Copyright-free

Librarian
Uttarpara Jaikrishna Public Library

A HISTORY OF INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Social Scientist Press Trivandrum-695014
A History of Indian Freedom Struggle
Author: E M S Namboodiripad
Edited: K M N Menon
Social Scientist Press, 1986
Printed at
Social Scientist Press, Trivandrum
Jacket : *Godfrey Das*
Rs: 160·00 (U S $ 35·00)

A HISTORY OF INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

E. M. S. NAMBOODIRIPAD

SOCIAL SCIENTIST PRESS
TRIVANDRUM, INDIA.

Author's Preface

Originally written in Malayalam and serialized in the *Deshabhimani* Daily, this book was brought out first in four volumes in 1977. A second edition in single volume appeared subsequently. I am glad that through the efforts of Sarvashri B. B. Nayar, K. T. Zacharias, P. K. Sivadas and C. P. Narayanan who translated it into English, this edition is now coming out. My thanks are due to the four translators as well as to Shri Atmanand Bhat and Dr. K. M. N. Menon who edited and prepared the matter for the press and to Smt. M. S. Aleyamma who prepared the Index. It was good of the Social Scientist Press at Trivandrum who undertook the job of printing and publishing the book.

As the reader will see, the volume ends with 15th August 1947. The last few chapters narrate the story of Indian partition creating the two new states of Indian Union and Pakistan. This in its turn culminated in the most extensive slaughter of human beings and destruction of property. The joyous occasion of the victorious end of freedom struggle in other words ended in the biggest tragedy in human history.

Over two decades before I started the serial articles which were subsequently collected and brought out in book form, I had covered almost the same ground in my review of Tendulkar's eight-volume biography of Mahatma Gandhi. Originally written for and serialized in the *New Age* Monthly, they were brought together in a volume, entitled *The Mahatma and the Ism*. Confining itself to a review of the Mahatma's life, that volume traced the evolution and

final collapse of Gandhism as a philosophy and a programme of political action. That volume ends as the same note as the last few chapters of the present volume. The only difference is that this is not confined, as the Mahatma was, to the evolution of Gandhism. This deals with bourgeois nationalism as a whole and, of course, includes the philosophy and political programme of Gandhism. The two volumes may therefore be considered companion volumes, though this is written with a much broader canvas.

In between the publication of *The Mahatma and the Ism* and the first edition of this volume in Malayalam, a furious debate raged in the undivided Communist Party of India in which I was naturally an active participant. Among the various notes and articles produced for nearly a decade for purposes of inner-party discussion, I also wrote a fairly large volume under the title *Economics and Politics of India's Socialist Pattern*. This was a major attempt for my own self-education and for discussions among the members and friends of the Party on various problems connected with the class character and policies of the Congress Government which took over the reins of administration from the British in 1947.

Thus being the basic character of that volume, it naturally contained many things which, after clarification of ideas which led to the formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), I found no more valid. I therefore rejected the suggestions made by friends that a second edition of that volume be brought out. The material contained in the book, however, was used in writing two smaller volumes brought out in the 1970s. *Indian Planning in Crisis* was the title of one and *Conflicts and Crisis* was of the second. The former dealt with the development of the economic crisis of the post-Independence years and the latter bringing up-to-date the political crisis which, in fact, had first made its appearance in 1947. The two smaller volumes thus constituted a new edition of the bigger *Economic and Political Crisis of Socialist Pattern*. They contained as sharp a critique of the economic and political policies of the Indian bourgeoise after it became the

ruling party as the earlier published volume on the *Mahatma* and the present volume on the *Freedom Struggle* are of the bourgeoisie's role before 1947.

The critique of the philosophy and plan of political action of the Indian bourgeoisie which, under the charismatic personality of Mahatma Gandhi, stood at the head of the freedom movement, contained in the four volumes referred to above is of topical importance today. The leadership of the ruling Congress Party organized last year on a mass scale the celebration of the Centenary of that organization. The pronouncement made on that occasion in December 1985 by the Prime Minister who is also the President of the Congress (I) indicates the deep crisis which has engulfed that party today. While taking pride in the centenary of Congress development, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi played another role—a severe critique of the doings of the party, its prominent leaders and governments headed by them. Did he himself or any other top-ranking leader of that party care to consider why the Congress which stood at the head of freedom struggle for 62 years since its formation came to such a pass during the next 38 years that the President himself has to take up the job of openly criticizing it?

The answer will be found in the three sections in the last chapter, titled 'The Scheme of Partition, 'The Surgical Operation, and 'Leaders of Freedom Struggle in Power'. The Mountbatten plan which was the culmination of the prolonged negotiations undertaken by Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders contained within itself the seeds of all that was painful and humiliating for many Congress leaders including Mahatma Gandhi. That was the bitter fruit of the astute strategy and tactics elaborated by the bourgeois leadership under Mahatma Gandhi—the strategy and tactics of *mass action for negotiations with the British.* It was this that enabled the British rulers to quit India as demanded by the Congress but after performing a cruel surgical operation which brought into being two hostile States.

One argument likely to be advanced in this context is that there is no use of crying over the split milk; the point is, it may be urged, to deal with the present and the future. But are the two things—review of the past, deciding the present and planning the future—so opposed to each other? I would, in fact, humbly plead that the econmic and political crisis through which the country has been passing for nearly 39 years and is passing today should be traced to the past—the class character of the bourgeios leadership which stood at the head of the freedom movement. As a matter of fact, the Communist movement in the country,which, of course,was too weak taking the country as a whole,had pointed out as early as in the years of the *Quit India* struggle that the freedom won on the basis of bargaining with the rulers would not take the country anywhere. After the country attained Independence, the undivided Communist Party to begin with, and the CPI (M) subsequently, persisted in projecting such general policies as alternatives to the policies of the bourgeoisie (ruling as well as Opposition bourgeois parties).

The line of criticism made by the undivided Party to begin with, and by the CPI (M) later, has been explained in the two volumes which I wrote in the 1970s — *Indian Planning in Crisis* and *Conflicts and Crisis*. I hope that the story narrated in this volume will give the readers a better idea of the content of the criticism made in the two volumes.

CONTENTS

Author's Preface v

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	11
3	THE EARLY STRUGGLES AND DEFEATS	39
4	SHOOTS OF BOURGEOIS NATIONALISM	79
5	INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS: THE EARLY YEARS	131
6	THE TILAK ERA	158
7	WAR-TIME NATIONAL UPSURGE	215
8	GANDHIAN ERA: SURGE AND SETBACK	248
9	WHITHER THE MOVEMENT ?	284
10	RIVALRIES AND NEGOTIATIONS	325
11	THE NEW UPSURGE	350
12	TOWARDS FULL INDEPENDENCE	377
13	THE SALT SATYAGRAHA	404
14	AFTER THE PACT	439
15	SECOND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE	470
16	AFTER THE WITHDRAWAL	506
17	TOWARDS THE LEFT AGAIN	551
18	FOR A MARXIST PERSPECTIVE	576
19	TACTICS OF BOURGEOIS LEADERSHIP	603
20	AFTER OFFICE ACCEPTANCE	634
21	CRISIS IN THE CONGRESS	670
22	THE WAR AND NATIONAL STRUGGLE	690
23	TENSIONS DURING THE WAR	714
24	THE 1942 STRUGGLE	735
25	THE CONGRESS AND ITS OPPONENTS	763

26 THE CONGRESS-LEAGUE RELATION 791
27 THE WAVELL PLAN 813
28 THE REVOLUTIONARY MASS UPSURGE 829
29 NEGOTIATIONS AND COMMUNAL RIOTS 847
30 LAST DAYS OF THE WAVELL REGIME 875
31 INDEPENDENCE: VICTORY OR DEFEAT ? 895

Index 913

England has to fulfil a double mission in India: One destructive, the other regenerating—the annihilation of old Asiatic Society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia.... All the English bourgeosie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people, depending not only on the development of the productive powers, but of their appropriation by the people. But what they will not fail is to lay down the material premises for both. Has the bourgeoisie ever done more?

KARL MARX, *New-York Daily Tribune*,
August 8, 1853

1

INTRODUCTION

Our historians once held the view that the Indian history began with the advent of the Aryans. However, historians from southern India argue that the Dravidian people have had a more ancient and developed civilization than the Aryans. Thus emerged the two streams of Indian history—one biased towards the Aryans and the other towards the Dravidians. Both the streams are largely based on mythologies. Instead of writing history based on myths, the present author attempted some time back to examine what instruments of production were existing at each historical epoch, what were the social relationships that governed production with such instruments, and how the changes in social relations led to political clashes, wars and revolutions.[1]

Many scholars and historians have emerged now, who have examined history connecting it with the development of instruments of production, although all of them cannot be

1. E M S Namboodiripad, *Indyacharitrathilekku Oru Ethinottam* (in Malayalam), Chintha Publishers, Trivandrum, 1975.

said to have fully assimilated the method of Historical Materialism. These scholars have none-the-less subjected the views and ideas of early historians to strong and effective criticism. For example, the very title of the Sardar Patel Memorial Lectures delivered by Professor Romila Thapar in 1972 was "Past and Prejudice". There she has pointed out that there were two sections amongst the historians, one that tried to justify and uphold imperialist domination of India, and another sympathetic to anti-imperialist struggles. Historians of both these persuasions tried to examine history with a prejudice and to formulate "historical theories" that went well with their respective political biases.

This holds good for the writing of modern Indian history as well. For example, the pro-imperialist historians described the situation prevailing in India during the centuries immediately preceding the advent of foreigners in such a way as to strengthen the claim of the imperialists that the traders from Portugal, Holland, France and England made 'uncivilized' India 'civilized'. Nationalist historians, on the other hand, selected and interpreted historical facts in such a way as to establish that it was the foreign domination alone which stood in the way of India's modernization and progress and but for it, India would have achieved progress comparable to any civilized country in the world.

I have tried to show elsewhere that any one who examines Indian history objectively would reject both these views which are subjective and suited to serve the narrow interests of the classes which their protagonists represent.[2] In particular, I have attempted to show that it was the weaknesses inherent in the Indian social system evolved through centuries which prepared the ground for foreign domination to take deep roots in the country. Although it destroyed the foundation of Indian society in its ancient and medieval forms, it failed to modernize it on a new basis. It was the process of modernization that began with the freedom struggle.

2 *Ibid.*

This is an approach which is different from that of most other authors on Indian freedom struggle. For example, the pro-imperialist historians treated with contempt the anti-British uprisings that took place earlier in the South in different forms. The nationalist historians, on the other hand, considered them as the beginning of and models for the struggle for national independence. I evaluate these events yet differently. In fact, people's resistance to the British rule is as old as the British rule itself. Like the anti-British revolts under the leadership of Velu Thampi Dalava and Pazhassi Raja in Kerala, the people in different parts of India had revolted even before the British rule had got established in the country. The 1857 uprisings were the most widespread and the highest form of such local revolts. That widespread anti-British revolt which the British historians designated as "Sepoy Mutiny" marked the end of a stage in the history of the national movement. It was a higher form of revolts jointly conducted by the peasant masses and the feudal gentry who exploited them, in order to preserve the *varna-jati* relations and the village system based on these relations which prevailed in the country before the establishment of the British rule. At the same time, it was the final stage of a national struggle of a particular type. Finally, the events that followed the 1857 struggle showed that such struggles would never be successful.

Twenty-six years after the suppression of the 1857 revolt, another organized movement emerged against the foreign domination. This was the Indian National Congress. As distinct from the people who participated in the 1857 and earlier anti-British revolts, the people who formed the new organization were those who perceived the 'progressive' character of the British rule and foreign culture and wanted to copy it in India. They were, however, distressed to notice that the British rulers who introduced progressive changes in their own country were standing against those changes being introduced in India. This grievance became more wide-spread and grew in intensity and finally turned into an anti-British

mass struggle. August 15, 1947 was the successful culmination of this struggle. Therefore, pro-Congress historians claim that the growth and final victory of the Indian National Congress represented the continuation and successful culmination of the mass revolts that took place in different parts of India in 1857 and earlier.

Several books, monograph and research articles were brought out in the early 1970's marking the Silver Jubilee of Independence, in which studies on anti-British revolts found a prominent place. These researches have surely enriched our historiography. Most scholars, however, failed to provide logical answers to a number of important questions such as:

(1) Why were the revolts that took place in 1857 and earlier not successful? Why did they get suppressed?

(2) Why did the national independence movement that emerged after the suppression of the 1857 revolt keep itself away from armed struggle of the masses? Why was it that the central slogan of that movement came to be 'non-violent struggle' even when it had reached the common masses? Why did leaders of that movement avoid the 'danger' of an armed mass struggle by coming to terms with the foreign rulers?

(3) How was it that sectarian politics based on religious and caste ideologies put obstacles before the nationalists from the very inception of the freedom movement and that the foreign rulers, taking advantage of this kind of politics, were able to foster disruption within the movement? How did India, a single political entity throughout the freedom struggle, come to be divided into two (Indian Union and Pakistan) which came into clash with each other continually after independence?

(4) Why was it that August 15, 1947 which the entire people of the country rejoiced at as the birth of a new era, failed to enthuse Mahatma Gandhi who had stood at the head of the freedom struggle for a generation? Why was it that when a section of his followers turned themselves into new rulers, another section got disappointed

by the contradiction between their words and deeds?Why was it that a large section among the Gandhians began to organize the people one way or another against the new rulers in the subsequent years?

In brief, the early national movement which culminated in the 1857 revolt was violently suppressed by the foreign rulers. The new national independence movement which emerged around 1885, although it ended apparently victorious, raised several new problems instead of fulfilling the aims and objectives it had placed before the people. The reason is not far to seek.

It was in the second half of the 18th century that the British became rulers in some parts of India. It took nearly a century for them to bring the whole of India under their rule. And whithin another century, on August 15, 1947, they had to wind up their regime and leave the country.

The Indian people fought bitter battles against the foreign domination throughout this period. Thousands laid down their lives in order to make these battles, in which millions participated, victorious. Numerous families became destitute and people faced brutal repressions. It was, in fact, the determination, courage and the organizational skill demonstrated by the people in these battles that forced the British to leave the country.

But independence came not in the manner in which the courageous patriots who participated in this long-drawn-out struggle wanted it. The content of the pledge which the people in thousands of villages and towns were taking on 26th January every year since 1930 did not materialize. Foreign domination over the social, political and cultural fronts was not overthrown; change took place only in the political administration of the country; White masters were replaced by Brown masters.

In the first stage of the fight for national independence feudal princes headed the struggle, while in the second stage, the bourgeoisie was in the leadership. Further, this bourgeoisie did not eliminate the pre-capitalist social system; instead, it came to a compromise with it. Therefore, it is necessary to

reconsider both stages of the struggle for independence—one that ended with 1857 and the other that ended in 1947. The weaknesses inherent in both the stages must be examined objectively and evaluated. Being a modest attempt in this direction, in the present work, my perspective is one of Historical Materialism. Consequently one may find in it an approach quite different from that of the ordinary nationalist historian.

This may naturally raise some doubts in the minds of non-Marxist historians. First, it may be asked: Does not a commitment to Historical Materialism amount to putting a fetter on independent historical investigation? Second, whatever be the situation with regard to other countries, is Historical Materialism relevant to India? In order to answer these questions it is necessary to examine the essence of Historical Materialism and its methods of investigation.

We may begin with the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (*Communist Manifesto* for brief), the most concise and comprehensive of all the works written from the perspective of Historical Materialism. Engels summarizes the content of this work as follows.

...economic production and the structure of society of every historical epoch necessarily arising therefrom constitute the foundation for the political and intellectual history of that epoch;...consequently (ever since the dissolution of the primeval communal ownership of land) all history has been a history of class struggles, of struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social development;...this struggle, however, has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself from the class which exploits and oppresses it (the bourgeoisie), without at the same time for ever freeing the whole of society from exploitation, oppression and class struggles...(Preface:1883).

Later there arose some misconceptions among Marxists on certain points relating to the essence of Historical

Materialism as summarized above. In a correspondence, Engels himself clarified the position on one of these points. He stated:

> Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. *We had to emphasise the main principle, vis-a-vis our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time,the place or the opportunity to give their due to other factors involved in the interaction.*[3]

In this same self-critical letter Engels clearly brings out the interaction between the economic and non-economic factors.

> ...The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure—political forms of the class struggle and its results, such as constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms,and especially the reflections of all these real struggles in the brains of the participants, political,legal, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas—also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases determine their *from* in particular. *There is an interaction of all these elements in which,amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent and neglect it), the economic movement is finally bound to assert itself.* Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.[4]

This conception can be found in all the comprehensive works of Marx and Engels and even in their brief correspondences. Marx and Engles did not, nor did the Marxists, ever consider Marxism to contain the ultimate and permanent truth, unlike the faith of the believers in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. The Marxists, who strive not only to "interpret

3. Engels to Joseph Bloch. September 21 (22), 1890. Emphasis added.
4. *Ibid.*

the world in various ways" but also to "change it", examine objectively the changes that are continuously taking place around them, with the aid of the view briefly stated above. This is the method of Marxism (Historical Materialism) for historical investigations.

When the *Communist Manifesto* was being written, Europe was witnessing a violent revolutionary upsurge. Marx and Engles who actively participated in this upsurge, analyzed the various theoretical aspects of this revolution. The Introduction written by Engels to the re-publication of Marx's *The Class Struggle in France, 1848 to 1850*, analyzing the revolution of 1848-49 and its lessons, throws light on certain questions relating to the application of Historical Materialism:

> The work here re-published was Marx's first attempt to explain a section of contemporary history by means of his materialist conception, as the basis of the given economic situation...If events and series of events are judged by current history, it will never be possible to go back to the *ultimate* economic causes. Even today...it still remains impossible...to follow day by day the movement of industry and trade in the world market and the changes which take place in the methods of production in such way as to be able to draw a general conclusion, for any point of time, from these manifold, complicated and ever changing factors, the most important of which...generally operate a long time in secret before they...(are) violently felt on the surface.

In the Introduction, Engels also points to certain errors made by Marx while undertaking to evaluate the class struggles in France between 1848-50:

> When Marx undertook his work, the source of error mentioned was even more unavoidable. It was simply impossible during the period of the Revolution of 1848-49 to follow up the economic transformation taking place at the same time or even to keep them in view. It was the same during the first months of exile in London, in the autumn and winter of 1848-50. But that was just the time when Marx

began this work. And in spite of these unfavourable circumtances, his exact knowledge both of the economic situation in France before, and of the political history of that country after the February Revolution made it possible for him to give a picture of events which laid bare their inner connections in a way never attained ever since, and which later brilliantly stood the double test applied by Marx himself.

Stating that Marx wrote these in the midst of the revolutionary upsurge in 1848-50 and that some changes were introduced in the formulation as a result of the studies conducted later by Marx himself, Engels continues:

> ...we declared as early as autumn 1850 that atleast the *first* chapter of the revolutionary period was closed and that nothing was to be expected until the outbreak of a new world economic crisis. For which reason we were excommunicated, as traitors to the revolution, by the very people who later, almost without exception, made their peace with Bismark—as far as Bismark found their worth the trouble. But history has shown us too to have been wrong, has revealed our point of view of that time to have been an illusion. It has done even more: it has not merely dispelled the erroneous notions we then held; it has also completely transformed the conditions under which the proletariat has to fight. The mode of struggle of 1848 is today obsolete in every respect....

Marx and Engels, however, did not confine themselves to this self-criticism, with respect to the experience of revolutionary struggles. They also reviewed carefully the contents of each of their works written before, during and after writing the *Communist Manifesto*. In this process they did not hesitate to draw new conclusions whenever they found new facts which convinced them of the need to revise the conclusions they had earlier arrived at. They took particular care to gather all the historical facts and statistics in respect of all countries, including Russia, China and India. They began to learn many languages for this purpose.

It is clear that Marx and Engels never regarded

themselves as sages who had realized the ultimate truth, but as scientific investigators devoted to finding truth. It is in this sense that Marxist students of history, including the present author, accept the approach of Historical Materialism.

Anyone who is engaged in the study of and research in history with the perspective of Historical Materialism should not neglect the historical facts brought out by other investigators who do not adopt this perspective. Rather, each such historical fact should be carefully examined. Similary, the conclusions they reach on the basis of these facts should be critically examined. For example, several studies have come out in the recent times in Indian history in general and in the history of freedom struggle in particular. Each of these studies contains a good deal of valuable facts.

However, many of these studies are made with the perspective of bourgeois nationalism. Some others are, on the other hand, written from the point of view of a religion or from the narrow outlook of the people of a region or the speakers of a language. Such biases can be discerned not only in arriving at conclusions but also in selecting the materials for study. They should not be blindly accepted. At the same time, as scholarly investigators, they have brought out historical facts. These facts must be used to enrich the method of Historical Materialism.

The questions raised earlier make obvious the need to enrich the method of Historical Materialism by subjecting the studies and investigations of non-Marxist historians to critical examination. These questions are such that none of the histories of freedom struggle is capable of providing logical answers to them. On the other hand, if one utilizes Historical Materialism to examine the entire freedom struggle based on the study of the development of India's past, the nature of social system prevalent in India immediately before the establishment of foreign rule in the country and the changes introduced by the foreign rulers in this system, one can provide answers which the nationalist historians are unable to provide. This is what is being attemped in the present work.

