to draw the rural poor away from the naxalite influence by offering them certain economic benefits. Agricultural co-operative banks were opened in the affected Telengana districts to provide loans to agricultural labourers and tribals. Agricultural equipment including diesel engines and cattle --sheep and milch animals-- were distributed among the poor. These were meant as immediate measures to relieve the masses from poverty and to provide, in the short term, a source of livelihood to the poor. Apart from these rather less substantive measures, the Congress(I) government in AP also undertook an aggressive campaign for land reforms. Of the three categories of land reform laws which were discussed in the previous chapter--abolition of intermediaries, tenancy reforms and land ceiling laws-- the last category and the most

important of these, the land ceiling laws, officially began to be implemented during this period. It was precisely during this period that the revenue department in the state began filing declarations of the size of land holding from all land owners in the state.⁶⁹

Yet, in spite of all the talk about the need for poverty alleviation and agrarian reforms, the conditions of the poor and landless in rural Telengana remained much the same. In fact, the conditions of the majority worsened as the number of agricultural labourers continued to increase and the number of small cultivators actually decreased from 99.52 to 78.1 million in AP during this period (1971-1974).⁷⁰ The government's socio-economic reform programs of the 1970s did not help in improving the lot of the poor and landless in Telengana. In the first place, the government's immediate welfare measures were not a major success as they were not proportionate to the magnitude of the problem of rural poverty. Even for the few who benefited from them, these measures proved very inadequate. Second, with regard to the more critical measure, land reforms, the government dragged its feet on implementation. The government's attitude reflected not just a lack of seriousness, but a complete absence of political will about the implementation of land reforms. General public opinion in this period towards the government on the issue of implementation of land reforms is reflected in a newspaper account:

The Chief Minister J. Vengal Rao said the other day that the state government "was going ahead with the implementation of land ceiling act".....Leaders of the state government have been assuring so persistently that there is no question of going back on land reforms that people are beginning to wonder. The very vehemence of the assurances creating doubts why are men in power and authority finding it necessary to reassure the people so much about the bona fides of the government? With all their repeated assurances, they are somehow unable to convince the people. There is already a mass of

⁶⁹Deccan Chronicle, May 28, 1975.

⁷⁰Deccan Chronicle, April 2, 1975.

legislation on land reforms. Somehow nothing has happened so far. Even the distribution of *bánjar* lands is by and large a farce and an eyewash. Land legislation, where is thy sting?⁷¹

In sum, the government laid emphasis on more superficial and ad hoc welfare measures, which were also inadequate, in preference to substantial long-term socio-economic reforms. The government did not seem very serious about the question of rural poverty but only appeared to make it an issue for political purposes. Thus, much of the talk about socio-economic change in the countryside was of little significance.

With the rise of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) to power in the state in 1983, prospects for a change in the government's policy towards the naxalites seemed likely as the TDP government appeared to have initiated a new 'conciliatory' phase in the government's response to the naxalites. Even before winning the state elections, the leader of the TDP, N.T.Rama Rao, made loud claims of his benign and friendly attitude towards the naxalites. In fact, while campaigning for elections he hailed the naxalites as being "true patriots". After assuming the office of the Chief Minister, he initiated the "30-day surrender" program which was a sort of a call given to the naxalites to lay down arms and surrender to the government within a period of 30 days. The government promised to rehabilitate the surrendered rebels and offered a cash prize of Rs.100,000 to each. The time limit of this policy was extended twice by month-long periods and netted a total of 240 naxalites who professed disenchantment with the methods of the naxalite groups and showed readiness to accept the monetary benefits.⁷² The surrender of Mukku Subba Reddy, a prominent leader of the PWG, had for some time given wide popularity to this policy. Throughout its regime, the TDP government relied chiefly on such efforts at reconciliation through negotiation to tackle the naxalite problem. Other welfare measures

⁷¹Deccan Chronicle, May 28, 1975.

⁷²Economic Times, September 10, 1989.

aimed at improving socio-economic conditions of the poor in rural areas and bringing about much-needed change in the agrarian structure were ignored.

However, in spite of initial modest achievements, the TDP governments efforts at reconciliation with the naxalites were not very successful. In fact, the incidents of naxalite violence in the state increased sharply during this period. The government's policies of dealing with the naxalites reflected a lack of proper understanding of the socio-economic aspect of the naxalite struggles and instead treating it as a mere political problem which was sought to be solved through bargaining and trying to buy off naxalite activists. Scarce public resources which could have been ideally used for hastening the process of implementation of land reforms, were instead squandered upon unproductive policies. In fact, some quarters of public opinion which were more sympathetic to the naxalites, criticized the government's policies as a ploy to avoid the difficult task of bringing about genuine structural changes in the rural economy through proper implementation of land reforms. Such criticisms were indeed not baseless as a disturbing slow-down in land reforms was reported during the TDP regime in AP.⁷³

By the end of 1989, the Congress(I) returned to power in AP. This time the Congress(I) government took a more conciliatory and accommodative stand on the naxalite issue, much in contrast to its ruthless and uncompromising approach in the late 1970s. This was perhaps in response to the civil liberties movement in the state which had repeatedly put pressure on the government to soften its approach towards the naxalites. Soon after coming to power, Chief Minister M. Chenna Reddy released all the naxalite prisoners held without trial. He also announced a policy whereby all legal activities of the naxalite groups would be allowed. More importantly, a socio-economic welfare package was delivered to the affected areas to wean people away from naxalite influence. This

⁷³Deccan Chronicle, March 17, 1989.

package was conceptualized as "the remote and interior area development plan." It was based on the realization that "development programs in the last four decades have not reached some remote and interior areas, most of them inhabited predominantly by tribals and lacking communications, irrigation and medical facilities."⁷⁴ Plans to accelerate development of the nine 'naxalite districts' were drawn up and implementation of these plans was entrusted to the local people, especially tribals and youth who were regarded as vulnerable to naxalite influence. Usual bureaucratic procedures like government licensing for contracts were relaxed in order to eliminate corruption and red tapism. After Chenna Reddy's exit, his successor N. Janardhan Reddy, adopted the same approach.

