



## ROLE OF RAYALASEEMA COMMUNISTS IN FREEDOM STRUGGLE - A STUDY

**I. Nageswara Reddy M.A.**

Lecturer in History ,

SKR & SKR Govt. Degree College for Women

Kadapa Town, YSR Dist, A.P. India.



### ABSTRACT

*The Communists took active part during the final phase of the freedom movement. Their ideology initially ran parallel to that of Congress and later on, it turned out to be a complex opposition to the latter in certain respects, though both of them cherished the same goal that is, securing freedom for India.*

*The paper highlights the role of the communists and also others in active participation in the final phase of freedom struggle.*

**KEYWORDS:** *freedom movement , communists , superficial reading.*

### INTRODUCTION

The communist ideology found its way into Rayalaseema in the late 1930s and early 40s.<sup>1</sup> By then, the Quit India Movement, the last phase of the Indian freedom movement, had begun. Many cadres in the INC with socialist ideology were attracted towards the communist movement. A superficial reading into the events of Indian freedom movement in Rayalseema provides an impression that the communists worked for the movement. But, by their own pronouncements, they did not support the basic idea of the Quit India Movement.

The major ideological reason for not supporting the Quit India Movement by the Communists was that the German aggressive posture during the World War II was considered fascist in nature, which the communists opposed. Opposition to Great Britain in her war with Germany was considered as a support to fascism. The INC wanted India to support Great Britain in the war efforts as an independent sovereign state but not as a dependent colony. Winston Churchill, the then British Prime Minister, did not agree to the proposal of Indian leadership for India's independence. The disagreement prompted the INC to oppose the war-efforts of Great Britain in India. Since the Quit India Movement was sponsored by the INC 9 August 1942 on the plank of opposition to Great Britain, communists declared that they would not support the movement as it would amount to supporting the fascists Germany. Another ideological reason for the difference with the INC was that the communists felt that independence could be achieved by participating in the war, whereas the INC felt "first independence, then only support to war efforts," as already pointed out.

The ideological differences between the INC and the communists made the latter to be opposed to the newly launched individual satyagraha as part of the Quit India Movement. But they attacked the British

for continuing their policy of imperialism toward India and for not conceding India's demand for independence. Almost every fortnightly report issued by the government referred to the communist activities in that direction and to their efforts to foment trouble among students and workers. The report dated 25 February 1941 said that the "communist activities amongst students are continuing but their efforts have been greatly hampered by the recent arrests and detentions". Another report, dated 4 July 1941 stated that - "a considerable quantity of communist literature was seized from various students and others in a school in the Chittoor district. The proscribed *Swatantra Bharat* continued to make its appearance from time to time particularly in the Andhra districts, and communists in that area have been trying to make trouble by utilising any dispute, however small, between the workers and their employers...."

Many a youth, pursuing either High School or collegiate education, developed nationalist ideas as the freedom movement progressed. This trend continued during the Quit India Movement as well. Such sensitive young men with dedication to the nationalist cause were influenced by the Communist ideology. Leaders like Putchalapalli Sundarayya, who was already an acknowledged Communist cadre, took pains in bringing such youth into the fold of Communist Party. E. Pulla Reddi, hailing from a wealthy family of Velugodu village in Nandikotkur taluk of Kurnool district, was one among many such young men, who were brought into the Communist fold in the first half of 1940s. He had developed nationalistic ideas since his school days, and when he was doing Engineering in Madras, he turned a Communist. Giving up his studies at that stage, he returned to Kurnool in 1942, and got himself acquainted with other local Communists like Tippareddi of Kurnool and Kodi Narasimham of Nandyal. Also, associating himself with the Kisan workers like Ghegireddi Balireddi and Kandula Obul Reddi of Kambam taluk and G.Rami Reddi of Nandyal taluk, he took interest in the formation of Ryots Association and toured the district, spreading Communist ideology. When engaged in these activities, he came in contact with the local Congress cadres. He attended the Communist party Plenum in Vijayawada during 21-28 January 1943. Thus, the basic nationalist instinct was presenting the dedicated youth, and whichever ideology they were influenced by, they mixed with one another and became a nationalist cadre, forgetting their party affiliations.

Despite the nationalist approach being a common factor, the communist approach to the freedom movement presents them in a distinct shade. When V Bapyya and C.Pullu Reddi, who were Secretary and Organiser respectively of the Kurnool District communist party, were arrested under section 144 of the Criminal procedure Code (CrPC), in September 1942 with a view to prevent them from holding meetings and taking out processions, Kodi Narasimham and R. Thippa Reddi, both communists, met the District Collector and presented him a memorandum on behalf of the organiser of the Andhra Provincial Communist Party. The memorandum pointed out that the communists had no intention of doing anything that would adversely affect the war effort and that the party's policy was to fight the fascists till the end. Further, the memorandum also pointed out that the local communists were doing their utmost to carry on anti-fascist propaganda and secure the support of the people for the war effort and that they were against the Congress movement. The memorandum warned that the repression of the communists by the government would only help the fascists. On that argument, the memorandum appealed to the Collector to allow the communists to continue their anti-fascist activities by releasing the arrested communist cadres and returning to them the office files, circulars, etc. of their party, which had been seized by the police. Later on, the communists lamented that the government ordered the arrest of communist workers because the government did not distinguish the imperialist war from the people's struggle in which the communist workers were active but not in the activities against the war-efforts. This stand looks paradoxical when we notice a reference to the effect that Idhukallu Sadhasivam of Anantapur district, a communist cadre, published and distributed in early 1940 a cyclostyled paper, *Akasavani*, through which the anti-war campaign was carried on. The paper reached even remote villages, and its contents were read out to the unlettered peasants and field workers also.