2

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

I. INDIA BEFORE FOREIGN DOMINATION

It has often been argued that those who formulated the theory of Historical Materialism were ignorant about India and other countries of Asia, and therefore, Historical Materialism is not relevant to India or to its contemporary problems. This is false. For, Marx and Engels were scholar-revolutionaries who viewed the entire world with the fundamental perspective of the bourgeois democratic revolution that was sweeping Europe and of the working class movement that was part of it, and strove to help social transformations everywhere. In the midst of their revolutionary activities, they also attempted to evaluate the developments in India in the background of the development of world capitalism, basing themselves on the materials accessible to scholars in Europe at that time. However, no Marxist would claim that the opinions they expressed resulting from these studies were

complete or faultless. Yet anyone who reads through their works would admit that they were able to go deep into the social transformation that was taking place in India and perceive its essence in a manner in which other historical investigators of their time were unable to do.

Marx and Engels wrote a number of articles in the *Daily Tribune* of Now York in the 1950s which were of critical importance in the history of British rule in India. Not long after they wrote these articles, the struggle for independence, which the British called the "Sepoy Mutiny", started. They also wrote several articles when the struggle was going on, observing the day-to-day development of events.

Though most of these articles were written by Marx himself, Marx and Engels were constantly exchanging ideas on the Indian developments, as they did on other issues. Therefore, it can be rightly stated that these articles were the result of the joint thinking of the two individuals who formulated the concepts of Historical Materialism. These articles have been collected and published in the from of a book entitled, *On the First Indian War of Independence, 1857-1859*, by the Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow. No one who takes even a cursory glance at these articles can dismiss the relevance to India of the theory of Historical Materialism under the pretext that those who formulated it were ignorant about India.

The materials on which Marx based himself for comprehending the nature and development of world capitalism and for determining its future development were the facts relating to the development of capitalism in England, which was the most advanced capitalist country in the world at that time. In particular, the statistics the rulers of England collected, the reports they prepared, and the debates in British Parliament and the press based on these materials, helped Marx to reveal the real character of capitalism through his works, including *Capital*. Similarly, the facts gathered by the British authorities on India and the opinions formed on the basis of these facts helped Marx to form his own opinion. Nevertheless,

just as in the case of world capitalism, Marx was able to take an approach with regard to India, which was diamatrically opposed to the views of the ruling circles.

However, Marx's evaluation of India was neither complete nor faultless in its details. This becomes obvious if one considers the volume of knowledge gained through studies made by Indian as well as foreign scholars during the past several decades since Marx wrote his articles on India. But he was able to evaluate India's past and the changes being introduced by the British rulers as well as the future results of these changes. All this he did in such an amazingly accurate fashion that it far outweighs the inadequacies in the details of his analysis. In particular, this evaluation was done from the viewpoint of a future Indian working class which had not emerged on the Indian scene then.

As in all countries witnessing the advance of capitalism, a conflict was taking place in India also between the old pre-capitalist forces and the new capitalist forces. Marx's approach was one that helped the rising working class to organize itself against the new dominating class of the bourgeoisie. That was why the *Communist Manifesto*, which declares that "the bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part", states: "The other classes decay and finally disappear in the face of modern industry; the proletariat is its special and essential product."

There are two elements that distinguish the situation in India from that in the European countries where Marx and Engels conducted their practical political activities. The first concerns the conflict between the old and the new, which in India assumed the form of a conflict between the natives and foreign rulers. This is because in India, the old was represented by the native feudal lords and other representatives of the old social system and the forces that overthrew them were the foreigners. In Europe, on the other hand, the representatives of both the old and the new were the natives themselves.

Marx is sympathetic to the foreign rulers to the extent

that they tried to destroy the old social system in India. But since the old is replaced by suppression and exploitation under the foreign domination, Marx expresses the anguish and indignation of a revolutionary against foreign domination.

The second factor that distinguishes India of those days was the fact that a working class had not yet emerged here, whereas in all the European countries, that class, however small it might have been, had already started emerging. There the working class was becoming an organized force by standing by the side of the bourgeoisie in the fight against feudalism and for the establishment of democracy. Therefore, right in the struggle between the old and the new, a new (working) class, a class which is destined to "dig the grave" of the dominant class within the new, had started emerging. This was not the case with India. Here the conflict was between the foreign rulers trying to subjugate India by destroying feudalism and establishing capitalist relations, and the reactionary feudal social forces fighting to preserve the decadent social system. Marx undertook the task of revealing both the forces. In an article dated June 10, 1853, Marx stated: "I share not the opinion of those who believe in a golden age of Hindustan.... There cannot, however, remain any doubt but that the misery inflicted by the British on Hindustan is of an essentially different and infinitely more intensive kind than all Hindustan had to suffer before."[1]

Comparing India with Italy, Marx wrote in the same article, "just as Italy has, form time to time, been compressed by the conqueror's sword into different national masses, so do we find Hindustan, when not under the pressure of the Mohammedan, or the Mogul, or the Briton, dissolved into as many independent and conflicting states as it numbered towns, or even villages."[2]

Marx has no regard at all for the Indian social life which the ordinary nationalist proudly claims as "centuries

1. "The British Rule in India", in *The First Indian War of Independence, 1857-59*, p 15.
2. *Ibid* p 14.

old". He even hates it. He is prepared to shed not a drop of tear at its destruction. He remarks:

> ...We must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath the traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. We must not forget that the barbarian egotism which, concentrating on some miserable patch of land, had quietly witnessed the ruin of empires, the perpetration of unspeakable cruelties, the massacre of the population of large towns, with no other consideration bestowed upon them than on natural events, itself the helpless prey of any aggressor who deigned to notice it at all. We must not forget that this undignified, stagnatory, and vegetative life, that this passive sort of existence evoked on the other part, in contradistinction, wild, aimless, unbounded forces of destruction and rendered murder itself a religious rite in Hindustan. We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances, instead of elevating man to be the soverign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into never changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalizing worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey, and Sabala, the cow.[3]

Marx's opinion about the British who destroyed such a decadent, degenerate and old Indian society is this: "England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing. This loss of his old world, with no gain of a new one, imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the

3. *Ibid* pp 20-21.

Hindu, and separates Hindustan ruled by Britain from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history."[4] On the question of the future of India, Marx wrote:

> All the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people.... The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the British yoke altogether.[5]

In brief, Marx recognized the historical truth that the British functioned in India as the "instrument of history" to cut at the roots of Indian social system which stood against social progress for centuries. But he was not prepared to compromise in any way with the inhuman aggression and robbery committed by them on that pretext. Marx wrote:

> The profound hypocracy and inherent barbarism of bourgeois civilization lies unveiled before our eyes, turning from its home, where it assumes respectable forms, to the colonies, where it goes naked. They are the defenders of property. But did any revolutionary party ever originate agrarian revolutions like those in Bengal, in Madras, and in Bombay? Did they not, in India, to borrow an expression of that great robber, Lord Clive himself, resort to atrocious extortion, when simple corruption could not keep pace with their rapacity? While they prated in Europe about the inviolable sanctity of national debt, did they not confiscate in India the dividends of the rajas, who had invested their private savings in the company's own funds? While they combated the French revolution under the pretext of defending "our holy religion", did they not forbid, at the same time, Christianity to be propagated in India, and did they not in order to make money out of the pilgrims streaming to the temples of

4. *Ibid*, p 16.
5. "The Future Results of the British Rule in India", *Ibid*, p 38

Orissa and Bengal, take up the trade in the murder and prostitution perpetrated in the temple of Juggernaut? [6]

It is clear that Marx and Engels gave India a new revolutionary perspective that would prepare the ground for the growth of democratic forces in the country by exposing the nature of both the British domination and the feudal forces that fought each other.

We rightly used to feel proud that India possessed a far more ancient civilization as compared to the Europeans who gradually established their domination over the country from the sixteenth century. But the fact is that Indian civilization, however ancient it might be, and its social life and economic basis got completely destroyed with the arrival of theEuropean traders. Ordinary nationalists attribute this exclusively to the use of force first by the foreign traders and then by the foreign rulers in order to protect the interests of the former. To say this would mean that a great and ancient civilization was completely destroyed by the representatives of a relatively inferior civilization.

This is contrary to the experience of history. There are, of course, instances of people of inferior civilization conquering countries of superior civilization in many parts of the world. But in such instance, the victors were compelled to adopt the civilization of the vanquished. The same thing happened in the case of India also. Marx says: "Arabs, Turks, Tartars, Moguls, who had successively overrum India, soon became Hinduized, the barbarian conquerors being, by an eternal law of history, conquered themselves by the superior civilization of their subjects."[7]

This was altered only by the arrival of the foreign traders who, unlike earlier conquerors, tried to destroy Indian civilization. The process of this destruction reached its zenith with the arrival of the most powerful among the European capitalist countries, the British. Why? Because, as Marx states: "The British were the first conquerors superior, and,

6. *Ibid*, pp 38-39
7. *Ibid*, p 34

therefore, inaccessible to Hindu civilization. They destroyed it by breaking up the native communities, by uprooting the native industry, and by levelling all that was great and elevated in the native society."[8]

This does not, however, mean that the use of force had no place in destroying Indian civilization. We come across instances of large-scale use of brutal force by the British. But what is more important than the use of force is the fact that the Europeans represented a relatively more progressive mode of production and production relations.

For several centuries, European countries were far behind the Oriental countries like China, India, Iran and Egypt in civilization. But by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there began to develop in Europe a new mode of production and a corresponding production relation and also a new civilization based on the new production relations leaving the Oriental countries behind them. As illustrated in the *Communist Manifesto:*

> The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonisation of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development.

And the results? The *Communist Manifesto* continues:

> The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment". It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into

8. *Ibid*

exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible charted freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom—Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.

The rise and development of capitalist society is the sum total of these transformations, which affected all aspects of human life. It was with the new life and inspiration that resulted from these transformations that the European traders, whom our ancesters ridiculed as "uncivilized", came to India. As it happens so often in running races, the Europeans who were trailing behind the hitherto advanced countries like India, China, Iran and Egypt began to overtake them in the race of progress of human society. The process that helped the Europeans to achieve this progress was the rise and development of capitalism which is so masterly illustrated in the *Communist Manifesto*.

Why was India, which had remained in the forefront for several centuries, pushed back at the stage of capitalist development? Why were the Europeans, who hitherto were trailing behind in the race of progress of human society, able to overtake India and reach the forefront? Marx did not have the relevant materials to find a clear answer to these questions. So, he made no attempt to answer them.

Thanks to the efforts made by some investigators after the life-time of Marx, some materials are now available enabling us to answer these questions. Based on such materials, the present author arrived at certain tentative conclusions:

1. The new mode of (agricultural) production developed by the invading Aryans broke up one by one the non-Aryan tribes. New societies emerged by the merging of different non-Aryan societies, on the one hand, and the non-Aryan and Aryan societies, on the other.
2. The productive capacity of the society as a whole increased as a result of the break-up of the tribal social

system, as well as the progress in the mode of production. Conseqently, the production activity became multifaceted, giving rise to a division of labour in the sense that a specific group of people became engaged in a specific type of occupation. As the productive capacity increased, all these factors together gave rise to a new production relation (*Chaturvarnya*) based on primitive form of exploitation. This turned into the caste system with greater complexity with the corresponding development of the mode of production and increased productive capacity.

3) There is no fundamental difference between the slave system that rose in ancient Greece, Rome and some West Asian countries and the *varna*-caste system that developed in India. The essential feature of both the system is the contradiction between the exploiters and the exploited. But there is one difference: in one system a large majority of the people were subjected to exploitation by openly declaring them slaves, whereas, in the other, the same thing was done in the guise of caste.

4) When the *varna*-caste system came into being, a special religious and ideological-philosophical framework was built up around the system of exploitation in order to maintain and justify the system. Thus, there formed in India a framework which was different from the religious and philosophical frame-work specific to exploitation in the form of the slave system. This is what appeared in the form of Hindu religion, Hindu philosophy and Hindu culture, which the Hindu communalists call the "Holy Indian Culture".

5) Although two different exploitative systems were prevalent in the West Asian countries and in India, there was one characteristic common to production in these regions in the ancient historical epoch. Generally speaking, the production process was for self-consumption. Only a small portion of the wealth produced was sold to others. Similarly, a small portion of the articles

required for consumption was bought from others. In other words, the mode of production called "commodity production" was weak under both the systems.

6) The *varna*–caste system made the progress of commodity production slower than in the slave system. In India, the system give rise to the characteristic self-sufficient village system and the caste system as an integrel part of it, under which the production of articles for local consumption was carried out by the local people themselves who were traditionally assigned specific occupations. Hence, the need for an exchange of articles across villages was reduced to the minimum.

7) Uuder slavery, on the other hand, the exploiting class had the motivation to sell the surplus appropriated from the slaves and lead a luxurious life with the money thus obtained. So, in the West Asian countries where the slave system existed, there was a more extensive exchange of commodities than in India with its self-sufficient village and caste systems. Therefore, it was necessary for the exploiting classes in those countries to plunder wealth which could be transformed into commodities. For this purpose they made large-scale incursions into India. The exploiting classes in India with self-sufficient villages could not resist these incursions and defeat the invaders.

8) None of these invaders could, however, destroy the foundation of the social system based on caste and self-sufficient villages. Even those who, taking inspiration from the new Islamic religion, were out to conduct *jihad* against non-Muslim religious believers could not destroy either the caste system or the self-sufficient villages. The result, however, was the formation of a 'Muslim caste' side by side with the numerous castes among the Hindus.

9) In the area of production, however, the invasions helped to increase commodity production. But it did not spread to the whole of the society, for the articles

that were bougth and sold were luxury items in demand to satisfy the needs of the exploiting classes only. Similarly, as the exploiting classes began to appropriate more wealth corresponding to the increase in production the volume of goods sold in the market also increased. This increase in the exchange of commodities in the market, however, remained confined to the upper layer of society. At the lower level, commodity production and purchase of articles for consumption from the market remained extremely limited.

10) Excepting for a minority of the exploiting classes, the Indian social system continued to be one of self-sufficient villages which could not be destroyed by the invaders from West Asia. Nor could these invaders, emperors, and other military adventurers change the production relations in the rural areas and the social system based on them.

11) Here we see clearly the difference between this and the events after the arrival of the European merchants and the establishment of British power in the country. Unlike the foreign invaders from the Vedic Aryans to the Mughals, the European traders came here with the seed of a social system which was foreign to India. They came here as the agents of the system of commodity production which cut at the very roots of 'Indian civilization'—the systems of village self-sufficiency and castes.

They were not just the customary merchants who bought here articles needed for maintaining the luxurious life of the exploiting clasess in their own countries, and sold here a portion of the articles produced there. Rather, they were the representatives of a new socio-economic system, capitalism, reaching every nook and corner of the world and transforming the people everywhere into producers and consumers for the world market. Having brought about an all-pervading revolution in their own country, they came to India, as they went elsewhere in the world, to fulfil the

mission of transforming everything into a commodity for exchange. Neither the Hindu nor the Islamic form of Indian civilization could survive it.

Thus, all the hitherto invaders who became the rulers of India and who in the process became Indians themselves, surrendered to the new (foreign) capitalism. The last of the 'Indian' empires, the Mughal Empire, collapsed and a new (British) empire, entirely foreign, began to emerge.

In sum, the "great ancientness" which helped India to reach the forefront in the race of social progress upto a stage, pushed the country to the background in the modern era of the history of human society, in the era of capitalism. The "great ancientness" which once proudly produced wealth became later a liability.

II. THE CHANGES INTRODUCED BY THE BRITISH RULE: ITS DUAL CHARACTER

On the eve of the sixteenth century—in 1498—Vasco De Gama landed at Calicut. It was from then on that the domination of foreign capitalism, which culminated in the domination by the British, began to take roots in India.

It was the Catholic monarchy of portugal that Vasco De Gama represented. Before long, a group of traders from Holland, a country of non-Catholics, came to India. Later on, traders came from France and England. Keen competition prevailed for nearly two centuries amongst the traders from these four countries.

During this period the foreign traders had not turned their attention to the sphere of internal trade (i. e, exchange of commodities within the country). They confined themselves to the purchase and exports of commodities that were marketable in their own countries and to the import of commodities for which there was a market in India. As such the places of operation of the East India Company were

coastal areas. They had their headquaters in the port towns.

In the context of the political situation following the decline of the Mughal Empire, the company needed a small unit of military force for the maintenance and protection of the trading centres; and they, therefore, organized such security forces. But these forces did not move into the rural areas in the interior for a period of over two centuries. For the limited purpose of protecting their trading interests they adopted the tactics of co-operating with one or the other of feudal chieftaints. They had no intention, at that time, of establishing their rule over this country.

It was in the middle of the eighteenth century that a change in the situation came about. By that time, the Dutch (Holland) had almost totally defeated the Portuguese. The conflict between England and Holland had also ended in the withdrawal of the British from Indonesia and of the Dutch from India. Thus, only Britain and France remained in the field of competition in India.

It was at a particular stage of this competition between these two countries that the trading companies of these two countries considered it necessary to have some hold over the administration of the country, even for the protection of the trading interests for which alone they had come to India earlier. Thus, by the middle of the eighteenth century, an intense struggle developed between them to protect their trading interests and for getting some hold on the administration of this country.

This struggle was not confined to India either; several intensified battles and conflicts were taking place during this period. At this time, a revolution took place in France, smashing the antiquated social system. Following this, the new French rulers unleashed another war in Europe, voicing the message of the revolution. The misdeeds of the rulers of France before the revolution and during the war following the revolution had weakened France in relation to England, both in Europe and in India. This resulted in a global defeat for France.

Thus out of the four European countries which had come to India from the beginning of the sixteenth century, only England remained the ultimate victor. Only small pockets like Pondicherry and Mahe remained in the possession of France and Goa in the possession of Portugal. Holland did not have any possession at all.

The battle of Plassey of 1757, in which the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-Daula, was defeated, was of crucial importance in the history of the traders from England, which had defeated the other three European powers through mutual conflicts lasting nearly three centuries. "Plassey started a long chain of consequences which utterly changed the face of India; the system of economy and government which had lasted for centuries was transformed."[9]

Till then the British traders were also making obeisance, like the Indian traders, to the Emperor at Delhi and to the Nawabs and other administrators subordinate to him, and submisively waiting on them with respect and humility, for favours and concessions. It was true they were using their money-power and military strength in fights against some of the feudal lords with the connivance and assistance of some others. But they were doing this while submitting totally to the political supremacy of the Emperor and the administrators under him.

A fundamental change came over this position with the battte of Plassey. They defeated the Nawab, Siraj-ud-Daula, who was the foremost and the strongest among the subordinates of the Emperor, and put in his place a new Nawab (Mir Jaffar) who was so subservient to the foreign power as to become the synonym for treachery and sedition. Thus the British became the *de facto* controlling power in an area which was of strategic importance.

Developments took place at a quick pace. In 1764 the Mughal Emperor himself granted the *Diwani* to the British Company empowering them the rule over the provinces of

9. Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, New Delhi, Publications Division. Govt. of India, 1970, Vol I, p. 221.

Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Thus the English East India Company became the direct controlling authority over a large territory, instead of ruling through Mir Jaffer. Subsequently, the British defeated the Nizam and the Sultan of Mysore in South India, the Mahrattas in Western India, and the feudal lords in areas which now form part of Uttar Pradesh and in Panjab (now divided, one part going to Pakistan) and in Sind, now part of Pakistan. Thus:

> Within a hundred years from Plassey the whole of India had been forced to accept the British yoke. It was, from the military point of view, a curious achievement. For in all the battles fought the fighters were predominantly Indians. The composition of the army of an Indian chief was not very different from that of the East India Company. The Indian chief's army consisted of a small contingent of European soldiers led by European officers, especially in the artillery arm, a quota of varying strength of European-trained Indian infantry, and a large number of Indian horse and foot fighting according to traditional ways. The army of the Company consisted of a contigent of European soldiers and an Indian infantry force trained by Europeans; the third element, the untrained trooper, was absent or formed an unimportant auxiliary force. Thus the forces of the Indian princes, under the command of European and Indian officers fought against the company's forces consisting of European and Indian soldiers under European and Indian commanders. [10]

It is needless to say that the army of the East India Company was also similary constituted.

The British subdued India not in a single battle of the normal type. They utilised the services of a section of the Indian chiefs, including their army, and subjugated the Indian feudal chiefs, one by one, to the position of mere subordinates. They used various tactics to suit this purpose. Battles with their attendant merciless cruelty, diplomatic actions and

10. *Ibid*, p 231.

the resultant friendly relations, policies and approaches adopted to suit the exigencies of the situation in order to establish their authority—all these tactics were skillfully employed to subjugate India.

It is needless to recount the reasons for their success in this regard. The Indian chiefs were the representatives of a social system which had remained stunted for centuries. The foreign traders, on the other hand, represented a rapidly developing social system. In the conflict between the representatives of the declining and developing social systems, the representatives of the latter emerged victorious.