This time, the state government seemed a little more serious about socio-economic development in rural Telengana, although it once again remained silent on the question of land reforms. But again, the government's efforts were not adequate to meet the magnitude of the problem of rural poverty. Meanwhile, in a less repressive atmosphere which permitted legal activities, the naxalites were able to regroup, reorganize and extend their mass base. Following this, there was an increase in naxalite activities in the state. Eventually, the government abandoned its soft approach and relied more on coercive means to put down the naxalite activities.

Coercive Measures

The naxalite movement is considered a serious challenge to the maintenance of 'law and order' in the state, and governments have often responded in ways they considered appropriate to meet the challenge. As in Naxalbari and Srikakulam, in Telengana also repeated attempts were made to crush the movement. During the 1970s, the Congress(I) government in the state made several efforts to nip the movement in the bud. In this phase, the state government was outright anti-naxalite both in ideology and in

⁷⁴Deccan Chronicle, April 20, 1991.

practice. Its attitude perhaps stemmed from the bloody story of Srikakulam which was then still very fresh in everyone's memory. This period represents the most outwardly repressive phase of state response.

The attitude of the government was reflected even in rhetoric. J.Vengal Rao, who was the Chief Minister as the Telengana naxalite struggle unfolded, minced no words in announcing that he would be as tough towards these rebels as he was towards the insurrectionists of the Srikakulam rebellion of the late 1960s. Thus, trying to allay the fears of the public he unabashedly reminded them---"You all know how I handled these activities earlier."⁷⁵ As early as 1971, just when isolated incidents of naxalite activity were reported from Telengana, the state launched a police force on a military scale to crush the movement. Nearly 100 police camps employing 15,000 policemen were set up in the naxalite affected districts of Khammam and Warangal. In addition, section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CRPC), according to which citizens are prohibited from moving in groups of more than 2 persons, was frequently imposed in those rural areas. Night time curfew was also imposed in these villages. The tough stand of the state did not, however, help in bringing down the movement. Between 1971 and 1974 the naxalite movement spread to almost all districts in Telengana. In 1974 -- the pre-Emergency period -- when naxalite violence reached its zenith and a series of attacks was launched against landlords in rural Telengana, the state government went a step further in seeking the co-operation of the central government in inducting one of the paramilitary forces, the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force), to quell the movement. In the following year, the imposition of national Emergency struck a serious blow to the movement. At a time when even democratic opposition was not tolerated, the state's attitudes towards open and violent opposition was all the more tough. As a result, in the Emergency period the movement suffered a serious setback. All naxalite groups went further underground.

⁷⁵Deccan Chronicle, May 24, 1975.

Even non-violent popular mass movements could not be organised. The success of state repression was such that the naxalites had to confine their activities to publishing radical literature secretly.

When, in 1977, the national Emergency was lifted and the Janata Party came to power at the centre, the tense atmosphere of the Emergency period gave way to a relatively relaxed political climate. Support for restoration of liberal democratic principles of freedom of opposition got a boost. Everywhere in the country, the state governments were having to be accountable to the public and press charges against atrocities that were committed by the state apparatus during the Emergency times. In AP also a similar movement for the restoration of civil liberties got underway. While it was, no doubt, felt in some official quarters that the pressure against the movement ought not to be relaxed, such was the reaction to the Emergency that governments were frightened of continuing with repressive policies even against violent challenges like the naxalite challenge. Thus, immediately following the lifting of the Emergency there was no option but to abstain from using repressive means. Making a virtue out of necessity, the AP government put forward a conciliatory stance towards the naxalites. Paradoxically, this enabled the naxalites to regroup their forces and start a more aggressive campaign against the state. In the early 1980s when the naxalite movement gained substantial momentum and when normality was restored in the political atmosphere, the state government once again reverted back to its coercive methods. In 1979, the two naxalite strongholds -- Sircilla and Vemulavada taluks, both in Karimnagar district -- were declared to be disturbed areas. Under the AP Suppression of Disturbances Act the police were allowed to open fire on mere suspicion at anyone. The disturbed areas proclamation can be regarded as a sort of mini-Emergency declared by the state government vis-a-vis the naxalites. It was virtually a legitimization of police rule. It was this measure that helped in liquidating the Karimnagar peasant struggle discussed in the previous chapter.

The change of ruling party in the state legislature and the coming to power of TDP in 1983 did not, however, change the overall state policy towards the naxalites. As noted earlier, this phase was marked by simultaneous efforts at peaceful reconciliation and brutal suppression. On the one hand, the government appeared to have made a dramatic change in its attitude towards the naxalites. Initially, it even praised the naxalites as 'true patriots' and made pious appeals and rewards for the so-called surrender of naxalites. On the other hand, the government did not abjure dependence on coercive methods to tackle the problem. One of the most unpopular policies of the NTR government was the move to liberalize arms licenses to help people defend themselves against naxalites. The state cabinet had decided to issue arms licenses to "men of character, standing and education."⁷⁶ This step of the TDP government was severely criticized and opposed by the general public and bureaucracy alike. Many interpreted this move as a deliberate attempt of the state government to strengthen the position of the landlord class in the rural areas, for the new policy would benefit only the rich. Others thought the policy was an irresponsible move which would only result in an increase in crime. In view of the public criticism, the government could not go ahead with the new policy. Another major step taken during the TDP regime was the government's creation of an elite police force called the "grey-hounds" meant specifically to tackle naxalism. This special police squad was to consist of 800 personnel provided with sophisticated arms and specially trained for guerrilla warfare.

