



IMPACT OF QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT ON RAYALASEEMA – A REVIEW

C. Baba Fakardhin

M.A., M.Phil.

Lecturer in History, V.R.S. Degree College

V.N. Palli, YSR Dist, A.P. India.



ABSTRACT :

After suppressing the mass upsurge of August-September 1942, the British lapsed into euphoria for some time, assuming that they had effectively removed the Congress from the centre of Indian politics. In a state of disarray and disorganization, the Congress was thought to have been rendered incapable of posing any threat to the Government. As early as 10th September 1942, Prime Minister Churchill declared in the British Parliament that the Congress party does not represent all India. It does not represent the majority of the people of India. It does not even represent the Hindu masses. It is a political organization built around a party machine and sustained by certain manufacturing and financial interests. Ninety million Muslims, fifty million depressed classes or untouchables, and ninety-five million Indians of Princely India, Churchill contended, were fundamentally opposed to the Congress. He included the Christians and the Sikhs, too, in this category of anti-Congress elements. The Congress as such was a non-representative and powerless organization which could do no harm. That the situation in India was normal was proved by the fact that 140,000 new recruits had joined the army during the time of the disturbances.

KEYWORDS : *political organization, economic necessity, situation in India.*

INTRODUCTION

Not many Indians resigned to their jobs. But it does not mean that they gave staunch support to the Government. The economic necessity compelled them to stick to their jobs. Some of these officials gave support by letters their typewriters, official envelopes, service stamps and similar other articles for the purpose of despatching "Quit India" notices to the British officials and minatory letters ("Do or Die") to Indian officials. Some of these originated from New Delhi (Karol Bagh) itself. The Government even suspected that some railway employees were involved in sabotage activities. It had indeed detected in New Delhi two cases of internal sabotage- one in the Record Room of the South Block of the Secretariat, and the other in the Supply Accounts office in the Assembly Chamber.

Village teachers, doctors serving in the rural dispensaries, station masters of the railways, and officials in the postal department did not extend full co-operation to the Government in suppressing the disturbances. Particularly, in Bihar, Midnapore (Bengal), Satara (Bombay) and Eastern U.P., the constabulary, the magistracy and the revenue officials were very much affected. In Bombay, many police Patels resigned.

Although at the national level the ability to galvanize rebellion was limited, the movement is notable for regional success especially at Satara in Maharashtra, Talcher in Orissa, and Midnapore in Bengal. In Tamluk and Contai subdivisions of Midnapore, the local populace was successful in establishing parallel governments, which continued to function, until Gandhi personally requested the leaders to disband them in 1944. A minor uprising took place in Ballia, now the easternmost district of

Uttar Pradesh. People overthrew the district administration, broke open the jail, released the arrested Congress leaders and established their own independent rule. It took weeks before the British could reestablish their authority in the district. Of special importance in Saurashtra (in western Gujarat) was the role of the region's 'baharvatiya' tradition (i.e. going outside the law) which abetted the sabotage activities of the movement there. In rural West Bengal, the Quit India Movement was fuelled by peasants' resentment against the new War taxes and the forced rice exports. There was open resistance to the point of rebellion in 1942 until the great famine of 1943 suspended the movement.

The Bengal famine of 1943 struck the Bengal Province of pre-partition British India during World War II following the Japanese occupation of Burma. Estimates are that between 1.5 and 4 million people died of starvation, malnutrition and disease, out of Bengal's 60.3 million populations, half of them dying from disease by December 1943. As in previous Bengal famines, the highest mortality was not among very poor groups, but among artisans and small traders whose income vanished when people spent all they had on food and did not employ cobblers, carpenters, etc. The famine also caused major economic and social disruption, ruining millions of families.

Lack of statistics was an important cause of the failure to recognize and tackle the famine. It was known by administrators and statisticians well before the famine that India's agricultural production statistics were merely rough estimates. Supplies from other countries any imports would have had to come from Australia, North America or South America. Some supplies from Australia entered the region. The main constraint was shipping. The Battle of the Atlantic was at its peak from mid-1942 to mid-1943, with submarines sinking so many ships that the Allies were on the verge of defeat. So, shipping could not be spared for India.