The changes that followed this victory possessed a dual character. A decadent social system faces all-round destruction following the military defeat of the representatives of that system. And that destruction eventually becomes complete. But in this case, the new foreign rulers did not want a complete destruction of the old—they wanted victory only on the military front—for they knew that the development of capitalism in India as it did in England would be a threat to their interest. That was why Marx stated that "the Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie till in Great Britain itself the new ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether."[11]

It is this dual character of the social revolution that took place in India, following the establishment of British rule over this country, that paved the way for the struggle for India's national independence. It was again this dual character of the social revolution that gave rise to two types of freedom movement in India—that of 1857, and the other that began after the 1857-59 struggle. Before going into the details of these movements, let us examine the character of this social revolution, how it manifested itself, and its impact on various spheres of social life.

11. *First Indian War of Independence*, p. 38.

We have seen that the battle of Plassey of 1757 was the turning point in the evolution of British rule in India. From that time onwards, virtually, and from 1764, the year in which the *Diwani* was obtained from the Emperor at Delhi, formally, the English East India Company became the actual rulers of India. This had its impact on the entire social system.

As we know, the social and administrative set-up prevailing in India prior to the advent of the foreign traders consisted of a hierarchy with more or less self-sufficient village communities with local self-government at the bottom, i.e., the level of the villages, feudal chieftains, with limited responsibilities of tax collection and rendering help during wars, occupying an intermediate position, and the prince or the Emperor at the top. This set-up and the social and administrative system evolved with the development of capitalism in England were poles apart in character. Consequently, there was an unbridgeable gap and contradiction between the legal enactments, rules and procedures and the consciousness and conception developed as a consequence in the minds of the people under these two systems. When the conflict between the two differing systems was beginning to develop, the *Diwani* granted by the Mughal emperor to the English East India Company in 1764, in fact, facilitated the domination by one over the other, that is, the domination of a system imported from a foreign land over the one which had remained relatively unchanged for several centuries.

On obtaining powers under the *Diwani* the English Company began to introduce in Bengal, and subsequently in areas where they acquired administrative powers, such reforms as would destroy the entire system in existence for centuries, including village life, the domination of feudal and caste-communal forces over it, the agricultural and industrial structure and the juridical system. And after the administrative power was transferred from the Company to the British Crown, this process continued in a more planned manner.

Under the rule of Mughal Emperors land relations had reached a relatively developed form in India, although the system was not working uniformly throughout the country. But there was one element common to all the variants of this system. And this common element was that no attempt was made by the administrative authorities to establish ownership rights on land or even to seriously interfere with the rights of those who were in possession of land. They confined themselves to collecting land revenue at the prescribed rates. The landlords who were emerging in the feudal system also confined themslves to collecting rent from the occupants, and did not interfere much with the rights and privileges of the possessors of land. The dues payable to both the landlords or to the administrative authorities were also fixed according to convention. This system was in existence for some centuries.

However, the new rulers (East India Company) tried to replicate the conceptions and laws regarding land ownership which were prevailing in their own country. Accordingly, one section of the new rulers began to function on the basis of the concept that the ownership rights rested solely with the king or the ruler. Another section, on the other hand, adhered to the theory that there must be a landlord in between the ruler and the actual possessors of land. Efforts were made to interpret the land ownership system in accordance with the concepts held by the respective sections of the rulers. Consequently, three land ownership systems—Zamindari, Ryotwari and Mahalwari—with several variants came into existence in different parts of the country.

Despite variations, all these systems are equally exploitative and pauperize the possessor of land. Under the Zamindari system, the landlord, who was liable to remit a prescribed amount to the government, could collect as much as he wished from those in possession of the land. Under the other two systems the Government directly collects the tax from the possessors of land at rates fixed on an increasing scale. The ultimate result of both types of collection is

the increasing burde on the cultivating peasants.

For instance, in the Madras Presidency, under the Ryotwari system, the land revenue collected in the year 1810-11 was £ 10,00,000. By 1825-26 the amount had increased to £40,00,000. In Bombay, the revenue collected was £ 8,00,000 in 1817, rising to £ 11,50,000 the next year and to £ 18,60,000 by the year 1837-38.

As mentioned earlier, it was in Bengal that the English Company had secured ruling power for the first time. There the Company introduced the Zamindari system. The agents of the Mughal Emperor collected in 1764-65 £ 8,18,000 which rose to £ 14,70, 000 in 1765-66 and to £ 28,60,000 in 1790-91.

Not only the amounts collected directly by the Government as tax or as rent through landlords but also the laws enacted for this purpose disrputed the rural economy of India. The theory that each piece of land must have an owner—either the ruler or the landlord, or alternatively, the possessor—was basic to the laws of land relations enacted by the foreign rulers. This was an anathema to the traditional Indian concepts and the consciousness of the people. The core of the old Indian village system was that although the possessors of land, the landlord, the feudal chief and the ruler, had certain rights of their own, none of them had an unlimited right.

When the English concept of land ownership was brought into practice in India, the owner, whether it be the Zamindar, or the landowner created by a legal enactment or the possessor of the land could mortgage or sell his right on the land. The land of the possessor could now be seized for default in payment of rent due to the landlord or the taxes due to the government, As a consequence, landowners and those in possession of land fell into the grip of a new section, the money-lender. According to Captain Wingate, the then Revenue Survey Commissioner in the Bombay Province, "a set of low usurers is fast springing up, by who small sums are lent for short period at enormous rates of interest

to the very lowest of the population who have not credit enough to obtain advances from the more respectable of village bankers."[12]

Thus, the landlords and the usurers, the two sections that emerged as a consequence of the land reform measures introduced by the English Company, joined together to loot the vast majority of peasants and other sections of the rural poor. And the practice of paying a major share of the loot to the English Company also came into vogue. Alongside these, handicrafts and the foreign trade based on these crafts, which had been extant for centuries in India, declined gradually. For instance, Indian textiles exported in 1795-96 amounted to Rs. 21,22,319.5. In 1829-30, the value of textiles exported fell to Rs. 6,95,725. On the other side, the value of goods imported to India from England in 1814 was £ 18,00,000. The value of imports rose to £ 45,00,000 in 1829. Thus, while the foreign market for goods produced by handicraftsmen in India declined, the market for foreign goods expanded.

The pauperization of the rural people as a result of the land reforms introduced by the Company and the decline in the trading and industrial sectors ruined both the villages and urban areas alike. It will not be an exaggeration to say that it was this decline and the ruin of the Indian people that accelerated the development of capitalism in England. English political commentators themselves have accepted this fact.

"In England, too, the agrarian revolution had thrown labourer out of land and increased unemployment, causing great misery and hardship. But the Industrial Revolution which followed soon absorbed the unemployed labourers in the newly established manufacturing industries, so that the period of unemployment and hardship was short. In India, on the other hand, labour was released from industry but there was no comparable development of industries or exten-

12. From the report of Capt. Wingate quoted by Tarachand, *op cit*, p. 299.

sion of agriculture to absorb that labour.....In India the human suffering caused by the social revolution was incalculably greater and much more prolonged."[13]

A question may be raised as to why the people of India were prepared to submit meekly to the situation, undergoing sufferings and misery resulting from it, and why they did not rise in revolt against British domination.

As will be seen in the following chapters, the people of India did, in fact, rise in revolt on several occasions against British domination, and in many cases these revolts assumed the form of armed insurrections. Revolts had burst out at various stages in various forms from one end of the country to the other. And these revolts date back to the very beginning of British domination.

None of these revolts was, however, as widespread as the struggle of 1857. Nor were they centred around the centre of power located in Delhi, considered the traditional capital of Indian rulers. These revolts were, on the other hand, isolated struggles carried on at places far away from Delhi and confined to relatively small areas. And each one of these struggles was suppressed as was the revolt of 1857. Why did it happen?

The answer is simple. Traders had come to India even earlier from West Asia and a few even from Europe and the eastern countries like China. While carrying on their trading activities, they were also participating at the same time in the socio-cultural life of this country. In the process they identified themselves with the life of this country. Many of them settled down in India and subsequently became Indians.

The people of India regarded the European trading companies located in the port towns and the persons working in these companies in the same way as they did the traders who had come to India earlier. They believed that these traders, like their predecessors, would gradually become 'Indians' or at least maintain friendly relations with the people of the country.

13. Tara Chand, *Ibid*, pp 335-386

Two and a half centuries after the landing of Vasco da Gama at Calicut, when the European powers, including the British and the French began to engage themselves in intense conflicts with each other in the middle of the 18th century for domination, Clive of England and Dupleix of France came to India as representatives of the trading companies of their respective countries. With their arrival the character of the trading companies which they represented changed completely. In their efforts to beat each other they began to exert influence on the local elites and gain control over the administrative machinery through them. The battle of Plassey represents an important stage in the victory which England was able to win in this regard.

It must also be understood that the situation that developed in India following the decline of the Mughal Empire provided a fertile ground not only for the conflicts between England and France but also for the earlier conflicts between Portugal and Holland, and between these two countries on the one hand and France on the other.

After Aurangazeb, no Mughal Emperor possessed anything more than the title. The Nawabs, princes and military chieftains under these emperors were functioning as *de facto* rulers. There were also areas which were not even formally part of the Mughal Empire. What prevailed in India at the time was the dominance of provincial rulers and feudal chieftains who were, formally or otherwise, independent of the Mughal Emperors of Delhi. Each one of these provincial rulers was trying to extend his authority to wider areas, and to curb the feudal chieftains in the areas under his control. Such conflicts amongst the local rulers were an integral part of the political situation prevailing in India at that time. For instance, three princes in Kerala—the Zamorin of Calicut, the Maharaja of Cochin and the Maharaja of Travancore—emerged as powerful rulers after defeating in war several feudal chieftains. And it was in those circumstances that Vasco da Gama landed in Calicut. For two centuries thereafter, foreign trading companies

first, the Portuguese, and then the Dutch, and following them the British and French tried to establish their trading supremacy by alternately fraternizing and opposing this or that ruler. The three rulers, on the other hand, utilized the armed might of these European trading companies which had maintained small naval forces originally to protect their trade in order to extend their respective territories. The same thing happened all over India. It became the practice of those wielding power to seek the assistance of the European trading companies for settling mutual conflicts as also to solve disputes over succession within the ruling families.

Ruling families, feudal lords and the local chieftains, however important they were in the social life of the time, were not the only sections that constituted the elite of that period. A class of traders was also emerging in India, although at a pace slower than in the European countries. Groups of people engaged in transporting and exchanging goods from one end of the country to the other had come to be formed in India. Many of them were so wealthy that they lent money even to the emperors and the princes.

In other words, social forces of capitalism were developing within the medieval Indian society, although at a slower pace than in the European countries. Trading was carried on by these groups in collaboration with the European trading companies. And in the process, the Indian commercial class also made profits, as did the European trading companies.

All these sections, namely, the former rulers, feudal lords, local chieftains and such others, as also those engaged in trade and industry, were interested in the functioning and development of the European trading companies. The European trading companies, on the other hand, tried to carry on trade without jeopardizing the interests of these sections. The British who gained ultimate victory over other European traders also continued this policy for some years even after consolidating their position. The period extending up to the middle of the 19th century witnessed a sense of co-operation between the British rulers and the newly affluent classes

consisting of landlords, traders and usurers. But this co-operation did not last long.

The Indian elite of those days did not realize that there was a special feature which distinguished these foreign traders from those who had come earlier in India's history. Hence they did not consider it in any way harmful or detrimental to their interests to enter into economic contracts or even military pacts with these traders.

The Indian elite did not realize at that time that France and England had adopted, by the middle of the 18th century, an approach different from that followed hitherto by the European companies, which, if put into practice, would deprive the elite class of India of its own ruling power. They had only the blinkered view of getting the help of the European companies for attaining their temporary selfish aims.

We have already noted briefly the developments which followed the victory of the British in the battle of Plassey, namely, their taking over control of the administration in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by securing the *Diwani* from the Emperor in Delhi, the land reforms measures implemented by them, and the decline of industry and trade in India as a consequence of the economic policies pursued by the British Government in England and by the new British rulers in India. The ruinous changes that were brought about in the sphere of economy did not leave the ruling classes alone.

In fact, the changes that were brought about in the system of land ownership following the grant of the *Diwani* in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and later on in all other areas which were brought under the domination of the British, had their impact in the administrative and educational spheres and in all sectors of the socio-cultural life of the country. Axe fell on the very roots of the *Gram Panchayats* and other local self-governing bodies, of caste-communal organizations, and not merely on the establishment, the Emperor and other rulers, the feudal lords and the provincial chieftains. It was such a transformation that the British rulers brought about when they altered the system of revenue administration.

> The change was enormous which it was the nature of this decree (relating to the decision of the Court of Directors of the Company that its servants should take upon themselves the entire care and management of the revenues—EMS) to produce. It was a revolution much greater, probably, than any previous conjecture—than even the change from Hindu to Mohammedan masters, had been able to create. The transition from Hindu to Mohammedan masters had only changed the hands by which the sword was wielded, and favours were dispensed; the machine of the Government, still more the texture of the society, underwent feeble alterations; and the civil part of the administration was, from conveniency, left almost wholly in the hands of the Hindus. A total change in the management of the revenues more deeply affected the condition, individually and collectively, of the people of India than it is easy for the European reader to conceive. It was an innovation by which the whole property of the country, and along with it the administration of justice, were placed upon a new foundation.[6]

The revenue department which was primarily responsible for the collection of taxes became the main instrument of general administration. The revenue department, from the District Collector down to the village officer, controlled by the rulers at the centre and provinces smashed the foundation of the traditional administrative system which continued till then. No longer did the village Panchayats and other local self-governing bodies, as also the local chiefs and feudal lords who were supervising the functioning of these bobies and taking a share of their income, find any place in the administrative set-up. Instead there was now a steel frame which lay extended from the village staff at the bottom to the Governor-General at the top.

The former elite classes, however, continued to enjoy their old position and status of landlords and the income

6. James Mill, quoted by Tara Chand, *Ibid*, pp 243-244.

derived therefrom, or *malikham*. A small section of these elites also obtained ruling powers as princes under the suzerainty of the British as long as they remained loyal to the new rulers. But none of them had any real or visible share in the administration.

The moves towards evolving and consolidating this new administrative set-up were gradual. In 1773, 1783, 1813, 1833, and 1853, each year, either an "India Act" was enacted in the British Parliament or the administrative system was reorganized in some other manner. At each stage the role of the British Government enhanced. The foundation of the former rulers and their subordinates, the feudal landlords and of the socio-cultural life that was the basis of their administrative functioning, was eroded in proportion to the increase in the role of the British Government.

Many revolts erupted in several parts of the country towards the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th. Not only was each of these revolts suppressed, but the feudal lords who remained in power in Delhi, which was India's centre of administration in the ancient and medieval periods, and in surrounding areas were also subjugated. It was with this development that the true colours of the new (foreign) rulers were revealed to both the elite classes and the common people throughout Northern India. It was the outburst of the dissatisfaction that arose out of this situation that was witnessed in the struggle for independence in 1857-59. Tara Chand describes the situation on the eve of this outburst in the following words: "A deadly pall hung over India, under which the classes were smothered and the masses breathed with difficulty. The Muslim and Hindu ruling princes were disarmed and isolated; the Muslim and Hindu families, tribes and castes which had provided soldiers, administrators and leaders, were ostracised from offices of responsibility and condemned to serve as helots; the Muslim and Hindu learned classes were deprived of patronage and slowly squeezed out of their avocatins."[7]

7. Tara Chand, *Ibid.* p 289.

In the background of the resultant discontent of the elite class was the miserable life of two sections of the people—the artisans and urban poor, on the one hand, and the pauperized peasants and the rural poor, on the other.

3

THE EARLY STRUGGLES AND DEFEATS

1. REVOLTS IN SOUTH INDIA

The series of revolts which broke out in 1857 in North India and lasted nearly two years were India's "first struggle for independence". Till the nationalist research scholars started to gather facts and evaluate this struggle, it was known as the "Sepoy Mutiny", the name given by the British. It was, in fact, not a "Sepoy Mutiny", but a magnificant form of people's struggle. The Sepoys, of course, played a prominent role in that struggle. This has now been widely accepted.

However, about half a century prior to this mass upsurge, South India had witnessed another revolt. Nationalist historians have now brought to light certain facts relating to some of the clashes which formed part of that revolt and about the valiant patriots who played a leading role in them.

Apart from these isolated and sporadic armed revolts, however, South India did not witness a freedom struggle as organized and as sweeping as the 1857-59 struggle of Northern India until recently.

As part of the centenary celebrations of the 1857-59 struggle for independence, several studies were carried out by eminent scholars on the history of the freedom movement in India, under the direction of the former Union Minister of Education, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. This gave an impetus to a number of scholars and students of history to conduct studies and research into the history of the various struggles for independence in different parts of India. One outcome of such researches was *South Indidn Rebellion—First War of Indepencence 1800-1801* by Rajayyan, from Madurai University, based on official documents in Madras archives.

The revolt of 1800 in South India was as inspiring as the 1857-59 struggle in North India. The planners, organizers, leaders and other heroic patriots belonging to various sections of the people had left the imprints of their personality on the history of struggle of not only South India, but also on the India-wide struggles for independence. And the names of at least some of these patriots—Kattabomman of Tirunelveli, Pazhassi Raja of Malabar and others—and their glorious deeds are, to some extent, known to us.

So far, the glorious deeds of these patriots were regarded only as stories of isolated acts of heroism. This is not correct. They formed part of a widespread movement which extended all over South India covering not only the four States of Kerala, Tamilnadu, Andhra and Karnataka, but also Maharashtra. In short, the resistance and revolts of 1800-1801 constituted an attempt to mobilize the various sections of the masses as well as the elites inhabiting areas south of the Vindhyas into an organized force to fight the foreign aggressors. Rajayyan has characterized these revolts as "the most widespread of all liberation wars of the

pre-Congress epoch" and the "first and the last violent popular struggle of any formidable dimensions", etc.[1]

Overwhelmed by the facts of history discovered by him, the author sometimes even belittles the significance of the 1857-59 struggle. While disagreeing with Rajayyan in regard to such incorrect conclusions, we are at the same time grateful to him for having written a book on the independence struggle in South India based on authentic facts.

The author describes the political situation and circumstances that led to the South Indian revolt, which can be called the first freedom struggle of India, before going into the details of the sweep of that struggle, the maturity and the organizational skill and efficiency of the leadership, the despicable tactics adopted by the enemy and the successive clashes that took place.

Any one who examines the facts now brought out by Rajayyan in the light of Historical Materialism can clearly see that the political factors which led to the struggle in its sweep and mass support were also responsible for its ultimate defeat. An understanding of this political situation also helps us to understand the features that differentiate this struggle from the freedom struggle of North India.

In this connection, it is worthwhile to note certain special features of South India. This region was totally free from the domination of the emperors who had ruled North India, right from the period of the Mauryas to that of the Mughals. At times when this region happened to be subjugated by one or the other of these emperors, liberation from such domination was achieved speedily. And at the time when the foreign conquerors, from the Portuguese to the British, were attempting to establish and consolidate their position in India, all regions of South India were free from even nominal domination of the Delhi Emperor.

The Marathas who had been consistently carrying on a struggle against the Mughal Emperors had not only liberated their region, but had even invaded the northern regions and

1. Rajayyan, *South Indian Rebellion-First War of Independence*, 1971, p 20.

acquired some areas from the domination of the Mughal Emperors; the Nizam of Hyderabad had virtually become an independent ruler, though in name he was subordinate to the Mughal Emperor; the Sultan of Mysore refused to recognize the suzerainty of the Mughal Emperor. There were several other States which maintained independence like Mysore—the Tamil princes of Tanjore, Madurai, Ramanad, Arcot, etc., and the princes of Malabar, whom Rajayyan credits with the distinction of having mainthined their political indepenence for over 1000 years. Cochin and Travancore had grown up into powerful States.

Perennial feuds were taking place amongst the princes of the region south of the Vindhyas. Each prince was persistently trying to make the others accept his domination so that he could rise up to the position of a powerful ruler or even an emperor. They had no compunction in forging alliances with any one in order to achieve their aim. It was as part of this tactic that they were ready, as and when it suited their purpose, to forge a friendship with or be hostile to the foreign trading companies.

These rulers had to carry on fights with the feudal lords under them as well, because it was a specific feature and integral part of the administrative set-up in South India. "Known as Poligars, at time as rajahs and Zamindars, these chieftains occupied a key position in the political structure between the princes and their subjects... They paid rent to the ruler for their lands and maintained bands of armed men for service with troops of the State in critical times. They undertook to protect private property against robbery and pay compensation in the event of their failure, As guardians of public welfare, they enforced police authority, administered justice, founded villages, conducted religious festivals, maintained temples, promoted cultivation and assisted charitable services. As an intermediary authority they performed what the rulers normally negotiated to do in the field of public walfare. While the common people found it beyond their reach to gain positions in the central administration, they

experienced no such difficulty in the establishments. This created and nurtured a bond of affinity between Poligars and the masses."[2] (In Tamil Nadu and Karnataka the feudal lords were known as poligars. The terms "feudal lords" is used here to include those in Kerala also though they were not known by that name).