In 1989, when Congress(I) returned to power in the state legislature, the Chief Minister, M.Chenna Reddy, had for a while given a degree of freedom to the naxalites. After a brief phase of attempts at peaceful coexistence with the naxalites, the state, in response to a growth in naxalite activities, once again became determined to 'wipe out' the naxalites. A marked alteration of government policy from a softened and conciliatory

⁷⁶Deccan Chronicle, April 29, 1989.

stand to an outright repressive stance is once again visible in this phase. The AP special police, some central paramilitary forces and a special task force of plainclothesmen began patrolling in villages in rural Telengana. Five battalions of CRPF were deployed in Adilabad district alone which since the late 1980s had become the strongest naxalite foothold. A landmark event of state repression was the official ban on the PWG on May 20, 1992, in response to the PWG's violence. The ban gave unlimited powers to police and paramilitary forces which significantly deterred naxalite activities in the following months.

So far, specific policies pursued by the two state governments in AP--the Congress(I) and the TDP-- to meet the naxalite challenge have been outlined. Apart from these, there are also other coercive measures commonly used by both the Congress and the TDP governments in response to the naxalite movement in the state. In fact, this package of coercive measures is common to other parts of the country as well, where violent confrontations against the state have become manifest. The common package, known as TADA (the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act), emerged in 1985 in response to the violent secessionist movements in Punjab and the north eastern states. In time, this Act also came to be widely used in AP to meet the naxalite challenge. TADA permitted police to arrest persons suspected of being involved in criminal activities against the state and retain them for a unspecified period without trial. In AP thousands of arrests have been made under this act. Innocent villagers who were suspected of aiding the naxalites, tribals, rural youth, journalists and civil liberties activists were booked under TADA and retained in prison for months or even years without even being produced before a magistrate, much less given a proper trial. Under a constitution, which in spirit incorporates the principle that every person is innocent until proven otherwise, this act represented a mockery and in fact an antithesis of the legal system. It is a threat to the fundamental rights of citizens guaranteed in the constitution. In AP the state

governments, both TDP and Congress, have resorted to the use of TADA as a means to curb naxalism. In practice, TADA did indeed have a deterring effect on the spread of the naxalite influence. The fact that in recent years the movement has become isolated from the masses and has become confined only to a limited number of people who are known as hard-core naxalites can be, to some extent, attributed to the effectiveness of this act. It could deter potentially sympathetic groups from joining the naxalite cadres.

Along with TADA, there is the AP Suppression of Disturbances Act, which, as mentioned earlier, provided the state government with wide arbitrary powers of detention, search and seizure in areas declared as disturbed. This act has been declared in the naxalite affected districts in Telengana a number of times since 1978. This is the only law which in effect allows the police to open fire on groups of people on mere suspicion of being engaged in violent activities. This law gives the executive wide powers to confront violence and has been widely misused by the state. While in theory, this law permits police to act only if the suspect is armed and poses a considerable challenge to life and liberty of other citizens, in practice, the police have used the law to indiscriminately kill innocent people. The so-called "encounter killings" in recent years are a consequence of this act. Typically, an 'encounter' is an incident in which armed naxalites confront the police somewhere in a thickly forested area and an exchange of fire takes place between the two. The accidental death of a naxalite in such a confrontation is described as an encounter killing. While this is what an encounter is understood to be, the reality is quite different. In the majority of cases it is neither true that the victim is an armed naxalite activist nor that he/she died after making an attempt on the lives of the police, thereby creating a situation where the police had to fire back in self-defense. In most cases, the victim is an unarmed villager who is taken into custody by the police on mere suspicion and shot dead in cold blood in the forest areas. According to one estimate, 1066

encounter deaths have been reported in AP in the period between 1968 and 1993.⁷⁷ Most are instances of terrorism producing legal sanction for state terrorism which soon gets out of control in the dialectic of insurgent terrorism versus state terrorism. It is particularly against such state-sponsored terrorism that the civil liberties movement got started in AP.

An Analysis of State Response

Having examined both non-coercive and coercive measures pursued by successive state governments in AP, in response to the naxalite movement, we will now identify certain general trends or patterns in the behaviour of the state. As already discussed, the naxalite movement is a socio-economic and political movement and therefore needs more than a political response. However, the state, in spite of having acknowledged the naxalite movement as an expression of a socio-economic problem, has failed to adequately respond to those aspects of the struggle. The government's efforts in bringing about the much needed change in the agrarian socio-economic structure have been inadequate. Not only has the government failed to accelerate the process of change and development in the rural areas, it has, in fact, in several ways constrained the process. The political nexus between the landed interests and governmental elite in AP has forced the government to avoid policies that could affect the interest of the landed classes. They have, by and large, treated it as overwhelmingly a political issue. Confining itself to this strategy, the state resorted to the twin tactics of persuasion and coercion, alternating them periodically. In the last ten years, the government has on several occasions made attempts at reconciliation through political negotiations. But, not having reached any viable compromise or solution, the state resorted to brutal repression to suppress the movement. To tell the truth, the hard-line approach has been more visible than consistent and credible efforts at reconciliation. In the following pages, an attempt will be made to explain the factors that may have influenced the use of violence by the state in dealing with the naxalites in AP.

⁷⁷"Mystery killings by the police," Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee Report (June 6, 1987).