The Famine Inquiry Commission (1945) document identifies a large number of administrative, civil, policy and military policy failures. Significantly, no other famine-struck country has published such criticisms of its own government's actions. In December 1942 there was a shortage in Calcutta itself. Therefore, the government focused on getting supplies to Calcutta by trying to buy surplus stocks in the region. The quantities that District Officers were able to locate and purchase were considered too small to meet the famine. So, the Government introduced free trade in rice in Eastern India, hoping that traders would sell their stocks to Bengal. This measure also failed to move large stocks of rice to Bengal.

The Indian Army and allied troops acted only after Wavell became Viceroy and got permission from the Bengal Government. They had vehicles, fuel, men and administrators, which the civil authority did not. So, they were much more effective than the civil authority in getting food to the starving from outside Calcutta. The distribution was difficult and continued for five months after the November/December 1943 crop was harvested. However, they did not have much food to distribute. During the course of the famine, 264 thousand tons of rice, 258 thousand tons of wheat and wheat products, and 55 thousand tons of millet were sent to Bengal from the rest of India and overseas in order to relieve the intensity of famine. One ton of rice feeds 5.75 people for a year at normal consumption, perhaps 8.2 at emergency survival rates. Various guesses were that the rice production in Bengal was 1.2 - 2.5 million tons below the ten-year average.

Food prices were high in mid-1942, reflecting the belief that India was in deficit. They rose sharply when the cyclone destroyed a quarter of Bengal's rice crop, and evidence of shortage elsewhere in India and elsewhere in the region emerged, and they continued to rise sharply as the famine bit. Repeated efforts to 'break the Calcutta market' and reduce prices by dumping grain on the market failed, the quantities of grain available for intervention were minuscule in relation to the shortage. There was the normal seasonal speculation which puts up prices, forcing the population to reduce consumption and so spread what is available throughout the year (as economists from Adam Smith have pointed out). The high prices determine who is to die, the poor, rather than increase the number of deaths.

Madras Government Control on Kerosene

As a result of the severity of the Second World War and as a result of the active participation of the masses during the Quit India Movement, the people also faced certain inconvenience due to the

short supply of the essential commodities. For example, the people were double to procure the required Kerosene like the pre-1939 War period. Only fifty per cent of the required Kerosene was available for distribution. The Retail merchants in order to gain more profit began to store the available Kerosene without selling the stock to the needy people. So, even the Kerosene which was supplied by the government was not available to the required people. The British government in order to discourage black marketing of the Kerosene, control was imposed on the Kerosene trader. The Wholesale and Retail dealers have to register with the Collector. Otherwise, they are not permitted to trade in Kerosene business.

The required Kerosene for the distribution Commoner, Public Organisations, Hospitals, Student Hostels etc. will be decided by the Collector. The Raising Prices also will be fixed by the Collector. The Retail Price will be decided by the Taluk Advisor Committees.

Famine in Rayalaseema during the Quit India Movement

Due to the short supply of rice, the ration was cut by one third of the supply. As a substitute to rice, the Director Health Department, Madras Government have advised the people to use Jowar and Ragi. In Rayalaseema famine condition was very severe. In Kurnool common mans Millets are not available. In the middle of the 1942 Millets were sold of Rs.01/- for 15 Kgs. But, by January 1943 for 01 Rupee only 7 ½ Kgs Millets are available only. Even 7 ½ Kgs are not available, Officers raided on shops and handover from the traders and releasing for common people. These officers fix the rationing in sales of the Millets for each Household. Every day ½ Kg Millets need for every person. But Officers release only ¼ Kg only. During the Quit India Movement there were drought conditions in 1943 in Rayalaseema region. The common man's foods i.e., the Millets were in short supply. There was rationing in the supply of millets to the people. In Kurnool Jowar was in short supply. The weaver was reasonable to weave the cloth because of the short supply of the raw material. The people began to suffer because the ruler helped to be fragrances. Had the Government was cautious, the people may not face many problems. In Kurnool, the shops were looted twice. On 31st March 1943, 40 members were arrested because of their involvement in the robbery. Another looting took place at Kodumuru village during the weekly shandy was held. The traders of textiles and Rice, Cloths sellers suffered heavily. The police restored law and order situation after these incidents took place. Those who involved in the looting incident were tried. 28 people were tried and 22 were arrested and three months jail sentence was awarded.