Friendly relations between the masses and the feudal lords were looked upon by each prince to be as dangerous to him as the military forces of other princes. For, as long as they (feudal lords) enjoyed popularity with the masses no prince would be able to establish his domination over them. Even if they succeeded in defeating their enemies and conquering their territories, there was no guarantee that they could sustain their domination as long as the feudal lords existed.

It was these princes who had to conduct war against their feudal lords as well as against other princes that welcomed with open arms the foreign traders as forces that could be of help and assistance to them in both these ventures.

In this dual struggle, they could, of course, depend to an extent upon the local allies, namely, some other princes and their armies. But the foreign companies could help them more effectively for two reasons. First, these foreign trading companies had more effective weapons and better method of warfare using these weapons. Second, the foreign companies which commanded larger maritime forces could bring in more commodities for them and obstruct the enemy's sea route. Therefore, it became a part of the policy of the princes to depend on one or the other foreign company which came to India one after another.

The policy of dependence on foreign trading companies in order to extend the areas of their domination became common amongst the princes in the 16th century throughout India. But South India had a special feature as compared with North India. As stated earlier, there was not an emperor even nominally in the South. Each prince was independent, and as such the victory or defeat in the various conflicts that

2. *Ibid* pp. 22,24.

took place amongst them was solely dependent on the military strength of the respeetive combatants.

Furthermore, southern India is closer to coastlines than the regions in northern India. As such, the foreign mercantile companies, backed by naval and military forces, could exercise influence on the political relations in southern India more skillfully and rapidly than they could in the northern Indian region.

As a consequence, by the end the 18th century the whole of South India came under the domination of the British. The princes in this region surrendered one by one to the British at different times. The Rajas of Travancore, Pudukkottai, Tanjore, Arcot and Mysore, the Peshwa of Poona and the Nizam of Hyderabad, either subordinated their authority to the British or their territories were turned into British territories. By the close of the 18th century a dual administrative system of British India and native States came into being in South India.

It is the revolt of the feudal lords who were the subordinates of the princes, against the new rulers that has been dealt with in Rajayyan's book. As mentioned earlier, these feudal lords maintained friendly relations with the common people and as such their revolt againt the British had the support of the masses. Each feudal lord was able to deploy thousands of soldiers on the field. And when the forces at the command of the various feudal lords who entered into fraternal alliances were mobilized together, it turned out to be a big military force.

An organization comprising the leaders of these revolts, from Kattabomman of Tirunelveli at the southern end to Dhondoji Wagh of the area comprising North Canara and South Maharashtra, came into being to mobilize military forces and co-ordinate their activities. Rajayyan has analysed in detail the individual characteristics and qualities of each one of these leaders, the methods of mobilization and coordination and the resultant centralized action programme. As in the case of the revolt of 1857-59 it was only through a

long-drawn-out armed conflict that the British were able to suppress the planned programme of revolt organized by these leaders.

Rajayyan describes Maruda Pandyan of Sivaganga as the "most conspicuous amongst the leaders, and the political strategist of this movement". He mobilized not only all the feudal lords in the regions south of Madurai, including Kattabomman of Tirunelveli, and the masses of people in their areas, but also worked with the aim of mobilizing the anti-British insurrectionists in areas like Dindigual, Coimbatore, Malabar, Mysore and Maharashtra and utilize the military forces of all of them to attack the British fortresses.

The plan of action succeeded to a considerable extent. The British found it hard to suppress this revolt of 1800-1801 in South India, just as they found it later on in 1857-59 in North India. Rajayyan has cited the opinions and comments expressed by some of the British military chiefs and administrators for this. The saga of these revolts is bound to create in our minds feelings of esteem and respect for the insurrectionists of South India.

But this revolt in South India was cruelly suppressed by the British in the same manner as they did all other freedom struggles in India, including the struggle of 1857-59. Hundreds of heroic patriots who had participated in this struggle were sentenced to death. Several hundreds of others lost all their properties and were reduced to a state of destitution. Dozens of persons were deported. National independence which was the cherished goal of their life turned out to be only a remembrance of the past and a dream of the future. Masses of people had to suffer untold miseries under the brutal heels of the British.

What caused such a development? Maruda Pandyan, foremost amongst the leaders of the struggle, provides a simple answer. In the Tiruchi proclamation of 1801, Maruda Pandyan stated that the princes who were not "aware of the duplicity" of the Europeans "foolishly" trusted them and that there was "no unity and friendship" amongst the people.

"His Highness the Nawab Mohammed Ali having foolishly given the Europeans place amongst you has become like a widow. The Europeans violating their faith have deceitfully made the Kingdom their own and (are) considering the inhabitants as dogs, accordingly exercise authority over them. There exist no unity and friendship amongst you. The above castes (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vysyas, Sudras and Mussalmans) who not being aware of the duplicity of these Europeans...have not only inconsiderately culminated each other but have absolutely surrendered the Kingdom to them."[3]

It appears that Rajayyan agrees with this. But this is not a satisfactory explanation, for this does not explain the reasons for the "foolishness" of the princes and disunity among the people. Nor does Rajayyan explain why a system that existed for several centuries came to such a pass only now.

The real answer to the question had been indicated in the preceeding chapters. The conflict here was between an outdated decadent indigenous social system and a foreign social system that was being newly evolved. While, on the one side, one section is eager to build a new society, another section is eager to protect its own land and the ancient customs and traditions characteristic of it. It is only through imbibing the essence of modern society that came to this country through the foreigners, and modernising our society can we protect our country from attack by foreigners. On the other hand, the planners and organizers of the freedom struggle were striving to restore to the rulers their respective territories in accordance with their beliefs and customs. In the following chapters we shall see that the organizers of the North Indian revolt that took place half a century later fought for the same objectives, which again constituted the weakness of that struggle.

3. *Ibid*, p 232

II. THE BACKGROUND OF 1857 STRUGGLE

In one respect eastern India comprising Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam is comparable with southerm India. Maritime transport of this region provided easy access to foreign tradnig companies; they established themselves there and then gradually transformed their trade relations into political relations, as they did in the South.

This region was, however, different in another respect from South India. This region formed part of the Mughal Empire. The Nawab of Bengal was one amongst the several subordinate local rulers under the Mughal Emperor. The British became the rulers in the eastern region of India by establishing trade relation with the Nawab of Bengal to start with and then by gradually transforming these relations into political relations. Once they secured the concessions they sought from the Nawab of Bengal, they took particular care to obtain from the Mughal Emperor the grant of the *Diwani* (the right to carry on civil administration) of this region in order to ensure the security of the concessions.

Unlike the kingdoms in the South, the Mughal Empire had, by this time, succeeded to a certain extent in establishing a centralized administration. The land revenue system devised and implemented by Raja Todarmal, a minister in the court of Emperor Akbar, had brought the feudal lords under the centralized administration as it did the military force under the Empire. In many regions in South India, too, there were intermediaries like Poligars who had considerable influence among the people. But such a system had become weak throughout the North in the later Mughal period itself. The Mughal administration had appointed many elites as local agents in place of the traditional Jagirdars and Talukdars.

It was on the basis of this historical fact that the new British rulers introduced Permanent Settlement in 1793 in eastern India. This system was different from the Ryotwari system which they introduced in South India.

Under the Ryotwari system, the actual cultivators and the government are in direct contact with each other without intermediaries. The actual yield that the cultivator got from his landholding, his expenses for cultivation, etc., were assessed and the share to be paid to the government out of the surplus was fixed. The government collected its dues directly from the actual cultivators. The amount payable to the government was fixed from time to time.

Under the Permanent Settlement (Zamindari) implemented in eastern India, the government did not deal with the cultivators directly. Instead, the government dealt with intermediaries known as Zamindars, Taluqdars, etc. The dues that these intermediaries had to pay to the government were permanently fixed. The intermediaries who duly discharged their liability of paying the prescribed amount due to the government could collect any amount they liked from the cultivators. Even if the income of the intermediaries increased, the dues that they had to pay to the government remained static.

These differences in landownership relations gave rise to a difference in the political system. In South India, the Poligars and other feudal lords who had been intermediaries before the introduction of the Ryotwari system were deprived of the position and benefits they had been enjoying for centuries. The principal motive force for the revolts in the South was the anguish and indignation of those who were thus deprived of positions.

In eastern India, on the other hand, instead of abolishing the intermediaries a new section of intermediaries came into being. In the place of the feudal lords who were performing various functions, including the collection of taxes, for centuries under the Mughals, another section of intermediaries with the sole responsibility of collecting taxes began to emerge in the later period of the Mughal Empire. The new intermediaries often functioned in accordance with the will and pleasure of the Nawabs of those days.

It was in this historical background that the British rulers

who obtained the *Diwani* from the Mughal Emperor gave permanency to the system of intermediaries. Consequently, the new intermediaries emerged with opportunities to earn income but without the political power which the Jagirdars and Taluqdars were enjoying earlier, Thus within 20 years of introducing Permanent Settlement, the Zamindary properties began to be bought and sold for prices several times over the amount of a year's tax. Through these transactions a new wealthy section with as much interested in the Zamindari properties as the Zamindars themselves, emerged in these regions. More than one intermediary (at times as many as half a dozen) appeared in between the Zamindar and the actual cultivators. Usurers engaged in money transactions with these intermediaries also became a part of the social life of those regions.

At the other end of this process were the actual possessors and cultivators of land, most of whom were getting pauperized. Even a section of the Zamindars lost their land due to their inability to pay the dues to the government. But no section of the former elite class in areas covered by Permanent Settlement lost everything as a result of the British rule as it happened in the case of the Poligars and other feudal lords in South India where the Ryotwari system was introduced. It was on account of this that eastern India submitted relatively peacefully to the British rule at a time when a widespread freedom struggle was going on in South India.

The living conditions of the poorer sections of the people and the middle class were nonetheless getting worse in eastern India as they were in South India, The common people of eastern India had to bear an additional burden of the new intermediary created as a result of the introduction of Permanent Settlement.

Despite this, such widespread struggles as were taking place in South India did not take place in eastern India. This was because, unlike in southern India, there was no section of intermediaries to lead a struggle of the common people in eastern India. The section of intermediaries which should have considered itself capable of heading such a struggle was

interested in the maintenance of the British rule. That was why, again, eastern India remained relatively peaceful at a time when widespread struggles were taking place in South India.

I have used the terms "relatively peaceful" deliberately. It was not as if the entire eastern region was peaceful till the year 1857. Even prior to 1857, several rovolts and clashes had taken place in some areas of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam. But such revolts were distinctly different in character from the struggle that was carried on in South India during 1800-1801.

As distinct from the struggle in South India, the struggles that took place in eastern India were mainly the revolts of the tribals. The Chuwar tribes of areas extending from western Midnapur to southern Bihar, and of Chota Nagpur and Orissa, the Ho tribes of Singhbhum, the Santals of Rajmahal area, the Gonds of Orissa, the Bhoomijas of Malbhum, the Kols and Mundas of Chota Napur, and the Khasis of Assam were involved in revolts on many occasions. In Orissa, tribal landlords and princes also participated in the resistance movements along with their people. Each one of these events taken in isolation represents the demonstration of the untiring patriotism of the Indian people who were not prepared to surrender to the foreign domination.

But no efforts were made to link these various struggles into a coordinated struggle under a central leadership in eastern India. That such an effort was made in South India distinguishes it from eastern India. This difference arose because in eastern India there were no sectors like the poligars and the feudal lords of the South, capable of coordinating the various scattered struggles taking place in different regions. At the same time, as a consequence of the Permanent Settlement, a new section of intermediaries having a vested interest in the continuance of the domination of the new rulers (the British), had emerged in eastern India. Thus the common people of this region, who were eager to fight against the new rulers, found themselves in a helpless situation.

Consequently, with the beginning of the 19th century the

British were able to consolidate their domination both in southern and eastern parts of India. While in South India the consolidation was effected after suppressing a relatively widespread freedom struggle, such a consolidation was achieved without any significant resistance in eastern India. The tribal revolts referred to above broke out only by the second decade of the 19th century, after the British rule was consolidated in the plains of Bengal and in South India.

The British were, however, not content with the consolidation of their position in Bengal and southern India. They were determined to extend their dominion to other regions of India, too. They had no compunction in unilaterally violating the provisions of agreements they had entered into with various feudal lords and princes. They ceded the territories ruled over by several princes and feudal lords, who were nominally under the suzerainty of the Mughal Emperor but were in fact independent rulers of their territories.

Ultimately they wielded their sword even against the Mughal Emperor. They changed their attitude towards the Emperor. From the position of supplicants seeking concessions from him and offering tributes to him, the British officials started behaving as if they were the 'dispensers of boons'. One British administrator (Amhersts) made it plain in writing to the Emperor: "Your Kingship is but nominal, it is merely out of courtesy that you are addressed as King."[4]

The British Resident at the Court refused to stand in his presence when presenting *Nazr*. Auckland asked Bahadur Shah to abandon his claims and rights. He stopped the offering of *Nazr*, the privilege of granting robes of honour and holding Durbars. The *Diwan-i-Khas* and the *Diwan-i-Am* were closed. He was pressed to give up residence in the Red Fort, to abjure the title of King and to abandon his prerogative to name his successor. [5]

4. Tara Chand, *op cit*, Vol II, p 47.
5. *Iibd*

There were no repercussions in North India when the authority and status of poligars and other feudal lords in South India were eliminated. This was because in North India the British were partially recognizing the status and position of the Mughal Emperor and of the Nawabs, princes and others subordinates to him. Further, in Bengal and other areas where Permanent Settlement had been introdced, a section of intermediaries who were interested in keeping themsclves attached to the British administration had emerged. But as the British began to establish a centralized administration extending to the whole of India soon after consolidating their power in South India and Bengal, the rich elite classes of North India also rose in revolt against the British rule.

It was an outburst of these feelings that was witnessed in the period from 1857 to 1859. We shall go into the details of these struggles later on. But let us note here how some of the authoritative spokesmen of the British administration had themselves characterized the rebellion of 1857-59.

Disraeli was one of the eminent thinkers amongst the British administrators in the 19th century. He characterized this struggle as a "national revolt" and opposed to its being treated as an "army revolt".

Ellenborough who became the president of the Board of Control of East India Company in 1853, censuring the confiscation of *talukdaris* in Oudh. wrote: "We must admit that, under the circumstances, the hostilities which have been carried on in Oudh have rather the character of legitimate war than that of rebellion."[6]

Another historion (Justin McCarthy) has recorded: "It was a combination of military grievances, national hatred and religious fanaticism against the English occupation of India. The native princes, and the native soldiers were in

6. *Ibib*, p 41.

it. The Mohammedan and the Hindoo forgot their old religious antipathies to join against the Christian."[7]

As we have already noticed, from the point of view of modern nationalism, the South Indian struggle of 1800-1801 and the North Indian struggle of 1857-59 were national struggles with a number of weaknesses and inadequacies. But we should not underestimate the historical importance and significance of these and other bigger and smaller struggles that took place in different parts of India. Each and every one of these struggles demonstrated the intensity of the feeling of patriotism among the Indian people which could not be suppressed by the use of brutal force. The freedom fighters of the later generations strove to uphold the great traditions of these struggles and march forward by avoiding their weaknesses.

III. "SEPOY MUTINY" OR POPULAR REVOLT?

The British had once propagated that what took place during the years 1857 to 1859 in India was only a sepoy mutiny and that it did not have any support from the people of India.

Later on, when the national movement for independence gathered momentum, historians came forward with facts claiming that it was a freedom struggle and that it had widespread support of the people. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who had actively participated in the freedom struggle and who was convicted to a long term of imprisonment, had even written a book, entitled *The Indian War of Independence* in which he had brought out several facts and authoritative documents that had not yet seen the light of the day.

Following Savarkar, several other political activists and scholars of history, basing themselves on the stand of the nationalists, tried to evaluate the struggle of 1857-59. As a

7. *Ibid.*

result of extensive research conducted by them, it came to light that the British officials who had either directly participated in those incidents or had witnessed them, were themselves divided on the character of the so-called Sepoy Mutiny. Col. G.B. Malleson,[8] Sir John William Kaye,[9] Charles Ball,[10] Rev. Alexander Duff[11] and many others had cited several instances of mass support that the insurrectionists had. According to Keye, there was none among the Hindus and Muslims from Ganga to Yamuna who was not against the British.

Malleson expressed the opinion that the majority of the people in Oudh (Ayodhya) Rohilkland, Bundelkhand, Sagar and Narmada were against the British.

What is more, Disraeli, who later became the Prime Minister of England, participating in the deliberations in the House of Commons on July 27, 1857, disagreed with the official view that the Indian struggle was merely a "military mutiny."

By 1947, as in the case of many other matters, a new impetus was given to research into the Indian freedom struggle. The centenary of the "freedom struggle" which the British authorities called "Sepoy Mutiny", was celebrated under the auspices of the government itself. As a part of the celebrations extensive research work was organized. Committees were constituted under the direct leadership of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who was then the Union Minister for Education.

Prof. Tara Chand's *History of the Freedom Movement in India*, from which several quotations were given in the earlier chapters, was the result of this work. This was prepared under official auspices. A series of monographs was also published non-officially under the supervision of Dr. R.C. Majumdar. Several other books, pamphlets and theses were also brought

8. Col. G B. Malleson, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, in three volumes, London, 1878-80.
9. Sir William Kaye, *A History of the Sepoy War in India*, in three volumes, London, 1878-80.
10. C. Ball, *History of the Indian Mutiny*, in two volumes, London
11. Dr. A.D Duff, *The Indian Rebellion; Its Causes and Results*, London 1858

out. Yet, although not in the same from as in the earlier days, two fundamentally differing approaches remained with the historians on the nature and contents of the struggle of 1857-59.

Although it is not correct to characterize it as a mere "Sepoy Mutiny" as the British administration had done earlier, it is not correct either to maintain that the sepoys or the civilians took up arms and fought against the government with the aim of liberating the country from the yoke of the British; their aim was selfish—this was one opinion. In the view of another section of scholars, what took place in 1857-59 was a people's revolt.

The most vociferous advocate of the former opinion was Dr. Majumdar, and of the latter Dr. S.B. Choudhury.[12] In between these two was Dr. S.N. Sen;[13] the author of *Eighteen Fifty Seven* published with an introduction by Maulana Azad. He opined that in Oudh and in the surrounding areas it was a people's rebellion; while in other places it was merely a sepoy mutiny.

But it is important to note that even Dr. Majumdar, who was opposed to the characterization of 1857-59 as a freedom struggle, was not prepared to consider it as a mere sepoy mutiny. The very title of his book was *"Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*.[14] Justifying this title, he wrote: "I have selected the title 'the Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857' as in my opinion it correctly describes the essential nature of the movements, whatever we might take of it. The word 'revolt' is used in its normal sense of casting off allegiance to the rulers, and does not convey any moral judgement such as disapproval or odium."[15]

Thus, it can be seen that even right from the British officials and historians referred to above to the Indian scholars of history like Dr. Majumdar who have no sympathy

12. S.B. Choudhuri, *Civil Rebellion in the Indian Mutinies (1857-59)*, Calcutta, 1957
13. Surendra Nath Sen, *Eighteen Fifty Seven*, New Delhi, 1957.
14. R.C. Majumar, *The Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857*, Calcutta, 1957.
15. Majumdar, *Ibid*, II Ed , Introduction, pp XVI-XVII.

for the objectives of the struggle, do concede the popular support to it.

One can say without hesitation that it was a rebellion in which millions of people in areas covered by the present Uttar Pradesh, and some parts of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh participated. At the same time, it was a movement without popular support in the entire South India, eastern India including Bengal, and in Punjab. Even scholars like Dr. Choudhury who characterize it as a people's struggle do accept this fact.

When we examine this struggle taking into consideration all the facts which are accepted equally by the scholars from both the camps, we arrive at the following conclusions.

1) In the sense that it was the sepoys who played the main role in the anti-British revolt, it was a sepoy mutiny.
2) However, behind the 'sepoy mutiny' lay the intense discontent of the people. Therefore, when the sepoys rose in revolt (in certain areas even before the mutiny started), the rural poor revolted against the rulers who were ruining their lives, and against the *nouveau riche* who were fattening themselves with the backing of the rulers. What the civillian rebellionists did was to destroy the government offices and official records and physically liquidate government officials, the *nouveau riche* usurers and traders. In this sense, the struggle of 1857-59 (at least insofar as the regions mentioned above) was a popular rebellion.
3) Except in this limited area, however, there was not only no popular support for the struggle, but it faced the opposition of the educated new generation, who stood behind the British government. For this reason one cannot say unequivocally that what took place in 1857-59 was the "first struggle for independence" as claimed by the government and the nationalist political leaders and historians.

We have also to specially mention here that a predominant section of Indian solidiers stood with the British in 1857-59 to suppress the revolt and they outnumbered

many times the sepoys who rose in revolt. Had there been no assistance form the Indian soliders, not only the British would not have been able to suppress the rebellion, but they would have had to pack up and leave the country. The bourgeois nationalists and nationalist historians are shutting their eyes to this truth when they characterize the 1857-59 struggle as the "first struggle for independence".