From a Marxist point of view, the state/government is considered to be the protector of the interests of the economically dominant classes in society and therefore resorts to coercive tactics if the interests of the economic elite in society are threatened. Gurr's three dimensional approach to understanding state violence also acknowledges the social or economic position of the ruling elite of a society as the *structural* cause for state violence. In view of the above mentioned theoretical conception of state violence, we must examine the social and economic base of the ruling elite in AP so as to connect this factor to the nature and scope of state response. The social base of the Congress Party in the Telengana region mainly consists of the *Brahmin, Reddy* and *Velama* castes. During the pre-independence years, the Congress leadership was drawn from the educated urban middle class, confined mainly to the Brahmin community. But, as one electoral study puts it, " the party leadership gradually shifted in the late fifties and early sixties from urban centres to rural periphery, from educated middle class in the cities to the rural elite, from higher urban based castes to middle peasant castes."⁷⁸ Their rise to political power also coincided with the Jagirdari abolition which enabled the consolidation of their position as rising rural middle class peasants. The phenomenon of adult suffrage coupled with the leverage that these classes have over the local people made them crucial segments of the Congress regime. The fact that the Reddy and Velama communities are concentrated in the Telengana regions also explains why the Congress Party had fared better in the Telengana region than in the coastal Andhra or Rayalseema areas. In the Telengana region, therefore, these communities represented both the economic and political elite.

The TDP was comprised mainly by members of the *Kamma* community which has traditionally been a rich land owning community inhabiting the coastal Andhra and

⁷⁸ F.D. Vakil, "Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh: A Review." in George Mathew (ed.) Shift in Indian Politics (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 1984), p.113.

Rayalseema regions. Not surprisingly, therefore, in contrast to the Congress, the TDP had greater support from the coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions than in Telengana. But, it must be noted that a major section of the TDP support structure was also comprised of dissidents from the Congress Party. To the extent that the level of dissidence rose within Congress ranks the Reddys also moved to the TDP. Dissidence in the Congress became quite considerable by the 1980s. In the 1983 elections when the Telugu Desam first won its astounding success, of the 35 seats it won in Telengana, 13 came from Reddy and Velama communities, by no means a small proportion.⁷⁹ The direct or indirect influence of the economic interests of these landed classes can still be seen behind the TDP government also. Thus, even during the TDP regime the Telengana Reddys and Velamas continued to exercise political power.

In sum, the political leadership in AP as a whole, and in Telengana in particular, came primarily from the rural landed classes. The conflict of interests between the political elite and the naxalites is obvious. The former attempted to maintain their status quo in the rural areas and the latter challenged the status-quo: this pattern provided the motivation for the state to resort to violence freely. Thus, while the threat of loss of economic influence provided the incentive, the fact that the elite gained control of state power gave it a monopoly access to instruments of coercion, making the use of force convenient and lawful.

However, although the conflict of interests arising from class differences between ruling elite and challengers is an important variable in analysing the AP government's response to the naxalite challenge, it does not in itself completely account for the use of force by the state, where state behavior is also shaped by the ideology of liberal democracy. Liberal democratic ideology, it cannot be denied, contributes to some norms

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, p. 116.

of restraint and control in the use of violence. After all, the conventions of liberal democracy are regarded as a part of the recent Indian political tradition which cannot be ignored in understanding state behaviour in preference to purely Marxist interpretation. Therefore there must be less ideological and a more practical reason for the state to use excessive force. Here Gurr's second variable--*the situational variable*-- which asserts that "governments respond selectively to different sorts of groups and to different sorts of actions,"⁸⁰ provides the key to understanding state actions in a democratic setup. In India, protests, mass demonstrations, non-violent challenges to the state in the form of social movements, and other forms of defiance of law are common day-to-day occurrences. Many of these arise from marginalised sections of the society such as the backward castes and scheduled castes-- the *dalits* as they are commonly referred to. These groups also, like the naxalites, are fighting against the status quo in the present socio-political system. The government, in most situations, does not respond to these confrontations with force. Such instances signify the availability of space in the political system for dissension which a purely Marxist interpretation does not allow scope for.

But, even a liberal democratic state, howsoever committed to constitutional methods and limited and restrained use of force against unlawful elements, cannot but respond to contain radical challenges through use of commensurate force. In so doing, the state interprets the challenge as directed against the entire public order and security rather than as a threat to purely sectarian socio-economic interests (like landed class). Therefore, challenges like that of the naxalite movement will be countered by the state in the name of protection of the socio-political fabric in general. Gurr's theory of selective response finds a good illustration in this.

⁸⁰Gurr borrowed this variable from Charles Tilly. See his From Mobilization to Revolution, p.106.

The objective of the naxalite movement is to violently overthrow existing state power and bring about a peasant revolution of the Maoist-type in India. Further, the naxalites use guerrilla tactics to wear down and discredit state power in the process. Their revolutionary objective, and more importantly their violent methods may be regarded as compelling reasons for the state to use force. The extent of violence used by the naxalites has indeed become a serious challenge to the law and order situation in the state. While the liberal democratic theory of the state does not accord primacy to only to the maintenance of law and order and in fact prides itself as protector of liberties of individuals, it cannot escape problematic situations where these two goals come into conflict. Harmonizing its dual-role as a protector of rights and liberties and a maintainer of law and order, often constitutes a dilemma for the modern state, particularly of the developing societies. Often, in such situations, the political state has the tendency to become over zealous about law and order and less so about social justice and civil liberties. Thus, the state response to the naxalite movement can also be interpreted in these terms.

Finally, most government policies are products of experience and experiment. Not only do governments learn from their own history but experiences of other states are also important sources of policy influences. Here Gurr's concept of the *dispositional variable* which looks at the nature and scope of governmental responses to violence as products of experience gained through time is extremely useful in understanding this particular instance of state response. For precisely, the naxalite type of challenge to state authority and the state response have yielded a good record of experience to the state. The experience factor has played an important role in determining the response of the government to the naxalite movement in Telengana. Just as the nature of the naxalite challenge in Telengana was influenced by the earlier expressions of the challenge in Naxalbari and Srikakulam, the state response was also to a large extent influenced and

shaped by the nature of state response in earlier situations. In Chapter 2, we have seen how the naxalite movements in Naxalbari and Srikakulam were effectively put down by the state governments in West Bengal and AP through the use of sheer force. These afforded enough lessons and precedents for the AP government to employ similar methods to tackle the naxalite challenge of the later years.