During this period in 1942, the Kurnool district was facing a severe famine. Crops failed in almost all areas. The war situation caused to increase price level and number of agricultural Labourers turned jobless. Apart from this the Government collected war fund and revenue tax from the Ryots. In Adoni division most of weavers and working class could not find work. They were dying due to the provision of one time meal per day. These people submitted a petition to the Collector under the leadership of M. Lakshmana Singh. Famine condition in the district made the working class resort to robbery and plunder. The Kurnool District Ryot Sangh Secretary G. Rami Reddy recommended the Kist remissions in the District and submitted notices to the Government. The District Famine Relief Committee met under the Presidentship of Nayakanti Sankara Reddy on 22nd March, passed resolutions for full remissions according to crop pattern and postponement of the payment of Kist to next year. In response to these pressures from Ryots and Famine Committee, the Government gave remission in 165 villages according to their crop yielding, the deducted remission was Rs.2,16,000/- in the District.

Coins Problem during the Quit India Movement in Rayalaseema

During the Quit India Movement period, the wealthy persons who procures more Coins and exchange the currency for more rate was arrested at Penugonda in Anantapur District. In one shop 685 coins were found. In this period whoever kept the coins without needy, the British government imposed fines and imprisonment.

Methods Adopted By the Government to Suppress the Quit India Movement

The British swiftly responded with mass detentions. Over 100,000 arrests were made, mass fines were levied and demonstrators were subjected to public flogging. Hundreds of civilians were killed in violence many shot by the police army. Many national leaders went underground and continued their struggle by broadcasting messages over clandestine radio stations, distributing pamphlets and establishing parallel governments. The British sense of crisis was strong enough that a battleship was specifically set aside to take Gandhi and the Congress leaders out of India, possibly to South Africa or Yemen but ultimately did not take that step out of fear of intensifying the revolt. The British Government tried to screen off the happenings in India by a wholesale attempt at muzzling the press. Orders against publication of anything but official version of all factual news, prohibition of the adverse comments on the measures adopted by the Government to deal with the movement, censorship at the very source of news etc., were some of the glaring attacks on the liberty of the Press in India. Meanwhile, every day the heavily censored news made the whole Press look exceedingly comical, not to say fraudulent.

The officers appointed to scrutinize news relating to the Congress movement and disorders were provided with guidance notes. The general aim was to allow the presentation of a correct objective account of what had happened omitting anything likely to incite the public to subversive activity or sabotage, to convey suggestions or instructions for act of violence, to excite popular feeling against the Government and the measures taken by them, to arouse apprehensions among the public or Government servants, or in any other way to arrest the restoration of confidence, or to prolong the disorder. Regarding the arrest of persons, it stated that 'name of persons arrested for offences in connection with the disorders or for suspicion of being implicated in them can be passed for publication in the local Press. In the case of obscure individuals and of persons courting arrest en masse discretion should be left with the scrutinizing body but such news should not ordinarily be passed'. However, it admitted no objection to the publication of the numbers arrested or the nature of the offence. With regard to the news connected with the jail condition, the scrutinizing officers were informed that reports purporting to describe conditions under which persons imprisoned or detained, should not be in such a manner as to glorify or make martyrs of them. In connection with the speeches, statements and slogans, the guidance note stated that slogans of a political nature need not be disallowed as such, but should not be passed. Reports of trials of persons arrested in connection with the disorders may be passed for publication but details of the proceedings should be subject to the same restrictions as on other news items. On repressive action, the guidance note stated that 'allegations of undue severity in the methods employed in dealing with disorders are clearly not capable of speedy verification and as such the Press should be informed that alleged incidents of this kind should be brought to the notice of the proper authorities who are as interested as the public in the maintenance of discipline. On programme of unlawful bodies designed to excite the public to subversive activities or sabotage.