Hence three important questions come up before one who studies history scientifically without pre-conceived notions and prejudices.

Firstly, how was it that in Oudh and the surrounding areas people's revolt mingled with the sepoys' mutiny and how could that rebellion last nearly two years, throwing a challenge to the British rule?

Secondly why was it that only a sepoys' mutiny without a people's revolt burst out in regions outside these areas? What was the reason for any type of people's struggle not coming up against the British in any other region?

Thirdly, why did a majority of the soldiers and the civilian population come forward to render help to the British to suppress the sepoys who started the mutiny?

Before answering these three questions it is necessary to make one thing clear. A revolt like the "Sepoy Mutiny" of 1857-59 with or without the backing of apeople's struggle was an indication of a very deep crisis of the existing society. In all revolutions, soldiers' revolts such as this have played an important role.

In the famous terminology of Lenin, sepoys (or soldiers) are "peanants in uniform". Their discontent presents itself during revolutionary stages in the form of quintessence of all contradictions in society. That was why Lenin gave the "Soviets", which were the revolutionary organizations of solidiers as well as of the workers and peasants, a very prominent place in the advance of the Russian revolution.

In the socialist revolutions of recent times as in China, Korea, Vietnam and Cuba and in all other revolutions of the historical periods, the discontent amongst the ranks of

the armed forces and the revolts that gave expression to this discontent have played key a role.

In India, the British had organized a military which was totally different in character from all types of military organizations that were in existence in India. Till then military organization that were extant in India was one formed under the feudal lords who were holding a dominant position in all sectors of life, inculding social and cultural. The military hierarchy consisted of the emperor or the king at the top, with the feudal lord and the local chiefs below him, in that order, who maintained relations, though exploitative, with the people. This relationship between them and the people was reflected in the military organization also.

On the other hand, the British built a military organization with a new kind of relationship between officers and rank based on pay and bureaucratic discipline, breaking the traditional set-up. Moreover, in this new organization, officers at all levels were foreigners. Consequently, unlike in the earlier set-up, there remained absolutely no relationship between the officers and ranks touching upon the social and cultural aspects of life. The sepoys came to realize that the British rulers were utilizing them to destroy all socio-cultural institutions that their predecessors had fondly built and also those who were heading those institutions. This naturally fostered anger and indignation in their minds.

This intense feeling first burst out as early as in 1806. The Vellore mutiny in the South was a forerunner of 1857-59, although it was relatively smaller in extent. Following this revolt, several small revolts of a similar nature had broken out in various parts of the country. Although each one of these was suppressed, the forces behind these struggles, namely, the social forces born out of the contradications between the official duties that the sepoys were forced to discharge as tools of foreign rulers and the reality that they belonged to that section of the people who were ruined day by day, being the victims of exploitation by the very same

foreign dominators. The 1857-59 revolt was the outburst of these forces.

Considered in this light, the question once again comes up before us: Why did 1857-59 not spread all over India and why the majority of the sepoys themselves and the civilian population, except in Oudh and the surrounding areas, helped the British? A detailed answer to this question may be found in the chapters that follow. But let us note one point here. The contradiction inherent in the feudal military set-up in India before the British established their power in the country was far greater than the contradiction in the militay organization built by the British. In fact, although the Mughal Emperors declared themselves the rulers of India, neither under them nor in the earlier periods was there a State or military organization which could be termed really "Indian". During the decades immediately preceding, various sections like the Sikhs of Punjab, the Hindustanis, Maharashtrians, South Indians and so on, had their own separate military organizations and chiefs. They were fighting amongst themselves, each one striving to dominate over the other. It was as part of these fights that they entered into military alliance and political relations with the foreigners. In Marx's words, "How came it that English supremacy was established in India? The paramount power of the Great Mogul was broken by the Mogul Viceroys. The power of the Viceroys was broken by the Mahrattas. The power of the Mahrattas was broken by the Afghans, and while all were struggling against all, the Briton rushed in and was enabled to subdue them all."[16]

This state of affairs was reflected in 1857-59 as well. The Rani of Jhansi, Nana Saheb and other recognized leaders of that revolt sought at one time or the other the assistance from the British in order to protect their own interests and to inflict defeat on their opponents. When they started their struggles against the British, their opponents sought the help of the British against them. No wonder, therefore, when

16 *The First Indian War of Independence, op cit,* p 33.

the leaders themselves acted in this manner, the ordinary soldiers and the lower ranks acted as tools of the British against the mutiny.

Briefly, the rebellion of 1857-59 was the outburst of the social contradictions that lay below the new military organization and the State established by the British rulers in India. And behind the suppression of the rebellion lay the fundamental contradiction inherent in the pre-British Indian society.

IV. THE BATTLE OF DELHI

The outburst of revolt of the sepoys of Meerut against their officers on May 9, 1857, marked the beginning of the "Sepoy Mutiny". These rebbellious troops marched to Delhi, and on reaching there appealed to Bahadur Shah, the living successor of Akbar and Aurangazeb, to take up the leadership of the anti-British struggle they had started.

Bahadur Shah was an old man, a simpleton, and did not possess the traditions and fame established by his predecessors. Nothing more could be said of Bahadur Shah than that he was born in the family of the Mughal Emperors who had ruled the country for several decades, in grandeur and glory. In other words, he represented only the outer shell of the renowned Mughal Empire.

But even this shell turned out to be a sharp weapon in the anti-British struggle. Weak and old, he was the last of the Mughal Emperors and the symbol of a social and administrative system which the people of Delhi and the surrounding areas had witnessed for several generations. It was in his name that the soldiers and the civilian population of that area organized the anti-British struggle.

We have noticed earlier, that the British became the rulers in Bengal and the surrounding areas by obtaining the *Diwani* from the Emperor of Delhi. It was by recognizing at least nominally the supremacy of the Emperor of Delhi that

they acquired the right to thus rule over Bihar, Orissa and other regions. In Bengal, on the other hand, they became the rulers after acting in the name of the Nawab who was directly under the Emperor.

It was in the initial stage of the power of the English East India Company that they acquired power in this manner directly from the emperor or his local representative. They had to act very cautiously at that time. Their method was to enter into military and political alliance with the princes and Nawabs under the emperor without offending him and even by pretending that they were submissive to him. The situation obtained at that time was such that only by following this policy in all the bordering areas of the empire would they be able to establish their domination.

In about the same period, the British gained ruling power in southern India, a region which was not even nominally under the jurisdiction of the Emperor of Delhi, by forming alliance with the princes and Nawabs in that region. Amongst these princes and Nawabs was the Nizam of Hyderabad who was nominally under the jurisdiction of the Emperor as also the Marathas who were consistently in conflict with Delhi. Thus the British began to consolidate their power in regions which were ruled by princes and others who were outside the jurisdiction of the emporer or were only nominally under him.

The situation obtained in the regions described as the centres of "Sepoy Mutiny" was entirely different. To the people of those regions, the Emperor of Delhi was not a distant ruler. They had been living directly under the authority of Emperor for generations. The elite class discharged various duties and responsibilities as part of that administrative system and received as remuneration for such services in cash or in the form of land or other benefits and concessions, and acquired authority and position. The Muslims among them were contented that the administration under the Mughal emperors was their own, while the Hindus were convinced that, though belonged to a different religion, they were being

treated with affection and respect. (Even under the rule of Aurangazeb, who was regarded as anti-Hindu, there were several Hindus occupying high positions.) Thus the Delhi Emperor was the head of an administrative system which generally enjoyed loyalty and confidence of the elite classes irrespective of the religion they professed.

Fully realising this, the British dealt with the Emperor with deference and submissiveness during the period just prior to the outbreak of the "Sepoy Mutiny". We have noted earlier that the flames of anti-British sentiment began to flare up in North India leading to the sepoy and civilian revolts when they changed their attitude towards the Emperor of Delhi. A change of a similar nature also came about in their attitude towards the princes and Nawabs, subordinate to the Emperor, and the Talukdars and other feudal lords subordinate to the princes and Nawabs.

The British decided to deal with feudal lords, princes and the Nawabs of Delhi and the surrounding areas only after consolidating their authority in eastern and southern India and after getting a section of the people friendly to them by transforming the socio-economic structures in these regions.

Another change that had come about as a result of this decision, namely, paying formal visits to the Emperor and offering him presents, etc., has already been mentioned earlier. Along with this they also deprived the princes and Nawabs of the right of adoption of successors, as also various traditional rights and benefits they had been enjoying since long. In addition, they also took measures to supervise the administrative functions of the princes and Nawabs and under the pretext of obviating misdeeds, to transfer the administration to themselves. In short, they unleashed a virtual attack against the Emperor of Delhi, the princes and Nawabs.

As stated earlier. before doing this, they had already consolidated their authority in eastern and southern India. Even in Punjab, Nepal, North-west Frontier region and in

Afghanistan they had established their authority. And for this purpose they managed to secure the help and assistance of the Emperor of Delhi and of the feudal lords of the neighbouring areas.

With the completion of this process, only the Emperor of Delhi and the rulers in the surrounding areas remained to be tackled. It became certain that in the event of a confrontation with them, the British would secure the assistance of the elite class and solidiers of the other regions. It was only the nthat they turned towards the rulers of Delhi and surrounding areas. It was for this reason that, as described in the earlier chapter, the struggle of 1857-59 and the people's revolt were confined mainly to this region. It was again for this same reason that while the sepoy mutiny was going on with the co-operation of the wide masses of the people at least in these limited areas, parallel struggles by the rural and urban poor and middle classes broke out against the British.

As far as this region was concerned, it was a real people's movement. It was not only the Emperor of Delhi, the princes, Nawabs and Talukdars and other feudal lords that the British ventured to attack and suppress. The life pattern then extant amongst the masses of people in the entire region was one based on the domination of the feudal elements with the Emperor of Delhi at the top. The destruction of the domination of the feudal lords meant disruption of the life pattern of the people. It also meant that the entire people were compelled to move towards a situation wherein they had perforce to bring about a thorough change in the pattern of life that they have been living for generations. Naturally therefore, the waves of anti-British feelings expressed by the feudal elements swept also through the common people. They had looked upon the feudal lords, including the Emperor of Delhi, as their traditional leaders and hence joined the anti-British struggles organized by them.

In the previous chapter we had made particular mention of some incidents as evidence to show that the Sepoy Mutiny was accompanied by people's revolts. Besides killing British

officials and setting fire to their offices, the masses also destroyed the records maintained by the *Nouveau riche* of their monetary transactions, profiteering in trade, etc. These incidents revealed the fact that the attacks unleashed by the revolting people were not against the traditional feudal lords but against the new elites who were fattening themselves in the shade of the British administrators. While destroying the properties of this section of the elite clasess, they chose as their leaders the traditional elites, like the Rani of Jhansi, Nana Saheb who rose to become the Peshwa of the Marathas, and such others. It was a part of this that the sepoys who raised the banner of revolt in Meerut marched to Delhi and installed the successor of Akbar and Aurangazeb as their leader. The British knew that this would have serious repercussions throughout northern India. They feared that the people who see Bahadur Shah, whom they were compelled to recognize at least nominally as the Mughal Emperor, heading the princes and Nawabs leading the Indian soldiers against the British, would render all assistance to the mutineers. They were therefore determined to capture Delhi, the capital of the Emperor at any cost and take the "Emperor" prisoner. On the other side, the revolting sepoys were determined not to yield and not to allow Delhi fall to the British.

Consequently, the "Battle of Delhi" which lasted for a few weeks was an important event in the struggle of 1857. It had military significance. But even more significant was the political aspect of the battle.

The fall of Delhi and the imprisonment of Bahadur Shah did not end the Sepoy Mutiny and people's revolt in the military sense. But the British occupation of Delhi, the capital of an empire for several generations, and the imprisonment of the head of that state, started the process of decline of the morale of the insurrectionists—both sepoys and masses of people. Following these developments, the sepoys and the people in revolt could not hold out for long; the centres of revolt fell one after another and finally the leaders of the revolt either surrendered or were captured.

The most regrettable aspect of the battle of Delhi was the shameless role played by Bahadur Shah and his family. Even to maintain the fame and prestige of his family, the Emperor and the members of his family were not prepared for a confrontation with the foreign masters. It was due to the pressure of some sort from soldiers and the people that Bahadur Shah ultimately agreed to be installed as the leader of the insurrectionists. And later he agreed to remain informally their leader and sign the proclamation and to stir the masses as long as the high tide of the struggle lasted.

But right at the time when the tide of the struggle began to rise high, he (actually through his wife) did whatever was possible to negotiate a settlement with the British with the aim of saving his life and as much property as possible. While in detention as a prisoner in the Delhi fort, and also before the trail court this successor of Akbar and Aurangazeb ventured to prove his innocence by stating that he did not do anything against the British except succumb to the pressure of insurrectionists to have his name used as their leader. This marked the shameless degeneration and surrender not of Bahadur Shah as an individual but of the class he represented.

True, others like Nana Saheb and the Rani of Jhansi, also belonging to the same class, left deep impressions on the history of the struggle. However, they also met with the final defeat due to the betrayal by a majority of their own class. They were the kind of people who refused to stand by the insurrectionists and rendered assistance to the foreigners to suppress them even during the high tide of the popular revolt. Thus, it was the class consisting of the Bahadur Shahs, who surrendered to the enemy at a crucial juncture and other feudal lords who had stood with the enemy all along that was at top of the society of those times. This constituted the fudamental weakness of a movement which has been characterized as 'the first freedom struggle'.

V. THE END OF AN EPOCH

With the imprisonment of Bahadur Shah, the end of the Sepoy Mutiny and of the accompanying mass revolt was in sight. But this was not only the end of a particular struggle or revolt, but a development that also marked the failure of the Indian society that had been in existence for centuries before the advent of the European trading companies in India. This marked the end of a historical epoch extending over the ancient and medieval periods characterized by the prevalence of the *varna* system which resulted from the disintegration of the ancient tribal society, of castes which had evolved out of it and the village community basic to it.

As we have seen, till the advent of European trading companies, the Indian society consisted of three elements, namely, the Emperor of Delhi, the local rulers directly under the Emperor or independent of him, and the feudal lords aligned to them. The rebellions which commenced as local revolts during the last decades of the 18th century and culminated in the sepoy mutiny and the popular revols of northern India in 1857-59, constituted a series of setbacks which this system had to face. With the defeat of the 1857-59struggle, the last and the most extensive of these revolts, society (or the elite class occupying top positions in that society) had to lay down its arms. The surrender of Bahadur Shah and the heroic end of Rani Jhansi illustrate this fact. But here it was a defeat not only of the elite class but of the people as a whole. What was lost in the military victory of the British was not only the ruling power of the Delhi Emperor or the properties of the Talukdars and other landlords but also the entire social life pattern of the whole people embedded in their system of beliefs, customs and behaviour. The common masses had felt the intense urge to protect and maintain their social life pattern and to resist the foreigner's attacks on it. This urge could be found expressed at each stage of the future anti-British struggles.

We had referred earlier to the break out of a series of revolts in the different parts of the country towards the end of 18th century. The type of revolts which the Hindu *Sanyasys* and the Muslim *Fakirs* had carried out, sometimes jointly and sometimes separately, must also be included in this series.

These revolts occurred at a time when the British had not yet been able to consolidate the authority which they had acquired formally from the local Nawabs in Bengal and the nearby areas and from the Emperor of Delhi. As in the case of the popular revolts in other areas, what was reflected in these revolts, too, was the acute discontent of the sections of the people who were being pauperized under the British rule, and who had lost their political authority. Thus, following the Bengal famine of 1770, the people who were affected by it mobilized themselves under the leadership of Hindu *Sanyasys* and Muslim *Fakirs*. In various parts of Bengal, the forces under the *Sanyasys* with such strength as could exterminate the entire British domination, were able to locally defeat the British soldiers.

But the *Sanyasy-Fakir* revolts were, unlike the other regional revolts of the period, mainly based on religious feelings. The feeling was widespread among the Hindus and the Muslims that Christianity which the European trading companies brought with them would be dangerous to their system of life and faiths. Therefore, they believed it their moral duty to resist this religion and its protectors, the British.

The *Sanyasy-Fakir* revolts burst out as a result of these feelings combined with the acute politico-economic discontent that was growing day by day amongst the people.

Following these revolts, various other movements based on religious feelings began to emerge in various parts of the country. Among them, the Muslim revolts had a distinct character. The Muslim elites had been holding high positions in the administrative set-up during the days of the Delhi Sultanate prior to the Mughal empire. The feeling

that they would lose these privileges and positions goaded them into anti-British revolts. Similarly, discontent was growing amongst the Hindus, too. Several revolts in which they also participated burst out in various parts of the country. But the notion that the Muslim rule which embraced the whole of northern India was about to end gave rise to certain movements with specific Islamic characteristics.

Of these, the Faraidi movement of Bengal and the Wahabi movement in the present Uttar Pradesh were two movements worth particular mention. The core of both these movements was the call to protect their *Deen* (religion) from the attacks from foreigners. The main enemy of these movements at that time was Christianity, which was considered to be the force which was attacking both Hinduism and Islam, along with the British, who were the patrons of that religion. Consequently, these movements did not lead to Hindu-Muslim conflicts. However, it contained the germ of the condition for the development of Hindu-Muslim communalism which, later, led to the break up of the unity of the national freedom struggle.

Both Hinduism and Islam had been existing for centuries in this country before the advent of the British. It is true that at times, in certain areas, these two religions had entered into conflicts. But, they both had existed as part of the same Indian society. The people of both the religions and their socio-cultural leaders had approved of the same society embedded in the caste, village and joint-family systems. The Christians who had considerably spread in many parts of India (e.g., in Kerala) also had imbibed this characteristic features of the Indian society.

But the situation changed with the advent of the European trading companies. Initially the Portuguese and later other European companies veiwed and used Christianity not as a religion but as a weapon to protect and develop their capitalist class interests in this country. This led to conflicts between their Christian religious propaganda and religious beliefs and

the customs based on caste of all sections of the people, including Christians, who had been living here for generations. (In Kerala, for example, the conflict between the local Christians and the Portuguese company men and the resultant *Koonan Kurisu Pledge*[17] are historically well known.)No wonder then that Hindus who claim to be the representatives of the Indian culture based on the *Vedas* and epics and the Muslims who claim to be the descendants of those who had ruled the country for centuries, opposed this new (Christian) religious propagandists and their rule.

More than the religious doctrines and systems of beliefs, it is the customs and rituals which the people as members of a community practise which easily stir up their emotions and feelings. The Hindus, Muslims and the local Christians had their own customs and rituals before the advent of the foreign traders. Each community was tolerant towards the customs and beliefs of the other and the authorities also did not interfere in such matters. (Even if on certain occasions, certain rulers had interfered with others' religious beliefs, the people of their own community hardly supported such actions.)

But, under the British rule, an attitude of deriding other religious doctrines and faiths and violation of their customs and rituals came into vogue. This pained both Muslims and Hindus alike. They lined up against the British rule. Hindu religious leaders called upon their followers to fight against the British to protect Hindu *Dharma*. Similarly, the leaders of the Muslim religion called upon their followers to smash foreign rule in order to protect their *Deen*.

Among the people's anti-British sentiments, which originated first in Bengal and South India and later led to

17. The Koonan Cross is situated in Mattancherry, Cochin. The Portuguese power established in Cochin refused to recognize the existence of the indigenous Christian community in Kerala which is commonly believed to have been established by St. Thomas himself. They tried to impose the Catholic-Portuguese religious customs and practices on the local Christians who strongly resented it. The Pledge they took in front of the cross is part of the declaration of freedom from Portuguese domination, rejecting the Catholic-Portuguese conventions and defending their own.

the sepoy mutiny and people's revolt, the feeling that caste rituals and "religious doctrines and beliefs were in danger" was the most prominent. Whenever the Indian soldiers revolted against the British rulers, from the local sepoy mutiny in Vellore in 1806 to the widespread revolt of 1857-59, it was evidently the feeling that their caste and religion were in danger that led them to action.

For instance, what led to the Vellore Sepoy mutiny of 1806, was certain orders issued by their superiors about the dress and bearing of the sepoys. These orders banned the Hindus practice of donning the caste mark of *tilak* on their forehead, compelled the Sikhs and Muslims to remove their beard or hair, and directed the use of caps in place of the headgears or turbans which the Indians were wont to use customarily. The use of hides and skins of animals in making caps was also an irritant to the Sepoy, as they did not know as to which animal hides and skins were being used, All these measures caused serious concern in the minds of soldiers belonging to the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities. They suspected that these measurers were a part of the British conspiracy to get them excommunicated from their community and then proselytize them to Christianity.

Following these developments, Indian soldiers had revolted on many occasions against their superior officers. It is true there were various causes for their resentment, but the main cause was their suspicion that they would be forced to renounce their religious beliefs and customs and to embrace Christianity. The Hindu soldiers resented when they were ordered lo go to war in foreign countries, because crossing the sea would have invited excommunication in accordance with the practice prevalent at that time.