Yet another important source of influence on the AP government to use violence as a policy choice is the general trend in the Indian politics since the 1980s to deal with violent challenges to state authority through repression. The rise of several violent challenges in the form of secessionist movements in the Punjab, the north east states and Kashmir, and the growth of the terrorist organization, the LTTE, in Tamilnadu, have exerted immense pressure on the Indian state. The state and central governments were forced to resort to repression to bring the political situation under control. The general pattern of resorting to violence to deal with secession and insurrection has been an influencing factor and a source of justification for the pattern of the AP government's use of violence.

Implications of State Response

The governments response to the naxalite movement has had two major implications. The first is in the area of civil liberties and the second is in its impact on the naxalite struggle. We will examine these in further detail.

The Rise of a Civil Liberties Movement

The Indian constitution is almost unique among the third world constitutions and for that matter even among those belonging to the so-called western democratic world in incorporating a chapter on fundamental rights enforceable through judicial review. Though certain provisions compromising the true spirit of democracy, such as preventive

detention, are written into the constitution, the courts have afforded protection against the rigors of this provision. A vigilant public opinion buttressed by a free press has also been a watchdog. Various associations promoting civil liberties have monitored the record of the government in the preventive detention area. However, there have been several instances, especially in times of acute crisis, when the government has resorted to extra-legal methods in order to deal with dissident groups. There have been equally strong reactions from civil liberties associations protesting and condemning government actions. So effective has been the pressure from such groups that the government has often been forced to respond by taking certain remedial measures.

It is in the context of the state response to the naxalite movement that the civil liberties movement in AP started. The civil liberties movement in AP today is headed by an organization of mostly urban middle class intellectuals, academics, writers and lawyers, known as the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC). Before the formation of the APCLC there were other civil liberties groups like the organization of Peoples Union Democratic Rights (PUDR) and Citizens for Democracy, an organization established by Jayaprakash Narayan. The role of civil liberties groups has been mainly in protecting the rights and liberties of minority dissident and radically protesting groups like the naxalites. The AP government's use of outright repressive means in dealing with naxalites has attracted the attention of these groups and they have since been putting pressure on the government to adopt democratic methods in dealing with the naxalites. Since the post-Emergency period, the civil liberties groups have been constantly exposing the extra-legal and unlawful methods adopted by the police, such as encounter killings and illegal detentions. Often these groups have forced the governments at the centre and the state levels to check their policies and at times take serious remedial measures to correct them.

The civil liberties groups, particularly since the post-Emergency period, have been involved in conducting inquiries into alleged violations of the human rights code by the state. In 1977, in the period following the rise of the Janata Party to power at the centre, Jayaprakash Narayan, as president of Citizens for Democracy, set up a committee headed by Mr. V.M.Tarkunde to collect evidence about the use of extra-legal means by the state vis-a-vis the naxalites. The Tarkunde Committee, after a thorough investigation, concluded in its report that there was sufficient evidence to warrant a judicial inquiry into all so-called 'encounters killings' in AP. Further, the committee also concluded that the AP government was heavily involved in the 'crimes' against the naxalites. It recommended that the central government institute a judicial inquiry into the encounter deaths that took place during the emergency period.

The Bhargava Commission was formed as a consequence of the recommendations. But it was the state government, under the direction of the centre, which constituted this commission. In fact, Justice Bhargava's name was suggested by the central government. The main purpose of the Bhargava Commission was to collect facts about the allegations of murder, torture and brutal treatment of naxalite prisoners and to suggest alternative administrative measures to deal with this problem in the future. However, the commission was not told to pinpoint the responsibility for the crimes (if any were committed). In the first few months of the inquiry, various non-governmental civil liberties groups participated in the proceedings of the Bhargava Commission. But, as the inquiry gained momentum, the state government's interference in the procedures of the commission increased. One significant method of manipulation was the insistence of the government that the commission hold some of its sittings in camera as the issues unfolding before it were highly sensitive. This insistence of the state government came in response to threats from police officials to resign if further evidence before the commission were not gathered

in camera.⁸¹ With this, private civil liberties groups withdrew from the proceedings of the Bhargava Commission. Some of them instituted their own fact-finding committees.

Meanwhile, the Bhargava Commission, even within the narrow scope of its operation was eliciting evidence and it became evident both from the nature of the evidence gathered and the comments and remarks that Justice Bhargava was making during the inquiry that state government officials, especially the police, were coming under heavy indictment. Soon the commission itself was wound up and its report never saw the light of the day. The whole Bhargava Commission inquiry proved only to be a farce, a half-hearted measure by the state to pacify civil liberties groups. Its importance is limited to being a symbolic gesture of the state's concern for civil liberties.

The next major step taken by the Indian state towards protection of civil liberties was the establishment of a human rights commission by the central government. In view of the pressure from prominent human rights bodies like Amnesty International and civil liberties groups in various parts of the country, the central government formed a national human rights commission in 1993 under the chairmanship of Justice Raganath Mishra. Within a year of the formation of the NHRC, the APCLC, which had been the most active civil liberties association in the state submitted a complaint against the AP state government concerning the incidents of encounter killings of naxalites. The commission responded with alacrity and a fact-finding committee of the NHRC visited AP in August 1994. The inquiry proceedings of the NHRC reveal the power exercised by the police in AP. All potential witnesses before the commission, particularly one member of the APCLC, were repeatedly harassed and even beaten up by the police. In spite of such

⁸¹Mohan Ram. "Getting away with murder," Economic and Political Weekly, (September 3, 1979), p. 1209.

obstacles, the commission conducted its inquiry. The report of the NHRC is yet to be published.