Thus, compulsory Press scrutiny gave Government officials power to control at every stage not only the publication but even the character of factual news. The fact that newspapers found it difficult to perform their duties to the public, increased unrest throughout the country. Pre-censorship in Madras Province was brought into force on 26th September 1942 superseding the system of precensorship of provincial telegrams and the registration of correspondents. When compared with other provinces the precensorship had been comparatively rigorous in the Madras Province, because a ban was imposed on news relating to setting fire to post boxes, sabotage directed at railways, cutting of telephone and telegraph wires etc. The Government of Madras called for a special meeting of the Madras Press Advisory Committee (M.P.A.C.) on 14th November 1942 to consider the method of press control and system of pre-scrutiny of news which was then in force in Madras Province. George Boag, Advisor to the Government of Madras, met the members of the M.P.A.C. to consult them on the question of the suitable method of press control which should be devised and substituted for the system of pre-scrutiny of news connected with the mass movement which was then in force in the Madras Province. The Committee desired the Government to accept and to give effect to the resolution passed on 5th October 1942, by the All India Newspaper Editors Conference in Bombay. The Government of Madras

decided to take action as recommended by the resolution. So it stated that 'Newspapers will be free to give publicity to objective reports of incidence in connection with the mass movement or disturbances'. The restrictions in regard to the publication of certain categories of matter which the All India News Paper Editors' Conference had agreed to, have been issued by the Government of Madras as press instructions in order to give them proper sanction. And in exercise of the powers conferred by clause (b) of sub rule (1) of rule 41 of the Defence of India Rule and in supersession of the orders issued on 26th September 1942, the Government of Madras on 16th November 1942 warned the printers, publishers and editors of newspapers against printing or publishing any newspaper or other document, any matter of the nature specified below unless it has been officially announced by the Government of Madras.

1. Reports of interruptions of any kind to road and railway communications.
2. Reports of acts of sabotage or attempted sabotage directed at railways, military or civil aerodromes, power houses, water supply installations, telegraph and telephone lines, or any other public utility service.
3. Reports of strikes or interruption of work in factories engaged in producing material required for military purposes.
4. Anything which is likely to incite the public to subversive activity.
5. Anything which conveys suggestions or instructions for illegal acts.
6. Anything which is an exaggerated report or on unfounded allegation regarding the excessive use or misuse of their powers by the police, troops and other Government servants or the treatment and condition of detenués or prisoners and
7. Anything which retards the restoration of the public sense of security.

The Government of Madras also stated 'deliberate contravention of these press instructions on the part of any newspaper will be dealt with by the government of Madras in consultation with the Madras Press Advisory Committee. In spreading the gospel of the Quit India Movement, *Sri Sadhana Patrika*, played a key role under the Editorship of Pappuri Ramacharyulu. It created a political awakening of the people of Chittoor district. The paper circulation was stopped due to the arrest of P. Ramacharyulu by the government. It helped not only in the growth of the political consciousness but also highlighted the need of social justice had been emphasized. By the propagation of the newspapers the movement spread to rural areas also. As a result the peasants and artisans also actively participated in the movement. They indulged in destruction of the communication system at many places and also advocated the non-cooperation with the British authorities.

Another method adopted by the Government to suppress the underground activities during the Quit India Movement was the enforcement of the Collective Fines Ordinance. The Collective Fines Ordinance XX of 1942 empowered the Provincial Governments to impose a collective fine on the inhabitants of any area who were involved in the commission of offences which prejudicially affected the defence of British India or the efficient prosecution of the War. Interruption of communication was beyond doubt an offence of this nature and the Government called for recommendation of the District Magistrate in all cases where this penalty could be imposed appropriately. The Government also emphasised the need for promptitude as well as sternness in dealing with cases arising out of these disorders. The Government of Madras also made it clear that if the existing number of Magistrate was insufficient to deal with all cases promptly, District Magistrate should at once apply for sanction for additional courts. Noticing the extensive damage done to Government buildings during the Quit India Movement, the Collective Fines Ordinance was amended so as to make it applicable to offences involving the destruction of Government property. Collective fines were imposed on the villagers in Rayalaseema for defying the orders of the government. The government collected fines from KammaKottala (Rs.20,000) and Kottalapalle (Rs.5,000), a total of Rs.25,000/- from the two hamlets of Anantapur District, Agadur, Vemula and Palagiri (Rs.1,600), Animula, Veerappanayunipalle and Thummalapalli (Rs.800), Alamkhanipalle (Rs.500), a total of Rs.2,900/- from seven villages of Kadapa District, Moolasagaram (Rs.500) and Noonepalle (Rs.500), a total of Rs.1,000/- from the two