Several such incidents constituted the apparant cause for the 1857 sepoy munity. The suspicion that animal fat was used to grease the cartridges caused resentment amongst the soldiers. The Hindus believed that they would lose caste if cartridges greased with the fat of cows were used. Similarly, the Muslims resented the use of grease taken from

boars. In fact, it was this suspicion that instigated the sepoys to revolt on the 9th of May 1857 in Meerut and subsequently in other places.

A rationalist or a materialist might dismiss all these as mere superstition. And they might characterize the soldiers who revolted on account of such superstitions as obscurantists and reactionaries. But the fact remains that the generations-old beliefs, faiths, customs and practices of lakhs were being violated. As mentioned earlier, these beliefs, faiths, customs and practices reflected the cultural ethos of a centuries-old society. That was why the Meerut mutiny reverberated in several other military centres too.

These feelings stirred up not only the soldiers in the military camps, but also the civilian population, with no lesser intensity than in the case of soldiers. The British were introducing several other measures, which, as in the case of the measures relating to the dress and bearing and use of arms by the soldiers, were bound to thoroughly transform the family life, property rights, education, and cultural advance of the civilian population.

The abolition of the practice of *Sati* (the burning of widow on the funeral pyre of her husband), and the legalization of widow re-marriage were progressive measures approvable by a modern society. But these measures were totally contradictory to the beliefs and practices of the Hindus. The Muslims felt that if the government which broke the customs and faiths of the Hindus would also do the same to them.

Both Hindus and Muslims saw the missionary propaganda of Christianity with the active connivance and protection of the authorities as an evidence. They even suspected that the new educational institutions established by the British government were being used as centres for proselytization. Thus, Christianity and its propagators roused the ire and harted of the entire mass irrespective of Hindu-Muslim religous differences.

The doctrines, faiths, customs and rituals based on casteist-religious institutions, were symbols of the collective

life of the Indian society like the political set-up including the Empire of Delhi and the rulers and provincial-regional chiefs under it. The socio-cultural structure was also an integral part of the ancient-medieval Indian society. It was this system which the European trading companies, from the very beginning, tried to destroy as they had tried to destroy the political system consisting of the rulers including the Emperor of Delhi, Talukdars, Jagirdars and other feudal lords. The rebellions of the *Sanyasys* and *Fakirs* on one side, and the various struggles of the local people on the other side, culminating in the sepoy mutiny of 1857 and the widespread people's revolts were struggles against these acts of the European traders. The defeat sustained by the provincial rulers and the Emperor of Delhi was, in fact, the defeat of the old Indian society based on institutions of castes and religions.

VI. THE UNWRITTEN SETTLEMENT

Following the suppression of the 1857-59 Sepoy Mutiny and the popular revolt, the new British rulers began to initiate vindictive measures. Bahadur Shah, who was taken prisoner, was exiled. Rani of Jhansi and many other leaders died. Many of those who survived were tried in courts and sentenced to death or to long periods of imprisonment. The mutineers and the people who had participated in the rebellion were subjected to cruel and heinous repression. The attitude of the British after 1859 was that of a conquerer towards the vanquished.

They did not conceal this either. British leaders, through the columns of newspapers, and in speeches in and outside parliament, demanded that no mercy be shown to those who rose against them in India.

The British administrators, however, realized that the feelings roused amongst the people by the mutiny and the people's rebellion which had lasted nearly two years could

not be suppressed easily through such direct acts of repression. The role played by the sepoys and the civilian population in the two-year-long mutiny and rebellion was of such magnitude as could neither be easily forgotten nor belittled. They realized that it was a widespread rebellion in which the princes who were ousted from seats of power, the feudal lords who had lost their landed properties and the poorest of the poor people actively participated. They were afraid that in case the causes that led to the outburst of the rebellion continued to exist, similar rebellions would recur in northern India itself or it would spread to other regions of the country. They realized that it was necessary to eliminate these causes in order to maintain their rule.

Following this realization, they brought about some substantial changes in the policies they had been pursuing till then. They were conscious of the fact that a foreign government would not be in a position to redress the grievances of the masses of people in the villages and urban areas. But it would be possible for the administrators to placate the feudal lords, and the heads of casteist and religious institutions who had played a leading role in turning the dissatisfaction of the masses into revolts, and transforming such revolts into an intense armed struggle. It was for this sort of appeasement that the British administrators were trying.

As we had noticed earlier, a few years prior to 1857, the British rulers had been pursuing a policy of depriving the princes, the Nawabs and other rulers and feudal lords like Jagirdars and Talukdars, of their rights and privileges and confiscating their landed properties. That policy had to be abandoned. There were suspicions amongst the Hindus and Muslims and other non-Christian sections of the people that the British were trying to destroy all their religious faiths, customs and practices. This suspicion had to be removed—that's all.

Accordingly, Queen Victoria made a proclamation before the people of India on the occasion of her assumption of power as the Empress of India in 1858. The Proclamation

gave concessions to two important sections of the Indian people, the native princes and the feudal lords. To the native princes it gave the undertaking that the British Government would honour all the agreements hitherto been entered into between them and the East India Company or their representatives. The government would guarantee their rights, privileges and position of honour. To the feudal lords, the proclamation undertook to preserve their ancenstral feudal properties and all privileges associated with them. It further assured that in the event of bringing new legislations, it would give due considerations to the rights, traditions, and customs and practices which had been extant right from the ancient times.

Obviously, the Proclamation undertakes to protect not only the economic interests of the landlords, but also their privileges as heads of the casteist-religious society and all the laws, conventions, and the rituals and practices associated with them.

That is, earlier in the years immediately preceding 1857, the British had taken a number of steps, such as annexing the territories ruled by the Rajahs and Nawabs, abrogating the agreements between them and the British, replacing old landlords by new, bringing under the direct control of the British the territories of the native princes and the land and properties of the landlords under the pretext of revenue arrears and maladministration, refusing to recognize the rights of the princes and feudal lords to adopt and nominate heirs, and so on. That was why the feudal elite threw the entire weight behind the Sepoy Mutiny and the mass revolt. The Proclamation envisages giving up the anti-feudal apprach contained in these actions and to make efforts to placate and turn them loyal to the British rule. Similarly, it was also necessary to take precautions against the communal and religious sentiments of the people reaching a point of outbreak as it happened in 1857-59. That was why the Proclamation assured that the customs, traditions, etc., would be taken into consideration before introducing new legislative measures.

The proclamation of Queen Victoria thus contained provisions to appease, at least to some extent, the people of India who took part in the Sepoy Mutiny and the revolts and the feudal elite who gave leadership to them as also to arrive at a compromise with the latter.

There were two faces to this compromise. There was, of course, no question at all of making a written compromise settlement directly with those who had participated in a revolt that was suppressed. But it was possible to have an unwritten compromise with them. The feudal elite and the common people who had waged the struggle under the former's leadership must recognize the fact that the power of the British government was unassailable and that the British would rule in such a way as to protect the rights, positions and properties of the feudal lords and to assure that the religious faiths and customs of the Indian people (non-Christian) would not in any way be harmed.

Needless to say, this approach represented a fundamental departure from the policy that had been pursued by the East India Company and the British government prior to 1857. This was a move to win over the former Rajahs, and the aristocracy including the feudal elite as allies of the British rule. A new approach was also adopted to honour the popular sentiments within the limits of religious practices and social life. in order to ensure that people's discontent that might arise in the course of the conduct of the administration of the country with the help of these new allies, did not burst out in another revolt.

And the elites of the existing Indian society were satisfied with this. There was no possibility of obtaining any rights or privileges of a wider extent or of more significance than what has been assured in the Proclamation. All ways and means to obtain more powers had ended with the suppression of the 1857-59 rebellion. As such, the elites of those times saw that the only way to protect their class interests was to be satisfied with what they got and to try to ensure that they get all the rights and privileges that were specified

in the Proclamation, and at the same time, to remain as loyal subjects of the Empress accepting the rule of her government.

Thus, the Proclamation of Queen Victoria made after the suppression of the revolt of 1857-59 meant a settlement, unwritten on the part of the feudal elite and written on the part of the British rulers. The elite class characterized this as a "Magna Carta" obtained from the British rulers. They made it clear through words and deeds that they shall ever remain "loyal and respectful" to the rulers who had very "graciously bestowed" upon them these rights and privileges.

It is for the first time in India's history that a group of foreigners, keeping their foreign identity— without getting merged with the socio-cultural mainstream of this country— became the rulers of this country. Never before had a king or a queen ruled over the princes and people of India sitting in a throne in a far-off place. But, unlike the different foreign groups from the Aryans to the Mughals which had become themselves Indianized and sat at the helm of affairs, the British were now able to transform the whole Indian social structure, using an administrative machinery situated 5,000 or more miles away.

However, they had to win over the former rulers and elite sections, without creating hatred in them and alienating them. And the elites of this country represented a feudal (or pre-capitalists) society. There was a basic contradiction between that society and the capitalist society which the British represented. This compromise between the foreign rulers and the native elites, who, by remaining loyal to the former, were trying to retain their power and position, representing two mutually contradictory social systems, gave rise to a number of incongruities. These incogruities have played their unique roles in the development of events in India in the years to come. We shall examine them in details in the next few chapters.

As a beginning of this examination, let us notice here that there is an irreconcilable contradiction between the wishes maintained by the British rulers and that of the Indian feudal

aristocracy which now decided to function as subjects loyal to them. This contradiction is as follows. The task of the British rulers as representatives of capitalist society was to cut at the roots of the existing pre-capitalist society evolved here for centuries. The feudal aristocrcay now determined to function as loyal subjects and to help the British in suppressing the discontented common people, on the other hand, wanted to preserve at least the remnant, if not the whole, of that pre-capitalist society. At the same time, the educated middle class which considered the Sepoy Mutiny and the popular revolt reactionary and advised the people to keep away form them, was baffled at the assurance given by the British to protect the doctrine, customs and practices which they considered reactionary.

The British representing capitalism cannot exist without strengthening the social forces represented by the educated middle class. At the same time, to curb the growing dissatisfaction of the people as an inevitable consequence of the development of capitalism, they had to enter into a political alliance with the feudal elites representing the reactionary forces.

It is out of this contradication that the next stage of the struggle of the Indian people for national independence emerges.

The British rule which got consolidated itself in India following the suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny and popular revolt was taking India irresistibly along the path of capitalism. As an inevitable consequence of this capitalist development, the roots of the pre-capitalist society were being cut, one by one. The new social forces born out of the development of a capitalist society were growing.

At the same time, considering self-existence in the administrative and political domains, it becomes imperative for the Biritish to strike a compromise with the declining pre-capitalist forces. Consequently, the foreign capitalist rulers and the constantly growing indigenous capitalist forces came into clash with each other. The latter forces

were striving to bring changes in all aspects of the social life in accordance with the capitalist forces which were growing as a consequence of the actions of the British rulers. The alien character of the foreign rulers, and their depedence on the representatives of the pre-capitalist society constituted an obstacle before this.

This situation gives rise to a new movement, rather than one assuming the form of an armed struggle as of the 1857-59 period, fighting for national independence along the constitutional and peaceful path led by the very same section of the society which stood with the British against the Sepoy Mutiny and the popular revolts. Here ends one stage of the national struggle against the alien rule and begins another. In place of one form, it assumes another form. The successors of those who had stood with the mutineers in 1857-59, now align themselves with the government against the freedom struggle; the successors of those who opposed the Sepoy Mutiny and people's revolt branding them "reactionary", now play an active role in the freedom struggle.

4

SHOOTS OF BOURGEOIS NATIONALISM

1. UNITY OF INDIA—THE MAIN CONDITION

We have already noticed that one of the important factors that enabled the British to suppress the Sepoy Mutiny and the people's revolt of 1857-59 was the disunity among Indians. Whenever a section of the people rose against the foreign rule, the British suppressed the revolt with the help and assistance of various other sections. Ultimately, when the people of Delhi and the surrounding areas started a far more widespread revolt, it was suppressed with the help and assistance of not only the Punjabis, Marathis and Nepalis in the neighbouring areas, but also sections of people in the very same areas where the revolt was going on.

Thisdisun ity among the Indian people was the product of the inherent character of the Indian society which had been divided among mutually opposing classes in the form of

varnas and castes that emerged after the break up of the ancient tribal society.

Unlike the European societies, the Indian class society did not reach the stage of national unity, a special product of capitalism, after going through the historical stages of social development of slavery, feudalism, and capitalism following the break up of the primitive tribal society. What prevailed in India for centuries was a social system based first on *chaturvarnya* and, later, on the caste system which hid behind it the class divisions characteristic of slavery and feudalism, and economic exploitation and political oppression arising out of them.

Consequently, when certain social forces of capitalism began to emerge in the caste-based society, the existing social background was not conducive for the development of these forces. The continued existence of a society for generations without appreciable change, divided not only among castes and religions, but also among tribes in some places, with growing contradictions and relations of hierarchy among them, and a system of self-sufficient village communities based on the social relations arising out of these institutions—this is the essence of India's past history. In the words of Marx:

> However changing the political aspect of India's past might appear, its social condition has remained unaltered since its remotest antiquity, until the first decennial of the 19th century. The handloom and the spinning wheel, producing their regular myriads of spinners and weavers, were the pivots of the structure of that society. From immemorial times, Europe received the admirable textures of Indian labour, sending in return for them her precious metals and furnishing thereby his material to the goldsmith, that indispensible member of Indian society, whose love of finery is so great that even the lowest class, those who go about nearly naked, have commonly a pair of golden ear-rings and a gold ornament of some kind hung round their necks.... It was the British intruder who broke

up the Indian handloom and destroyed the spinning wheel. England began with driving the Indian cotton from the European market; it then introduced twist into Hindustan and in the end inundated the very mother country of cotton with cottons.[1]

The disastrous changes this has brought to Indian society have been described in an earlier chapter. The people's rebellions that ended with the 1857-59 revolt were the consequence of these changes. For the same reason, when the rebellions were suppressed, this disastrous process not only continued but got strengthened. Although the rebellionists were suppressed, the political backgrounds that led to those revolts, i. e., the discontent of the pauperized masses, still continued with intensity.

Along with this, a new background began to develop capable of giving expression to the growing mass discontent in forms other than the form of the 1857-59 struggles. The institutions of caste and the more or less self-sufficient villages were undermined. Objective conditions began to develop for politically unifying Indian people who hitherto remained divided among the different castes, religions and tribes and for transforming them into a unified nation. As part of the process of the destruction of the rural society based on handloom and hand-spinning, the foundation of the caste system and of the society based on it began to crack.

A new consciousness began to spread among the Indian people that they, like the European nationalities which were being united more and more as an inevitable result of the development of capitalism, also constituted themselves a nationality. Also, material conditions began to emerge for the formation of a national independence movement as distinct from that of the 1857-59 period.

Marx observed that the British had "to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating—the annihilation of old Asiatic society and the laying of the

1. *The First Indian War of Independence*, pp 17-18.

material foundations of Western Society in Asia", because it was the same British domination which caused disaster to Indian society that caused these material conditions to rise. The British rule established here was, in fact, fulfilling both these missions. It was by giving paramount importance to "political unity of India" in this "regeneration" that Marx presented his conclusions on the "future results of the British rule in India". Marx wrote: "The political unity of India, more consolidated, and extending farther than it did under the Great Moguls, was the first condition of its regeneration."[2] How did this "political unity" come about under the British rule? Marx says:

> That unity, imposed by the British sword, will now be strengthened and perputuated by the electric telegraph. The native army organised and trained by the British drill-sergeant, was the *sine qua non* of Indian self-emancipation and of India ceasing to be the prey of the first foreign intruder. The free press, introduced for the first time into Asiatic society, and managed principally by the common offspring of Hindus and Europeans, is a new and powerful agent of reconstruction. The zamindari and ryotwari themselves, abominable as they are, involve two distinct forms of private property in land—the great desideratum of Asiatic society. From the Indian natives, reluctantly and sparingly educated at Calcutta, under English superintendence, a fresh class is springing up, endowed with the requirements for government, and imbued with European science. Steam has brought India into regular and rapid communication with Europe, has connected its chief ports with those of the whole south-eastern ocean, and has revindicated it from the isolated position which was the prime law of its stagnation. The day is not far distant when, by a combination of railways and steam vessels the distance between England and India, measured by time, will be shortened to eight days and when that once fabulous

2. *Ibid*, p. 34.

country will thus be actually annexed to the Western world.[3]

Marx gave a preeminent role to the construction of railways in fulfilling the mission of "regeneration" by the British in India. Marx saw in the introduction of railways a step that would help bring about a total change in the traditional image of India:

> It is notorious that the productive powers of India are paralyzed by the utter want of means of conveying and exchanging its various produce. Nowhere, more than in India, do we meet with social destitution in the midst of natural plenty for want of means of exchange. ...The introduction of railroads may be easily made to subserve agricultural purposes by the formation of tanks where ground is required for embankment and by the conveyance of water along different lines. Thus irrigation, the *sine qua non* of farming in the East, might be greatly extended and the frequently recurring local famines, arising from the want of water, would be averted.[4]

The importance of railways does not end with this. It is the beginning of the process which Marx characterizes as the "laying of the material foundations of Western society". Marx continues:

> I know that the English millocracy intend to endow India with railways with the exclusive view of extracting at diminished expenses cotton and other raw materials for their manufacturers. But when you have once introduced machinery into the locomotion of a country, which possesses iron and coals, you are unable to withold it from its fabrication. You cannot maintain a net of railways over an immense country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion and out of which there must grow the application of machinery to those branches of industry not immediately connected with railways. The

3 *Ibid*, pp. 34-35.
4. *Ibid*, pp 35-36.

railway system will therefore become, in India, truly the forerunner of modern industry. This is the more certain as the Hinds are allowed by British authorities themselves to possess particular aptitude for accommodating themselves to entirely new labour and acquiring the requisite knowledge of machinery.... Modern industry resulting from the railway system will dissolve the hereditary divisions of labour upon which rest the Indian castes, those decisive impediments to Indian progress and Indian power.[5]

The British engaged themselves in these "regeneration" activities, not as propagated by the British rulers and their sycophants, for modernizing in India. In Marx's words: "The millocracy have discovered that the transformation of India into a reproductive country has become of vital importance to them, and that, to that end, it is necessary, above all, to gift her with means of irrigation and of internal communication. They intend now drawing a net of railroads over India. And they will do it."[6]

But whatever might have been the real intentions of British rulers, this fostered the material conditions for the emergence of an organized people's struggle. The result was that it provided the capability to the Indian people to build a new movement that could not be suppressed by force as it was the people's revolts that culminated in the 1857-59 revolt. Unconsciously though, the British united the Indian people politically, by destroying the caste-based beliefs and practices and the decadent social life that had been preventing the people from launching and participating in such a people's struggle and also fostered in them the intense urge for independence. This was the other side of the mission of "destruction" of the British.

The British rule also began the process of the birth of a class—the bourgeosie—as distinct from the feudal aristocracy, and its co-born antagonistic class force—the working

5. *Ibid.* pp 37-38.
6. *Ibid*, p. 35.

class—to stand in forefront of the people surging towards a unified freedom struggle.

It would not have been possible for the British to consolidate their political administrative system or to perpetuate their economic exploitation of India without creating the material conditions for the creation of a state with jurisdiction all over the country but above the *varna*-caste system, and for the emergence and development of new classes and strata with bourgeois characteristics, under it.

Classes and strata of people capable of giving leadership to a new type of independence struggle had already begun to emerge in various parts of India even before 1857-59. The most significant manifestation of this was witnessed in Bengal where the British rule had first struck roots. In fact, it was this section of people who played a key role in organizing the masses against the 1857-59 revolt characterizing it "reactionary". For the same reason,the assurances given by the British in 1859 in the form of Queen Victoria's Proclamation, etc., to maintain and protect all the traditional beliefs, customs and practices based on caste, naturally disturbed this section of the people. Furthermore, the steps subsequently taken by the British rulers also created disillusionment among these people who had hoped that the rulers would take their stand in their favour to maintain and protect the moral values that they had cherished most, as also their economic and political ideologies.

Thus, the very same sections of people who had earlier stood alongside the British against the rebellion, began to give shape to a new anti-British movement, step by step.

Which were these sections and how did they come to be formed and developed; how did the organized bourgeois national movement come to be formed as a result of this development; how did the working class become an independent political force against the bourgeois leadership of the movement, though an integral part of it? —these are the main questions that relate to the next stage in the history of the freedom struggle.

II. LANDED ARISTOCRACY—OLD AND NEW

We had cited more than once in the earlier pages the opinion of Marx that the British had really brought a revolution in the landownership system in India. This played a significant role in building up political unity of India and in creating the forces that were to give leadership to a new stage of the struggle for independence.

In the Indian social system which gradually evolved after the break up of the ancient tribal society, the nature of possession and utilization of landed property occupies an important place. Marx pointed out that the characteristic feature of the social system of India and of Asia was that no individual had ownership rights on land. On this basis, while distinguishing between various social formations, he has used the terms "Asiatic Society" in some places.