Impact of State Response on the Naxalites

On the whole, the severe repressive measures of the state have not helped in scaling down the naxalite movement. The notion that 'violence breeds counter-violence' is clearly discernible in this case. First, the pressure of police repression had a deterring effect on socio-economic front of the naxalite activity. The hard line approach of the state denied the naxalites the normally available political space for expressing discontent by organizing non-violent struggles of the poor. Also, the naxalite activists were forced to go further underground and conduct all their operations in secrecy. Second, police violence against naxalites in the form of torture of naxalite prisoners and killing of naxalite activists in encounter killings had the effect of creating a sense of revenge among the naxalites. Their urge to fight back and drive to intimidate the state and its apparatus had strengthened. As a result, the naxalites became more direct and violent in their confrontations with the state. Thus, even when the state adopted a less repressive stance with the hope of winning over the naxalites through persuasion, naxalite activists truly committed to the cause of the movement remained distrustful of the state's intentions and made use of the opportunity to regroup and reorganize their forces to launch an offensive against the state.

Chapter 5

Analysis and Conclusions

Explaining the causes of the naxalite movement

The causes for the emergence of the naxalite movement in Telengana can be understood in the light of the theoretical models on revolution that were discussed in chapter 1 of this thesis. Barrington Moore's socio-structural theory helps account for the socio-structural factors that lie behind the rise of the movement. In Telengana, indeed, it resulted from a sharpening of the already existing feudal class contradictions between the landlords and the agricultural labourers during the modernization process of the society in the twentieth century. By the time the naxalite movement broke out, the Telengana region remained relatively backward in terms of social and economic development. The society was plagued by vast disparities in wealth between rich and poor and by overall underdevelopment. This had resulted from many factors related to both the pre-independence and post-independence times. The feudal society of the pre-independence period, because of very low technological inputs, could not undergo the commercial revolution in agricultural production which the coastal parts of AP underwent since the last decades of the nineteenth century. Backward as it was in not 'achieving' the levels of commercialization in agricultural economy, the Telengana region could not escape the effects of incorporation into the world capitalist market. For example, subsistence farming was replaced by farming for commercial needs. Peasants who were earlier producing to meet personal, or at best, local needs, were now having to meet the demands of the capitalist economy. The first signs of the subjection of pre-capitalist modes of production to the burdens of capitalism appeared even in the pre-independence era. This transformation put intolerable burdens on the peasantry in Telengana, sharpening the class contradictions between the landlords and the peasants.

In the post-independence period these class contradictions assumed confrontational proportions. The introduction of the green revolution had brought about a commercial revolution of unprecedented proportions all over the country and in particular in some regions like Punjab. In those areas an economically stable class of farmers evolved. In Telengana, however, the impact of green revolution has been limited. The landlords and rich farmers in this region failed to promote agricultural production on commercial lines through introduction of technological innovations. Thus, pre-capitalist forms of production continued to persist in a capitalist economic system. Further, the rural rich in Telengana, while unwilling to invest in agricultural production, continued to maintain their extravagant style of living in a world changing under the impact of industrial capitalism by extracting large surpluses from the peasantry. In addition to this economic dimension of exploitation, the peasantry in Telengana were also subject to the feudal social exploitation of the pre-capitalist order. As Telengana did not undergo a large scale commercial revolution, the social relations of the pre-capitalist order continued to persist. Contractual agreements between worker and landlord did not replace the old status relationships. Medieval social relationships like bonded labour continued to persist even in the modern age. In sum, the peasantry in Telengana were subject to a most oppressive socio-economic order. They enjoyed neither the security of the traditional norms of agrarian relationships based on the exchange of mutual benefits and services nor the social freedom that comes with the new social relationships of the capitalist system based on contractual agreements between the worker and the landlord.

Thus, what Moore contends is the main cause of a peasant revolution--"the absence of a commercial revolution in agriculture led by the landed upper classes and the concomitant survival of peasant social institutions into the modern era where they are subject to new stresses and strains," is largely the situation in Telengana. Therefore, it can

be argued that the social structure of the region has played an important role in promoting revolutionary behavior among the peasants.

While Moore's theory accounts for the socio-structural causes for the emergence of the naxalite movement, Johnson's theory can be used to explain how the state and political elite in AP have influenced the rise of the movement. According to Johnson, revolutions occur when the values and social environment of a society become desynchronized and when the political elite of the society fail to recognize the disequilibrium and correct it. In the case of Telengana, there has clearly been desynchronization of values and social environment; the state and political elite in AP have failed to recognize the disequilibrium in society and indeed are, to some extent, responsible for creating it. Two policies of the state have played an important role in this regard. The first is the state government's policy with regard to the implementation of land reforms and the second relates to the process of political accommodation in AP.

Since independence, the Indian state has been committed to a socialist system of economy. The ostensible goal was to bring about social justice to all the citizens through an equitable distribution of resources. The main problem that confronted the state was the problem of rural poverty. The state's professed strategy to achieve social justice in the rural areas was through radical land reforms. During the Nehruvian years, the Congress government at the centre started an aggressive campaign for land reforms. All states in India were to implement these reforms. In AP the implementation of these began in the 1950s. In the case of the Telengana region which before 1957 was a part of the Hyderabad state, not yet becoming a part of the present Andhra Pradesh state, the land reform measures were initiated by the Congress Party. People's hopes and expectations further intensified as the transitory situation of Telengana ended and it became a part of AP. As indicated in Chapter 3, the profile of land reform in the coastal regions was more

advanced then in the Telengana region. There was, therefore, more expectation in this region with regard to reforms for all the talk about socio-economic equality and land reforms had more impact where these were absent. The poor were no longer willing to accept their poverty and misfortune passively and began to demand their share in the national wealth. The poorer classes believed that land reforms would lead to the reconstruction of the socio-economic order. However, as has already been pointed out, the impact of land reforms turned out to be minimal. The political elite in AP failed to meet the expectations of the rural poor. The former, because of the clout exercised by the landed interests within the state government, did not have the determined will to implement land reforms. Thus, while the values of the rural poor were greatly changed under the influence of the new ideas of socialism and equality, their conditions of living in the broader framework of the social environment remained unchanged. In theoretical terms, the political elite in AP, far from correcting the problem of disequilibrium of the system by implementing land reforms, took a course of action, which in Johnson's theory would amount to 'elite intransigence,' that only served to exacerbate the disequilibrium.