Despite protestations by the Communist party organisers that their struggle was against imperialism and fascism but not against the British war-efforts, Communist workers faced arrests and conviction during the Quit India Movement under different sections of the Defence of India Rules. The government considered

even a procession here and a public meeting there as anti-British and against the defence of the country. It was under such circumstances that V. Bapayya, secretary of the Kurnool district committee of the Communist Party of India, was convicted by the Sub Divisional magistrate of Kurnool on 11 September 1942 and awarded one year simple imprisonment. C. Pulla Reddy, organiser of the district committee of the Communist Party of India, was sentenced to six months term of imprisonment.<sup>2</sup>

Student organisations grew along with the spread of the communist ideology and activities in Rayalaseema. A students federation was in existence in Kurnool district by 1942. In the first week of October 1942, G.Venkata Reddy, a communist cadre from Velugodu in Kurnool district was an organiser of the Kurnool district students federation. The police of the time alleged that he was involved in the distribution of pamphlets "prejudicial" to the then government. For this alleged anti-government activity, the sub-divisional magistrate of Kurnool convicted him on 7 October 1942. He was sentenced to one year term of rigorous imprisonment.

Quite often, the government of the day considered the Communist activities in Rayalaseema as illegal and prejudicial to the interests of the government. Charges were framed against Chanda Narayanappa and seven others of Anantapur district and Gurram Venkanna, also of the same district, under different sections of the Indian Penal Code, Defence of India Rules and ordinance 3 of 1942. The offence they committed was "conspiracy..., illegal and prejudicial acts and burning the car of Dr. Koshi in Uravakonda" on the night of 14 August 1942. Dr. Koshi, could possibly be on government employment, the details of which are not available.

Even without investigating into the alleged charges, arrests were made under the Defence of India Rules during the Quit India Movement. Communist workers were not an exception to this. At Rajampeta, a taluk headquarters in Kadapa district, eight communists were arrested and detained. Of them, P. Narasimha Reddi, C. Rammohan Roy and Rama Krishna Reddi were arrested on 5 June 1943, while Ramayanam Tirupelu, Peddi Reddi, Vengal Reddi, P.K. Subbarama Reddi and S. Subbarama Raju were arrested on 10 June 1943. They were remanded to custody for fifteen days from the date of their arrest. Superintendent of Police, Kadapa district, recommended continuance of their detention until the investigation into the charges was completed.

Fomenting trouble in the ranks of workers in railways and also in factories to paralyse the administration was one of the items on the agenda of the Quit India Movement in Rayalaseema. This was well suited to the communist point of view so far as its stand towards working class is concerned. Even though the declared policy of the Communists was against the Quit India Movement, they did not lose an opportunity to induce disgruntled attitude in the workers against the managements of factories. Several instances can be quoted from Rayalaseema on this subject. But suffice would it be to say that in one case the district magistrate of Chittoor pointed out that the workers in some factories at Chittoor and Kalahasti observed strike in early December 1946, in which the Communists had a 'share'. The professed anti-Congress and pro-British stand of the communists during the Quit India Movement in Rayalaseema did not appease the colonial government in India. The Communist cadres could not escape being convicted under different sections of the then Defence of India Rules. They faced arrest and punishment by the government with simple or rigorous imprisonment.

Thus, the different sections of the Indian society worked for the freedom of the country with different ideologies, particularly different type of mixed action went on in Rayalaseema also. Meanwhile, the developments like coming to power by Winston Churchill in place of Clement Attlee in England. The Labour Government under Attlee decided to leave India to her own people's rule. The consequent attainment of independence by India 14-15 August 1947 and the celebration of the occasion in the country are now a part of history, "along with the celebration, the country was to experience the trauma of partition and its consequences as well. Rayalaseema shared the joy of celebration and also the pain of trauma of Free India, the pangs of partition in particular, on that occasion.

---

**REFERENCES:**

1. Y. V. Krishna Rao et.al, *Andhra Pradesh lo Communist Udyama Charitra, 1936-42 (History of Communist Movement in Andhra Pradesh-Telugu)*, Hyderabad, 1988, Pp. 160-177
2. History of Freedom Movement Book (HFMB), n. 3, p. 4336.