Marx thought that during the ancient and medieval times, the land, jointly owned by the community, was given for cultivation to individuals or families in India. He believed that this system continued till the consolidation of the British domination. This is what he has written evaluating the situation in India.

It can be seen that if we take the observation of Marx literally, it does not correspond to reality. Recent investigations have revealed that private ownership in land had appeared in many parts of India even before the advent of the British rule. Several documents dealing with transactions in land (mortgages and sales, etc.) have been discovered. In other words, this accumulated body of evidence shows that in the Indian society which started initially in the form of *Chaturvarnya* and later in its extended form of castes and which absorbed at a still later stage the non-Hindus also, private ownership in land had already begun to appear, although slower in pace and smaller in extent as compared to the sectors of commerce and industry. Anyone who examines Marx's method of investigation would be convinced that had these documents and other materials come to his notice, he would

not have asserted that land in India was owned by the community in common.

Whatever be the inadequacies in the opinion Marx held on the details, the picture he has presented on Indian society in general and on the landownership in particular was correct.

Slavery in the sense that the labourer himself is the property of the owner and production based on that never existed in India on a wide scale. Neither did the kind of feudalism come to exist in India as in Europe, which replaced slavery through a revolutionary process, nor did a capitalist class capable of destroying feudalism and establishing domination in the society as it happened in Europe. It is this reality that Marx has indicated using the term "unchanging" in his works on India.

Basic to this 'unchangingness' was the village community that rose on the foundation of a social system anchored upon caste-based customs and conventions. In that society each individual or family had to perform an ascribed function in return of which the individual or family was entitled to a definite privilege and status in society. Avoiding or failing to fulfil this function did not go well with one's self-respect. Depriving one of his privileges and status was never tolerated, either.

It was these same social relations based on customs and conventions adopted and strictly practised by the society as a whole that governed the pattern of ownership of landed property, as they did in other domains in the life. Each one of those who occupied the different layers of the society—the occupant of the land, the local chief, the provincial chief, the king, and so on—had partial rights on land, but none of them had absolute right on it. Consequently, each of them had a fixed share, and that alone, in the produce from the land.

Different methods such as wars, conquest and change in the administration, had been resorted to to gradually reduce the share of the tiller of the soil and to enhance the shares of those occupying positions above him in the hierarchy. In this

sense, class exploitation became intensified. However, even under the most intense class exploitation, the prescribed share of the occupant was as valuable and unassailable as those of sections above him. It can thus be seen that it is not irrelevant to say that in a system in which each one in the society had a right to a fixed share, private ownership in land, as it is seen under modern capitalism, did not exist.

When trade and the use of money began to develop in a society in which different kinds of right on land and different rates of share in the produce evolved through a historical process, it was natural that those who had a share in the ownership right on land made their share an object of transaction. But, under the land ownership relactions which formed the basis of village communities in a society based on the caste system, such transactions would be extremely rare. The documents discovered by researchers after Marx were of transactions that took place rarely.

The fact that such transactions did take place in some parts of India does not negate fundamentally Marx's conclusions in regard to the "unchanging" character of Indian society and the non-existence of private ownership of land in that society. It only confirms Marx's view that a revolution in the land ownership relations was an urgent need to facilitate the reconstruction and political unity of India.

The British had regularized land ownership relations by introducing the Zamindari, Ryotwari, Mahalwari and various other systems in different parts of the country. Although all these systems differed from one another, there was one factor that linked them together, namely, the creation of private ownership on land in India where it did not exist before. As Marx pointed out, this was a revolutionary change.

According to the new system introduced by the British, every piece of land now had an owner. Whatever may be the name given to him, zamindar, mirazdar, landlord or what have you, he enjoyed full rights over his land. He had the right either to appropriate wholly for himself the produce of the land or to give a share of it to others who assisted

him in the production, as he wished. Similarly, he had also the right to obtain loans by mortgaging that property or to sell it for cash. Even those who were landless got the right to get land on mortgage or by purchase. In other words, land ownership rights could also be brought for transactions as in the case of any other form of private property.

While thus recognising land owners with full ownership rights, the functions that were formerly attached to land-ownership were taken away from it. Previously, all those who were connected with land, from the actual possessor to each one of those above him at various levels, had certain functions to discharge. From the village artisan to the officer in the army or in the civilian service, each had some obligation to the village community or to the administrative machinery above it. The rights over the land and the share in its produce were determined in relation to such obligations.

The British severed all these links and divided the entire system into two: the administrative machinery and other social organizational forms on one side and the land ownership rights on the other. The revolutionary transformation brought about by the British in the landownership relations consisted of payment of salaries from the exchequer to the men in the military and civilian services forming part of the administrative machinery, payment of remuneration to the village artisans and other employees by those who utilised their services as also fixing the wages of workers, rent payable by tenants and tax payable by the landowners to the government and interest to the moneylenders and so on.

As a result of these changes, a considerable section of the people who had possessed various rights and privileges were deprived of all such rights and privileges; millions of common people lost the land (means of subsistence) they possessed and became destitutes. Similarly, local and provincial chiefs and many other individals and families associated with administration lost the rights and privileges they once enjoyed. The functions that they had been discharging for generations were transferred to officials of the new

administration along with their rights and privileges. And at the top of this administrative machinery stood the British officials.

All this formed the basis for people's dissatisfaction leading to the 1857-59 rebellion. It was, in fact, an explosion caused by the discontent of wide sections of the people, from the landed aristocracy at the top to the cultivating peasants and other rural poor at the bottom, who were ruined by agrarian revolution brought in by the British.

But there is another side of the coin. Although a big section of the existing landowners lost the property right in land, a new section of landowners was emerging with full ownership right, in their place. They were free to collect rent from tenant cultivators at rates they were pleased to prescribe or evict tenants incurring their displeasure. They were free either to lease out the land for cultivation or to directly cultivate it employing labour. They were free also to enhance their income to any extent through various other means. It is true that they did not have the status in society as local chiefs or feudal lords. Their preoccupation now was to earn as much as they could by utilizing the ownership rights bestowed upon them by the British and to rise up in society.

The British not only created such a new class of landowners, but also adopted steps to transform agricultural technology. Imbibing the experience they had gained from the transformations in agricultural technology in Europe, particularly in England, as part of the economic changes there, some of them ventured to start tea, rubber and indigo plantations. Efforts were also made to increase the production of commercial and industrial crops and to modernize agricultural operations. These moves on the part of the British considerably influenced the new landlords who were concentrating all their attention on enhancing their income. Thus emerged a new section of landlords whose mode of production as well as ownership rights were distinctly different from the former landlords.

Needless to say, this was an indication of the emergence of a new set of (capitalist) landlords in place of the old pre-capitalist landlords. There was an important difference between the former and latter. The traditional landlords were basically against the agrarian revolution brought by the British. They were trying to protect the traditional system of landownership and relations as also the functions and privileges associated with it. The new section of landlords, on the other hand, did not desire the continuance of the old system as such. They desired to lead the new transformations that were being brought about to their logical conclusion. That was why while the former landlords stood with the mass upsurge which ended in 1859, the new landlords not only kept off themselves from the upsurge but also co-operated the British in suppressing it.

These capitalist landlords, like the capitalists in trade and industry, wanted the capitalist mode of reconstruction initiated by the British to reach its logical conclusion. They wanted to nurture the seeds of the capitalist development sown by the British and lead it to fruition. They were eager to acquire modern knoledge and to adopt new styles of work and organisational methods for that purpose. They wanted to see a bourgeois society develop in India, stage by stage though, and to share the leading position with the capitalists in commerce and industry. In the process of attaining these objectives they would in the long run come into conflict with the interests of the British as they would with those of the commercial and industrial capitalists. In other words, they also would participate activity in the next stage of the freedom struggle as other sections in the capitalist society.

III. VANGUARDS OF THE NEW EPOCH

As we have seen, the result of the agrarian policy of the British in India was the elimination of the domination of the

feudal lords and the development of a new section of capitalist landlords. Its impact was not, however, confined to the economic sector alone. It exerted immense influence on all spheres of the socio-cultural life. It was as a logical culmination of this process that a new political movement emerged subsequently under the leadership of the bourgeoisie.

The socio-cultural life of medieval India was associated with feudal landownership in the economic sector and with the traditions of the classical works written in Sanskrit, Pali, Persian, Arabic, etc., in the cultural sphere. Till the establishment of the British rule, the repository of knowledge that India possessed consisted of the knowledge commonly developed by the Hindu scholars well-versed in Indian languages like Sanskrit and Pali and by the Islamic scholars well-versed in the Persian and Arabic languages. Eminent scholars in various branches of knowledge like philosophy and mathematics had emerged from among Hindus and Muslims. The edifice of civilization that had come up in India that excelled even Europe, until the technological revolution in the wake of capitalist development there, was built on the foundation of the *Varna*-caste system that had been developed in India and the Islamic empires which left that system undisturbed.

It was this very foundation that was shattered when British rule took roots here. The hatchet wielded by the British rulers fell on the very roots of the medieval Indian civilization in the forms of the Brahmin dominated Hindu culture and civilization, and the non-Hindu culture and civilization developed by Islamic rulers. In place of the domination of the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and other upper caste Hindus and of the Islamic rulers, the British formulated their administrative policies in such away as to consolidate the domination of the foreign rulers belonging to the Christian faith. Cutting off the links which the Hindu -Islamic religions had with the administative set-up in the ancient and medieval India, the new regime installed Christianity in its place. This was a political transformation that had far reaching effects on the entire socio-cultural life.

In the earlier chapters we have already dealt with one aspect of the reaction of the masses of Hindus and Muslims and the elite classes which exercised influence on them, to this development. They were intensely enraged at their being deprived of their doctrines, caste-based customs and practices, educational system and cultural ethos which they valued as priceless possessions. As we have seen, it was this ire in part that ignited the 1857-59 revolt that spread extensively and was finally suppressed.

There was, however, another aspect of this development. A section of the masses and another section of the elite class had kept themselves aloof from this resistance. Further, within the elite class itself had emerged a section which had come to realize that the old social system and cultural life ought to be destroyed and replaced by the system which the British had built in their own country.

The lower middle class and poorer sections of the society were not conscious of the superiority of the new society; nor did they demonstrate the desire to establish that system in India. Every one, however, began to depend on the British to get employment under the new administration. For those sections of the people who were deprived of their means of life as a result of the destruction of the feudal system and the rural life, the only way open to eke out a living under the British was to obtain jobs under the rulers.

Since a considerable section of the people, both in the elite class and the common people had thus to depend on the British rulers, they welcomed the emergence of the new society. One of the main reasons for this situation was the modern system of education that was spreading rapidly in the country. Instead of imparting knowledge based on Hindu and Muslim philosophy and depending on the Oriental languages, a new system of education that was intended to impart modern knowledge to the pupils was adopted. To suit this purpose, English became the medium of instruction. Parallel to the *Pathasalas* and *Madrassas* which imparted Oriental culture in general and Indian culture in particular through

Sanskrit and Persian languages, modern English medium schools and colleges teaching modern science and humanities like history began to emerge.

This change in the educational system which was being brought about led to sharp differences of opinion even among the rulers. One section strongly advocated for facilities to provide Oriental education, while another section argued equally strongly against the utility of Oriental education and for modern Western education. As the culmination of this debate which lasted for nearly half a century, the Government adopted the policy of establishing modern educational institutions (schools and colleges) with English as the medium of instruction.

This difference of opinion appeared among the elites of India as well. Among the Indians also there was a section advocating the establishment of schools and colleges with English as the medium of instruction to impart modern knowledge. This section believed that those who were organizing revolts against the rulers with the intention of maintaining ancient and medieval Indian culture and civilization were, in fact, trying to arrest the progress of the country and taking the people backwards. They also believed that India could advance only if a radical transformation was brought about as in Europe, imbibing modern knowledge being disseminated by the British rulers. As representatives of Indians with social consciousness, they presented memoranda before the rulers in India and in England against Oriental education and in favour of Western education.

Among this section of people, special mention needs to be made of Raja Ram Mohan Roy who may rightly be called the founding leader of the bourgeois nationalist movement in India. Unike the Jhansi Ranis and the Bahadur Shahs, he did not wish to save the socio-cultural life of India from British domination. Rather, his aim was to bring about the kind of socio-cultural transformation that the British had brought about in their own country.

The activities of Ram Mohan Roy and his colleagues

in this direction will be dealt with in the next chapter. Here we will refer to his activities in the field of education. In a letter to Governor General, Lord Armherst, he pointed out that "No improvement can be expected from inducing young men to consume a dozen of years of the most valuable period of their lives in acquiring the niceties of Baikaran (Vyakarana) or Sanskrit grammar", or from the speculations of *Vedanta* or from *Mimamsa* or *Nyaya* and wanted the Government to "promote a more liberal and enlightened system of education, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences...."[7]

It was these views of Ram Mohan Roy among others that subsequently induced the British government, following the recommendations in the famous Macaulay minute to take a decision in favour of introducing Western education in India.

Comparing these views of Ram Mohan Roy with the feelings of the participants of the people's uprisings, it might seem that he was a devotee of the British. And viewed from the stand-point of the anti-imperialist movement that developed later, he was a devotee of the British. But his loyalty was not to the British rule, but to the new (bourgeois) society and its cultural values which the British were trying to impart to the people of India. For instance, Ram Mohan Roy strongly advocated freedom of the press, another contribution of European bourgeois society, with the same vigour as he advocated the introduction of modern education with English as the medium of instruction. He not only welcomed the publication of newspapers, in the beginning under the auspices of the foreigners and later under Indians, openly criticizing the government and its officials, but also took initiative to start a newspaper. When the Government tried to implement acts to suppress the freedom of the press, as they could not tolerate a free press, he strongly opposed the move.

The notes Ram Mohan sent first to the authorities in

7. Cited in Tara Chand, *History of the Freedom Movement of India*, Vol: II p. 189.

India and later to those in England, protesting against the 1823 Press Act muzzling the press are well known. Although he dealt with only the topic of freedom of the press in those notes, they contained the urge for independence of the country which was expressed later by his successors amongst the bourgeois nationalists. The agitations that Ram Mohan carried on for a new educational system based on modern sciences and for the freedom of the press, were events of historic significance. An examination of the documents he had prepared on these two issues would show that the agitation he had launched was the forerunner of the efforts of Indian bourgeoisie to take the Indian society along the path of capitalism. The scope of the agitation was limited and its language moderate, because the bourgeoisie at that time was in its infancy.

Although Ram Mohan Roy's name has been specifically mentioned here, he was not an isolated individual. As we shall see in the next chapter, he was, in fact, the representative of an emerging section anxious to modernize the Indian society which has been dependant mainly on Hindu culture and civilization.

Although they formed only a small minority of the population, they were the vanguard of an all-pervading social revolution that was to take shape in the future. The waves of the slogan of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity", reverberated in the historic French Revolution, had swept through their hearts. The inspiring message of the socio-cultural renaissance and the politico-economic revolutions that had swept throughout Europe since the 17th century had stirred them. They viewed modern education and freedom of the press as the beginning of the efforts to modernize India along the same path.

It was in Bengal that this section emerged first and started functioning in a well organized manner. As we know, it was there that the British first established their domination. It was only after a few decades of obtaining the *Diwani* in 1765 from the Emperor of Delhi to administer the areas

covering Bengal and its surroundings, that the British established themselves in South India and Bombay. The northern part of India came under their sway only in the middle of the 19th century. Therefore, modern education and independent journalism which made the beginnings in Bengal spread to South India and Bombay, and finally reached North India only in the last stage of this development.

A similar time lag could be discerned even in the matter of religions, castes and communities. The foreign trading companies had also carried on Christian religious propaganda in an organized manner along with their trading operations. As such, the Christian communities which had existed in many parts of India even earlier had a closer affinity than the other communities with the foreign colonizers from the very beginning. Indian Christians also participated in the propagation of Christianity conducted by the foreigners by starting printing presses and publishing journals and other materials. As such, in all these sectors, Christians were far ahead of Hindus and Muslims.

Next to the Christians it was the Hindus who forged links of friendship with the foreign rulers. Hindus belonging to the upper castes were engaged, even in the old society, in various intellectual avocations. They, therefore, desired to acquire modern education and to reconstruct their mode of life in such a way as to enable them to preserve their old positions even under the British domination. Thus, they began acquiring modern education.

The Muslim elites, however, turned against modern civilization, because of their nostalgia for the days of Mughal Empire and the desire to revive the mode of life of those days. This was, in fact, the main reason for the backwardness of the Muslims which adversely affected the Indian national movement in the later days.

There was another reason for Bengal being an example to other regions in renaissance, as it was in the social and cultural spheres. The Zamindars who obtained property rights under the Permanent Settlement—the new landlord

class which had no other relations with land than that of collecting rent from the tenants—had emerged first in Bengal. The provision that they could collect as much rent as they pleased rapidly enriched them. They used this newly acquired wealth in leading a luxurious life in Calcutta which was also the capital of British India to establish themselves in trade and industry and to seek their own ends by establishing friendly relations with the new rulers. A considerable section among them left the rural areas and settled permanently in Calcutta. It became customary for them to go once in a year to the villages to collect rent or just to send their agents for that purpose. There were many among them who had never seen even once the landed property which they owned or the farmers who cultivated those lands.

It was from this section that the leaders of the socio-cultural renaissance in Bengal rose. Whether it be in the social reforms movements like the Brahma Samaj, or in the spheres of arts and literature, or in the different revolutionary political movements, it was this class that provided leaders and active participants. And it was because no other region had such a class and a city like Calcutta that all other states lagged behind Bengal. But, these same social forces which had emerged first in Bengal were certainly developing in other parts of India also.

IV. FOR SOCIAL REFORMS

The Bengali Hindu's urge for a thorough transformation of the caste-communal customs and the movement that started to achieve it were the Indian parallels of the European renaissance. Raja Ram Mohan Roy who was the best known among those who led this movement was not a mere social reformer; he was also a brilliant respresentative of the bourgeois nationalist ideologies.

We have referred earlier to the agitation he had launched to defend the freedom of the press. He unhesitatingly

expressed his views on various political issues, including the political future of India. He was optimistic about India achieving independence in the long run.

Ram Mohan had also paid attention to international issues. For instance, in 1830, when a revolution was going on in France, a French naval vessel visited India and he felt particularly anxious to go inside the ship to personally express his sympathy to the French Revolution. Again, when the British Parliament was debating on a bill for administrative reforms in India which he regarded progressive, Ram Mohan declared that he would sever all his relations with England if the bill fell through the Parliament. In short, he viewed the political issues of India as an integral part of the bourgeois democratic movements embracing the whole of Europe, including England, of that time.

Ram Mohan Roy, however, maintained the firm view that the problems relating to the Hindu caste-based customs and the resultant misery of the people were of more immediate importance than the political transformations of India and the world. Not that India's independence was less important, but he rather considered that in order to tackle that issue, it was essential to liberate the Indian society from the chains of caste-based customs. He also anticipated the assistance and co-operation of the British in the national efforts to achieve this objective.

Before going into the details of the content of the social reforms that Ram Mohan had envisaged, it is necessary to make one thing clear. Many of the educated sections among the people of India who were within the sphere of influence of the British rulers were sympathetic to Christianity and the missionaries who were propagating that religion.Ram Mohan was not one among them. On the contrary, he even opposed the religious preachings of the Christian missionaries and their attempts at proselytization. He did not conceal his faith in the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* which were considered to be the foundation of the doctrines of Hinduism, either. He

advised the Hindus to wholly imbibe the doctrines contained in the *Vedic* literature, and put them into practice.

At the same time, he paid particular attention to distinguish the doctrines contained in the *Vedas* which he considered to be the essence of the Hindu religious faith, from the superstitious beliefs and practices that had crept into the social life of the Hindus. He also ensured that this distinction was brought to the attention of others. He believed that the caste rules and the caste-based customs and practices were fundamentally opposed to the Hindu religious faith and that they prevented the Indian people, including Hindus, from reaching the level of other civilized peoples. In other words, Ram Mohan Roy realized that it was necessary to sweep the Hindu social life of the rubbish it had accumulated for the emergence of a new Indian people, as independent and civilized as the Europeans.

Ram Mohan wielded his sword mainly against the illtreatments towards woman and low caste people in the Hindu society. He strongly opposed the denial of property rights to women in the family, prohibition of widow re-marriage, the system of *Sati*, polygamy, restrictions imposed on schooling of girls, the *Purdah* system confining women within the home, and so on. He demanded that polygamy and *Sati* be banned and that widows be given the right to re-marry.

He also advocated similar social reforms in the caste system. He attributed the stagnation of the Indian society to the system of division of the people into castes and sub-castes. He was of the view that it was essential to destroy the caste system in order to unite the Indian people into a nationality.

It was during the first three decades of the 19th century that Ram Mohan started propagating these ideas. Initially it was confined to Bengal, because it was there, as we have seen earlier, that conditions developed for such a movement following the emergence of a new landlord class. Gradually it spread to other parts of the country, in which even those

who belonged to the lower castes also participated. Particular mention should be made, in this connection, of Jotiba Phule, the founding leader of the non-Brahmin movement in Maharashtra.