The other way in which the political elite in AP failed to correct the disequilibrium in the social system lay in their adoption of a policy of political accommodation. In the immediate post-independence period several groups of people like the backward castes and scheduled castes had started to demand political power. In AP the political elite sought to respond to this problem by co-opting the leaders of these groups into the existing social system without altering the power structures. The basic objective of such a policy was to contain discontent. Here we see the political elite responding to a disequilibrium situation with, what Johnson terms 'barely adequate' policies. These policies had the effect of cosmetically 'resynchronizing values and environment' without altering the old structure of the social system. But the effect of such policies, as pointed out before, was that it did not cater adequately to the aspirations of the disadvantaged and

created instead a sense of frustration among them. Further, it also created a political vacuum at the grass roots level which could be exploited by a radical party. Thus, the naxalite movement was the result of a disequilibrium in the social system that went uncorrected by the governmental elite.

Moore's and Johnson's theoretical models help to explain the long term causes of the emergence of the naxalite movement in Telengana. Tilly's mobilization theory, on the other hand, accounts for the immediate factors that contributed to the rise of the movement. Positing the conditions for the rise of organized revolutions/rebellions, Tilly emphasizes the need for an organization to effectively mobilize the discontent of the people. The communist parties in Telengana have served precisely this important function. As early as the 1940s, the CPI had first started to mobilize peasants in Telengana. As discussed earlier, the CPI could effectively exploit the sharp economic inequities in Telengana and draw support from the vast disadvantaged segments of the population in rural Telengana. By the late 1940s, when the Telengana peasant rebellion broke out, the CPI had demonstrated its control over poor peasants and agricultural labourers. Of course, this movement was crushed by the state. Immediately thereafter, the CPI committed itself to work within the constitutional order and consequently the ardor for revolutionary activity was dampened. It was not until two decades later that a truly revolutionary party was to emerge in the Communist fold. The 1960s witnessed the split in the party between the CPI and CPI(M), both professing their commitment to constitutional ways. In this context the CPI(ML) emerged as a radical communist faction which reclaimed the legacy of the older revolutionary commitment. The PWG itself arose as an offshoot of the CPI(ML), taking over the leadership of the poor peasantry and agricultural labour classes. In Telengana it can be said that, the PWG represented the CPI(ML). It extended its support base in the region, absorbing into its fold various oppressed groups such as agricultural labourers, tribals and women. In this process, it

also increased its revolutionary capabilities, acquiring guerrilla techniques from various sources, not all Marxist in theoretical orientation. For example, in recent years it even forged close links with ethnic and sub-national terrorist groups like the LTTE of Sri Lanka. In this manner, the PWG has developed its organizational level by acquiring mass support and by gaining access to instruments of terror. It has served as a vehicle to express the discontent of the masses and effectively mobilized them to pose a significant challenge to the state.

In sum, the naxalite movement in Telengana has resulted from a combination of different factors. Each of the three theoretical models presented in the beginning of the thesis serves to highlight the diverse empirical contexts that characterize the origins and rise of the movement. While no single theory can adequately account for the phenomenon, the three theories together provide a comprehensive explanation for its occurrence. Some theories can be regarded as more satisfactory in their explanation of the situation than others. For example, Moore's theory concerning the conditions conducive to revolutions may not completely explain why it is that a revolutionary situation did not actually occur in other places where the polarization between the oppressed landless and tribal poor and the rural landed rich exists and why did it occur in Telengana. Here the theoretical formulations relating to the availability of effective grassroots organization and of appropriate revolutionary ideologies to inspire them are much more relevant as explanatory instruments. But, this is only a matter of assignment of relative purposiveness of theories. In the present study the cumulative benefit derived from the theories, taken together, is indeed very beneficial for our understanding of the situation, its origins and development.

Explaining the AP state governments' responses to the naxalite challenge

The theoretical framework featuring the three aspects of state violence-- structural, situational, and dispositional -- which have been discussed in Chapter 1, will afford us an explanation of the AP governments' response to the naxalites. To examine the issue from the structural perspective, which lays emphasis on the internal social structure of the society and the political elite's position in it vis-a-vis the challenger, we must first study the social base of the two parties--the Congress and the TDP-- which had formed governments in AP. The Congress leadership in AP, particularly since independence, has been drawn from rural elite classes, especially the *Reddys* and *Velamas*, which have been the dominant landed castes in rural Telengana. The TDP, on the other hand, has been comprised mainly of the *Kamma* community which have traditionally been a rich land owning community of the coastal Andhra region. Dissidents of the Congress Party also formed a major section of the TDP support structure. Thus, in terms of social composition, both Congress and TDP have tended to represent the rural elite and landlord communities of AP. The fact that both the parties are dominated by landed classes perhaps explains why both parties have shied away from going ahead with the implementation of land reforms in the state. Any moves against landed interests would result in intra-party conflicts, a loss of majority to the party in the state legislature and finally, loss of political power.

Not surprisingly, therefore, none of the Chief Ministers in AP, neither from Congress nor from the TDP, has had any enthusiasm for seriously implementing land reforms in the state. Thus in striking contrast to the naxalite groups, which represent the poor and landless and generally the lower sections of the social strata, the political base of the ruling parties in AP consists of the upper layers of the social pyramid. Therefore, social distance based on differences in class between elite and non-elite, a factor which has

been stressed by Gurr as an important structural cause for state violence, could be regarded as a factor influencing the use of violence as a means of social control by the political elite in AP.