villages of Kurnool District. Stern measures were taken to suppress the disturbances, by awarding punishment of death or whipping to offenders. Section 5 of the Penalties Enhancement Ordinance, 1942 provided death or whipping for the offence of sabotage under rule 35 of the Defence of India Rules. The District Magistrate and Commissioners of Police were requested to instruct their public prosecutors to press for death sentences against the ring leaders in serious cases of sabotage especially in those involving danger to life. It also stated that since no hard and fast rules could be laid down, District Magistrate and Commissioners of Police were to use their discretion according to the merits of each individual case. The Government also took precautionary measures to prevent the participation of the Government servants in the Quit India Struggle. On 5th September 1942, all Heads of Departments were informed that if they received any letters of resignation from government servants under their administrative control on account of the Civil Disobedience Movement, they should on no account accept the resignation. If the Government servant, after tendering his resignation, absent himself from duty, he should at once be dismissed, with consequential loss of pension and forfeiture of government contribution if any to his Provident Fund.⁴⁴ The government of India proposed to follow this policy in respect of all officers in the central services, and requested the provincial Governments to adopt the same policy in respect of officers under their control.

But, on the other hand, the Government of India on 9th September 1942 stressed the desirability of granting generous compensation to dependents of the police and other officials murdered in the execution of their duties during the disturbances connected with the Quit India Movement and to give wide publicity to such grants. In their letter, they urged, "in all cases of officials killed, their widows should be granted an immediate suitable lumpsum, pending settlement of their pension and a pension with the least possible delay on the highest possible scale". It also decided to give wide publicity to the grant of those lumpsums. Cash awards and medals were also given to police officers and other persons for their meritorious service in connection with the Quit India Movement.

Police atrocities perpetrated against the people were severe. Many people were subjected to physical suffering for their participation in the Quit India Movement. Often false charges were made against innocent men, and many Congressites were pestered by the C.I.D. men. In order to extract information from the suspected people the police authorities often used third degree methods. When prisoners reached the toilet, one among them, had to tell the police man either to remove their chain or to remove their undergarment which irritated the police man. Such was the suffering these people had undergone for attaining independence. Often they had to fight against the jail authorities. The sanitary fittings too were very poor. Rayalaseema region prisoners were also affected by poor medical aid and very poor food, which spoiled their health very much. All these merciless atrocities were done to them for trying to regain independence for India from the British Rulers. The Government also imposed restrictions on the conduct of interviews, correspondence and newspapers given to Congress men detained in connection with the Civil Disobedience Movement were allowed to receive and send the ordinary number of letters permitted by the Security Prisoner's Rules, (S.P.R.) provided they were confined to letters to or from members of their families and were limited to personal and domestic matters. In this way many letters were withheld and several representations were made by detainees. Unnecessary delay too was made in the delivery of letters and many requests were made for the prompt dispatch and delivery of outgoing letters.

Restrictions imposed on the interviews were such that only one interview a month with members of their family i.e. Wife/ husband, father, mother, brother, sister, son or daughter or any 'in-laws' of such relationships was allowed. Applications for interviews other than those mentioned had to be forwarded to Government for orders. Discussion of only personal matters was allowed during the interview. It was also announced that there shall not ordinarily be more than three visitors present (excluding children under 12 years) simultaneously at any interview.⁵¹ Interviews between detainees belonging to one family and confined in jails in different places were not allowed.

REFERENCES:

1. Chakraborty, Bidyut. *Local Politics and Indian Nationalism: Midnapur (1919–1944)*. Manohar. 1997, 33
2. Jaykumar R.Shukla, *The Quit India Movement on Sourashtra*, Quarterly Review of Historical Studies, 1981, Pp. 3-8
3. Sunil Sen, *Popular Participation in the Quit India Movement: Midnapore, 1942-44*, Indian Historical Review, January, 1985, Vol.12, Issue. 1, 2, Pp. 300-316
4. Y.V. Krishna Rao, et al, *Andhra Pradeshlo Communist UdhyaCharitra 1936-1942*, Vol. 2, Hyderabad, 1988,p. 481
5. D. Fisher, Road, A, *The Proudesh Day: India's Long Road to Independence*, WWNorton, 1998.