While the social class of the political elite is an important variable which accounts for state actions, there are other factors that have a more direct and immediate impact on state behavior. Tilly contends that situational factors such as the extent of threat posed to the existing regime by the challengers, the status of the challengers and the strategies pursued by them are important variables in determining state response. The naxalite movement, as is well known, is a revolutionary movement, the main objective of which is to overthrow state power. Based on Mao's theory of revolution, the naxalites strive to build a violent mass movement at the grassroots levels. The violent nature of the movement and its ultimate aim to overthrow state power, according to Tilly, is a compelling factor for governments to use violence as a policy choice. Further, the expanding nature of the movement, which has over the past twenty-five years absorbed into its fold large sections of the agrarian labourers, tribals and women, and has also gained sympathy and ideological support from a section of the urban middle class population, has forced the state to use force as a deterrent for further expansion. The use of certain coercive measures like TADA is one example of the use of force for deterrence.

Also, the fact that those groups of people directly involved in the naxalite struggle -- tribals in particular -- are politically marginalised sections who have had little or no representation in the state legislature has made it easy for the political elite to use force against them. And finally, the guerrilla warfare methods adopted by the naxalites are regarded as an important reason for the state to respond through violence. Guerrilla warfare makes it difficult for the government to combat the challenger through

conventional security means. The hit and run tactics of the guerrillas, their attack by surprise and ambush and disappearance into the surrounding countryside, making it difficult to distinguish between guerrilla fighters and local population, force the government to adopt repressive measures which often violate the rights of the local population not involved in the struggle. The frequent imposition of the AP Suppression of Disturbances Act in the Telengana districts, which has led to a temporary suspension of civil liberties of citizens in those areas giving the state government wide arbitrary powers of detention, search and seizure can be explained, though not defended, as a governmental strategy to confront the guerrilla warfare methods of the naxalites.

Finally, the dispositional perspective also provides some useful insights to analyze why the state government in AP relied so much on force to deal with the naxalites. The AP state government while dealing with the Srikakulam naxalite rebellion had successfully put down the movement through the use of sheer brute force. This indeed gave a sort of a justification and incentive to the state to use force in similar situations in later times. The repeated assurances of the Chief Minister J. Vengal Rao, that he could tackle the naxalite movement in Telengana just the way he did in Srikakulam is proof enough of the fact that the successful use of force in earlier situations provides further incentive for its use in later situations. The widespread application of TADA in Telengana can also be understood in this context. The effectiveness of this Act in deterring terrorist activities in Punjab and in Assam had led to its application in other situations of violence.

The state response to the naxalite movement has been the result of interplay of a many factors. The theoretical variables--structural, situational and dispositional-- help in highlighting each of these. The situational variable explains the social structural reasons that lie behind the violent response of the state to the naxalite challenge. The situational variable, on the other hand, accounts for the more apparent reason--the violent nature of

the naxalite challenge and its obvious threat to law and order-- as the main cause for violent state response. And finally the dispositional variable explains how the AP state governments' response to the contemporary naxalite challenge has been influenced by its policies that were taken with regard to the Srikakulam naxalite movement and the policies of other states. Thus, all the three variables have served as tools to explain state behavior.

Conclusion

The thesis has so far analyzed the nature of the forces that are responsible for the rise of a people's movement in AP and those that shaped the state's response to the peoples' movement. There are, of course, broader implications to this study. The naxalite movement is a significant episode in contemporary Indian history which brings to light aspects of the characteristics of the society and political system in India. First, it highlights the problem of rural poverty in India and how the state has failed to address this problem. Second, it also highlights the role of the communist party and its ideological influence in the Indian political system. More importantly, it shows how the revolutionary side of the communist movement as reflected in the naxalite manifestations, represents a challenge to the state. The importance of this movement lies in the fact that although it does not pose a critical challenge to the legitimacy of the state, it does pose a critical problem to its democratic credentials. The nature of state response and its escalating pattern, frequently described as state terrorism, has a considerable effect on its democratic credentials. More importantly, it has led to the projection of human rights concerns. It has been noted that the human rights movement especially in places like AP has been almost a function of the escalating pattern of state response. Thus, the naxalite movement provides a window through which to view several aspects of state politics in India.

The study also affords us a model with which to analyze and understand other instances of violent challenges to the authority of the state. Such instances have not been

confined to movements driven by Marxist ideology only. Ethnic and regionally based separatist-secessionist challenges to state power have also assumed violent shape. To a considerable extent the mobilization of anti-state forces and the nature of state response to these afford similarities for us to notice, similarities amenable to some of the theoretical explanations that we made use of in the study. No doubt, one should enter the caution that there is an important difference between insurrectionary movements motivated by peasants and rural poor seeking socio-economic egalitarian goals and other violent challenges to the state on ethnic and sectarian claims to separate existence. Still the point is that in a limited sense there are comparisons to be drawn. And in fact, even the contrasts afford interesting insights into the variations in the conditions and dynamics of insurrectionary movements.

In terms of theoretical models, this case study reveals the general relevance of theoretical models dealing with the causes for the rise of radical social movements and the phenomenon of violence in the form of a chain reaction in the political system. In this sense, the case study offers a worthwhile opportunity to verify some theoretical perspectives and identify those which are of greater relevance to the Indian naxalite scene. Also, the case study enriches the empirical base of some theoretical perspectives by revealing significant data flowing from the analysis of some significant trends. The case study shows that no single theoretical model can explain the complex situation which any revolutionary movement is. The naxalite case study reveals that revolutionary conflict is a the result of the interplay of several factors. Therefore, it highlights the deficiency of the present theoretical approaches and the need to develop more comprehensive theoretical models to explain the phenomenon of revolutionary conflict.

Thus, it is hoped that both as an historical analysis of a socio-political movement, the consequential state reaction and the emergence of wider concerns about human rights

and also as an attempt to relate some theoretical concepts to prevailing situations concerning the mobilization of forces for social justice and the state's response, the study has been a worthwhile exercise.

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