Unlike Ram Mohan, Phule was born in a low caste family. And for this reason, he could not complete his education till he received the aid and assistance of Christian priests. He had also to suffer a lot of indignities from the Brahmins and members of other high castes. As a consequence of all these, Phule began his public life as one who was enraged with the caste system in general and the domination of Brahmins in particular.

These differences between Ram Mohan and Phule could be seen also in the character of the movements they had started. The Brahma Samaj founded by Ram Mohan functioned mainly amongst the caste Hindus. As such, it was a movement directed generally against the caste system and for equality between men and women. On the other hand, the movement started by Phule was firmly rooted among the low castes, especially the untouchables. Consequently, anti-Brahminism was the core of its ideology. An official report of the organization notes: "For thousands of years, with the help of their books, the Brahmans have declared the masses low born and are exploiting them. To liberate them from the thraldom of the sacredotal authority and make them conscious of their rights by educating them the 'Satyashodhak Samaj' was founded on 24th September 1873."[1]

In order to demonstrate the nature of the living conditions of the common people whom he represented, Phule presented himself in a loin-cloth as the true representative of the poverty-stricken Indian peasant, to the Duke of York, a member of the British Royal family. This is a sufficient example of the social perspective he was holding.

It was not only the Brahma Samaj of Bengal and the Satyashodhak Samaj of Maharashtra that had worked for

1. Quoted in Tara Chand, *History of Freedom Movement in India*, Vol. II, p. 274.

social reforms. Similar movements in various forms appeared in the different provinces during the close of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. While some of them had similarities with the Brahma Samaj of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, others could be compared with the Satyashodhak Samaj of Phule.

The social and class contents of both the movements were in the final analysis the same. Whether they were organized by the caste Hindus and landlords, or by the poor section among the low castes, both of them were movements that were capable of cutting at the very roots of the out-dated Hindu society. What had given the inspiration and impetus to these movements was the urge of the bourgeoisie for independence and progress that had begun to grow under the British rule.

Similar movements had come up in Kerala, too, during the last decades of the 19th century and in the 20th century, although weak as compared with the movements of Bengal and Maharashtra. A brief description of the movement in Kerala has been given in a book written by the present author sometime back.[2] Here it must be pointed out that the Travancore part of the present Kerala was ahead of the Malabar part insofar as social reforms. If we examine the reasons behind this difference we would get a clear picture of the social forces that were at work behind such social reforms movements.

Following the fierce fights that took place between the prince and the feudal lords in Travancore before the British rule became established, the landed properties of the feudal lords in Travancore were confiscated by the government and made them state properties(*Pandaram vaka*). Under this system a landownership system comparable with the Ryotwari system established by the British had came into being. Due to the influence of the Christian community which had close affinity to the Western (capitalist) civilization, and the special

2. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *Keralam Malayaalikalute Mathrubhumi*, (Kerala the Motherland of Malayalees) in Malayalam, Calicut, 1947-48.

characteristics of individual officials of the administration, Travancore provided a fertile soil for bourgeois social reforms. English education, printing press and newspapers, etc., had spread in Travancore more extensively than in other regions.

In Malabar, however, the strength of the old feudal lords had subsisted without any change. All those landlords who had fled during the military expedition of Tippu Sultan of Mysore had been brought back. Their properties were restored and the rights of their tenants were denied by the British. Since the Muslims were predominant among the non-Hindus in Malabar as against the Christians in Travancore, and since they hated bourgeois culture, bourgeois advancement did not take place in Malabar as it did in Travancore. Thus, while Kerala was lagging behind Bengal and Maharashtra, within Kerala the Malabar region lagged behind Travancore. But the issue relevant here is not which region was advanced and which was backward. The fact is that none of them was against the tendencies of bourgeois development.

The movement started in Bengal during the early decades of the 19th century under the leadership of Raja Ram Mohan Roy had spread all over India by the first decades of the 20th century. Depending on the historical background of each province, the interrelationship among the different castes and sub-castes, the speed of the emergence of the new capitalist economy and culture, and the differences in the personal characteristics of the people occupying key positions in the administration, this movement developed with specific local characteristics in the various regions.

Whatever might have been the differences, there was one characteristic common to all regions, a common aim that coordinated all of them. Everywhere it was a movement aimed at the elimination of the Hindu social system which had remained relatively static for centuries beginning from the Vedic times and the development of a bourgeois culture. As to the methods to be adopted for the realization of this aim, three shades of opinion emerged—one which adopted a

relatively reformist attitude, another, an intense urge for a revolutionary transformation and the third in between these two. There were also various sub-sections within these sections of opinion. Even the Brahma Samaj was split into two or three camps.

For this reason, and also because of the diversities in the situations prevailing in the different provinces, a movement embracing all parts the country or even all regions within a single province did not emerge. But the slogans and demands raised by Ram Mohan Roy became the forerunner of the common perspective of the educated sections among the Hindus all over the country. This, combined with other movements to be described in the next few chapters, gave rise to a new movement for national freedom as distinct from that of the 1857-59 period or, in a sense, negating it.

V. DEVELOPMENT OF THE VERNACULARS

For centuries since the Vedic period, several languages and dialects were in use in India. The common people used a variety of dialects and the rulers and the intelligentsia used a standard literary language. In the North, for instance, several *Prakrit* dialects were used by the common people for everyday communication, while Sanskrit was used for administration and for transactions in the different areas of knowledge. In ancient Sanskrit dramas, kings and other noble characters spoke in Sanskrit, while the commoners and women spoke in a *Prakrit* dialect.

Similarly in South India, a variety of dialect (*Kodum*) Tamils were used by the common people and over them was emerging a standard (*Sen*) Tamil, as Sanskrit in the North, which was used by rulers as well as scholars in art and literature and in the different branches of knowledge.

The distance between the dielects of the common people and the standard language used by the elites continued to exist through the ancient and medieval periods. Pali, a

Prakrit language, developed as a standard written language parallel to Sanskrit, following the emergence and growth of the Buddhist religion. While the medium of the Vedic civilization was Sanskirt, that of Budhism was Pali.

Following the advent of Mohammedans from West Asia, and the establishment of their empire, Persian acquired the position of the language of administration and the medium for imparting knowledge, while Arabic became the medium of religious education among the commoners and priests.

As the early Christians in India were those who had migrated from the Syriac speaking regions, that language came to be used for their religious education.

All these written languages were associated with the social and cultural life of the elite class. So with the development of the class society in which administration became more complex and with the development of cultural life in various spheres, each one of these written languages developed to a greater or lesser extent in accordance with the specific peculiarities of each. Innumerable works were written in each of these languages, some of them rising to the position of "classics".

However, at the lower level, the various dialects remained as they were. Like the non-elite "dramatis personnae" in the Sanskrit dramas, the commoners used these dialects in their daily life. When a few fortunate individuals rose in position to join the elite class and began to participate in administration and culture, they too began to use a standard language like Sanskrit. During the ancient and medieval periods, the relations between the dialects and the standard written languages remained an index of the gap that existed between the common people and the elites.

A change in this situation occurred by about the 12th century. Several of such dialects began to be written down and standardized. For example, the *Braj Bhakha* (Braj language) which had hitherto been regarded as a *Prakrit* language began to be cultivated, which later developed as Hindi. Similarly developed the written languages like Marathi, Gujarathi and

Bengali, etc., in the North, and Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam in the South. These written languages were evolved through a long process of merger of many old *Prakrit* dialects in the North and *Kodum Tamils* in the South.

The literary works produced in these newly evolved languages were religious in their content. The writers of these works tried through them to inculcate among the common people in the language understood by them the religious beliefs and faiths that had been incorporated in the works written earlier in Sanskrit, Pali, Arabic and Syriac. As such, compared to the works written in the languages of the elite class, these new literary works were simpler, and natural in their content. Many of these writers had themselves risen from the ranks of the peasantry, agricultural workers, artisans and such other sections of the people. It is well known, for example, that the development of Malayalam as an independent literary language began with the writings of Thunchattu Ezhuthachan, born in a low-caste family. The content of his works and those of other poets following him belonging to *Bhakti* (devotion) school of literature was the same as those in the epics written in Sanskrit. But in their form and style and in versification, the works of Ezhuthachan and other litterateurs of the early period like Kunchan Nambiar and Cherussery Nambuthiri were closer to the spoken dialects and folk literature that were extant in Kerala than to Sanskrit.

All other present-day literary languages of India also underwent similar processes. It is, therefore, customary to characterize the period in which these works were written and the movement that emerged at that time as the period of *Bhakti* movement (the period of the movement of devotional literature). These works were the result of the efforts made by the *Vaishnavite* poets to reach the common people with their religious doctrines.

The impact of this movement, rather than confining itself to the domain of religion, was the emergence of a new movement affecting the social life of the people as a whole. Specifically, while the social distance and difference between

the elites and the common people persisted, it led to the development of a common language—a new link binding these two sections together.

There were indications of a similar development even earlier when the Pali language began to develop in parallel with Sanskrit. It is now generally admitted that the emergence of Buddhism was symbolic of the people's movement against the domination of the upper strata of the caste system over society. For the same reason Pali, one of the *Prakrit* languages, rose to the position of a medium of religious instruction in place of Sanskrit and developed into a medium for spreading knowledge, as important as Sanskrit.

Nevertheless, in the background of the class society existing at that time, Pali, which in a sense emerged as a challenge to Sanskrit, itself got transformed subsequently into "another Sanskrit". As distinct from this, the new vernaculars that emerged through the *Bhakti* Movement, were based on firmer foundations. Unlike the philosophical works written in Pali, the woks produced in the vernaculars became an integral part of the everyday life of the masses of people. Poets like Tulsidas, Kabir, Tukaram and Ezhuthachan came to be regarded as the common property of the families in their respective regions. Unlike in the case of Sanskrit and Pali literature, wide groups of readers of these works also emerged from among the common people. This change was the result of the changes that had come about in the soico-cultural life of the people.

As we have seen earlier, the society in the ancient and medieval times was based on almost self-sufficient village communities and families. A major portion of the wealth produced by the members of each family through their own labour was consumed by themselves. Only a small portion was exchanged as surplus with other families in the village. And out of the commodities thus exchanged, only a still smaller portion was exchanged as surplus with the neighbouring villages. In other words, out of the products made

in the country as a whole, only a very small share was brought into exchange as commodities.

However, as a consequence of the developments that took place in the medieval period, the extent of the exchange of commodities gradually enlarged. Under the Mughal Empire in North India, and also in South India during the same period, commodity exchange and the amount of money involved in such exchanges and new sectors of activities such as moneylending, etc., began to develop. As the number of traders and industrialists engaged in these activities as well as that of the producers who had to deal with them also increased, the need for exchange of ideas among these various sections also increased correspondingly. The role of self-sufficiency in the relationship among villages diminished, while the extent of mutual dependence increased. Thus arose the need for the emergence of new standard written languages out of the existing spoken dialects, in additian to the languages being used exclusively for communication among the elites. Corresponding to the growth of exchanges among the people, the need for a medium for exchange of ideas grew. Even at this stage, in the spheres of activities in which the elites were involved, such as administration, development of talents in literature and culture, acquisition of skills in the various areas of knowledge, etc., the old standard language had to be depended on. The new languages which were being developed were not of much help in these matters. At the same time, side by side with the educational and cultural activities through the medium of the standard languages, it became absolutely necessary to have a language more popular and democratic in nature in order to conduct religious education and propagation of ideas.

The development of the vernaculars during the British rule was the result of the continuance of this process. For, the administative system established by the British reduced regularly the elements of self-sufficiency in the interrelationship among villages and among families in the same village and accelerated and intensified the process of increasing

mutual dependence at an unprecedented rate. Exchange of commodities, the use of money and the emergence of a new society based on these factors, influenced the social life more extensively and rapidly than never before. With the advent of the Portuguese traders began the process of tying each producer and each consumer in every part of the country to a common market or even to the world market. As the British rule got established and consolidated, this process not only continued but also became intense.

It was at this stage that new standard written languages developed further by merging of many of the old spoken dialects. Instead of confining literary works to the sphere of religious education and propaganda as it was during the *Bhakti* Movement, literature in these new languages came to be used in the areas of secular knowledge also. They began to develop as part of a new literary movement, purveying to the common people modern scientific knowledge which developed in Europe in the wake of the industrial revolution. Side by side, literary prose in general and the branches of short stories, novels, literary criticism, etc., in particular, which had evolved as part of modern (capitalist) literature, also grew in each of these new languages.

It may appear to be a paradox that this process of bringing about basic transformations in the cultural life of India was led by foreign traders, from the Portuguese to the British.

These foreign merchants, in fact, made efforts to impose on the Indian people the European culture and civilization showing no compassion towards the cultural traditions, languages and literature of India. It was as part of these efforts that they conducted their educational and cultural activities in India.

It must be noted that it was the missionaries engaged in proselytizing the Hindus and Muslims of India to Christianity who presented for the first time to the various Indian languages with modern scientific grammar, dictionaries, etc. The printing press they started and the books they

published marked the begining of a prose style in the modern languages. And with the consolidation of British domination in India, works with contents relating to science and other disciplines of modern knowledge also began to be published in the form of text books when the British decided to start schools and other educational institutions with a view to creating a generation of educated people for the stability of their regime.

It is evident that the intention of the British was not in any way connected with any desire on their part to modernize India. On the other hand, they knew that they would be able to exploit the Indian people to the maximum extent only if they kept India as much backward as possible in the scientific and technological fields. At the same time, in order to carry on cleverly their exploitation, they were forced to destroy the foundation of ancient Indian civilization and culture. They had also to bring up new generations of Indians imbued with modern (capitalist) civilization and culture, and spread among the masses of people at least some elements of that culture and civilization. For this purpose, it was essential to develop modern literary prose, and as part of it, short stories, novels, literary criticism as also scientific and technological books and theses in the modern Indian languages which had begun to evolve during the *Bhakti* Movement, but as distinct from those that appeared during that Movement.

In other words, the British who were striving to establish the domination of English language and literature over India had to take the initiative and leadership to develop the vernaculars of India in order to achieve that objective. They made efforts to develop the vernaculars as languages subservient to and dependent on the English language. But the development of these vernaculars itself turned into an important aspect of the freedom movement which was developing against the British domination.

VI. INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM: DEVELOPMENT AND LIMITATIONS

As a logical culmination of the kind of socio-cultural transformation we have discussed in the preceding sections, an "industrial revolution" should to have taken place in India. And following such a revolution two mutually antagonistic classes—capitalists and the working class—should have emerged and developed rapidly. This was what happened in Europe when it passed from feudalism to capitalism. In Asia, too,during the last few decades of the 19th century, a similar change had come about in Japan. Consequently, Japan pushed back India and China with long traditions lasting for several centuries, and rose to the position of a mighty imperialist power as a potential threat to not only the Asian countries but the European powers.

In India, too, objective conditions for such a transformation had begun to emerge during the Mughal period and in the centuries following its fall. The early form of industrial capitalism, namely, mercantile capitalism and finance capitalism had become generally widespread. The merchant class purchased surplus commodities from the rural population and carried them to towns and villages situated hundreds of miles away. The traders who took up this work had formulated and practised all methods required for the purpose, such as money transactions, terms and conditions governing such transactions and measures to protect goods and money from robbers on the way.

The section of the people, who with the requisite skill in all these operations, had made profits out of them had exercised considerable influence in the feudal society of those times. They had even the capacity to give loans to the princes and feudal lords when they needed funds to conduct wars or to carry on their administration.

These mercantile and finance capitalists who emerged and developed as part of the feudal society had contributed considerably to the development of trade conducted by the foreigners from the Portuguese to the British. Had these foreign traders not obtained the help and assistance of this section, they would have faced serious difficulties during the earlier period when they had to operate merely as traders without administrative authority.

Conversely, the enterprises of these foreign trading companies and their officials had helped these mercantile and finance capitalists. The development of trade and the consequent expansion of transport of commodities and monetary transactions helped the intermediaries such as Indian traders and moneylenders to raise their position in social life and enhance the rate of their profits. The section of the people who grew both in number and financial capacity in this manner became loyal and subservient to the foreign trading companies.

In Europe and also in Japan in Asia, when the growth of this section reached a particular stage, they themselves and the society as a whole became thoroughly transformed. These capitalists who till then confined their activities to trade and moneylending began to enter the area of industrial production. The owner of the capital which he used hitherto for exchanging commodities between the producers and consumers and for transporting the commodities began to expand his areas of activities by investing capital to buy raw materials and the machinery to process them and also to hire labour to work on the machine, thereby transforming himself into the industrial capitalist engaged in production. From the position of an intermediary functioning in between the producer and consumer, he transformed himself to the position of an organizer actively participating in the process of production.

The foundation for this transformation in the owner of capital was laid through the revolutionary transformations that had been taking place in the technology of the process

of production. The industrial revolution, as is well known, was the natural culmination of the gradual technological transformations brought about in the traditional industries which were evolved on the basis of the personal capacity of those who had acquired skills in handicrafts, and the consequent invention of machines. With this development, it became necessary that a new section of intermediaries who could systematically organize the process of production and invest capital required for the purpose, should come to participate in the process, in addition to the customary intermediary between the consumer and the producer. When the machineries, which were relatively simple in the initial stages, and the production based on them became more and more complex, more and more capital became necessary to install new machines, to engage more workers to operate these machines and to acquire raw materials. Thus, the change that came about in the production relations (the economic system) following such radical transformations in the production process, called "technological revolution", laid the foundation for industrial capitalism.

This process did not take place in India. Although the function of trading and usurer capital expanded on an unprecedented scale, it did not enter the sphere of production. Capital continued to be invested, as before, in the distribution of products and other related activities without investing it to set up factories with machines and other means of productions, and to acquire raw materials and to engage labour. There were two reasons for this.

The first and foremost reason was that the foundation for the development of capitalism in India was laid by foreign traders. They knew that if the same kind of economic transformation and "industrial revolution" as in Europe were brought about in India and consequently capitalism developed here, it would pose a threat to their own self-interest. Their intention was to use India to exploit at low prices her raw materials required for the production in the industries in their own countries and for creating a market for their products

at prices most favourable to them. For that purpose, they wanted to ensure the development and modernization of transport and such other facilities for reaching the raw materials from the nooks and corners of India to the ports and their shipment to England as also to reach their industrial products to the Indian market. The development of the transport system, the development in the areas of commerce and banking, the growth of organized markets and the necessary laws for this purpose were essential to serve their interests. Similarly, the development of the production of industrial and commercial crops by starting estates where modern farming operations would be utilized was also essential. They introduced in India modernization in the economic sphere keeping these objectives in mind.

At the same time, they feared that their own growth would be hampered if industries for processing the raw materials available here were developed in India. Consequently they took all measures to ensure that no such moves for the development of industries in India were made by Indian capitalists. In the early days of development of capitalism in England, Indian handloom cloth and other consumer goods were able to effectively compete with the English industries. They brought in legislative measures to prevent such a competition. Later on, when possibilities arose of marketing English products in India, they opposed taking steps to save the handicrafts of India from the English competition. In other words, the very same rulers who had in the earlier stages imposed tariffs in their own country in order to protect the development of English industries, prevented, using their political power, the imposition of tariffs in India, which was essential for the survival of the Indian handicrafts.

The second factor that stood in the way of an independent development of industrial capitalism in India was the social system prevailing in India. There were no objective conditions in the Indian society, divided into various castes and sub-castes, for facilitating or encouraging the modernization of the production process. The system that existed in

India was one in which each caste or sub-caste was ascribed a specific occupation and each member born of a particular caste or sub-caste carried out production activities in his ascribed occupation with the skill traditionally handed down to him from his predecessors with social customs and beliefs that prevented him from breaking this tradition. This social system discouraged them from bringing about even the slightest change in the technology of production, whereas the core of industrial revolution was the introduction of constant changes in the technology of production process.

Thus, in India, both the internal social system and the foreign rulers simultaneously placed obstacles on the path of bringing about an industrial revolution in the sense of a transition from the system of handicrafts to the modern mechanized industry. A modern bourgeois society could come up in India only by removing both these obstacles. Even if a people's movement had grown up against any one of these obstacles, there was no possibility, in the circumstances then prevailing, of bringing about a real industrial revolution. Instead of such a development, what would have actually taken place was a polarization between those who opposed foreign domination and those who opposed the maintenance of the traditional social system, the two sections ranging themselves in opposite camps. It was impossible, in the objective conditions present in that period, for people to become conscious of the fact that it was essential to cut at the very roots of the traditional social system to throw the foreigners out of the land and conversely that for destroying the old social system and for bringing about a social revolution, it was essential to end foreign domination.

But, as pointed out by Marx, the foreign powers who had taken up the mission of destroying the old traditional society also discharged the mission of laying the material foundations for a social revolution. By establishing a centralized administration in India, by introducing rail roads and other modern systems of communication and by linking the village social system with the world market, the British

had sown the seeds of modernization of the society in India. This promoted the investment in industrial production of a small portion of the capital which was being utilized for trading and moneylending operations. Some Indian capitalists started establishing industrial undertakings on the model of the industries started by the British. This process which began during the earlier years of the 19th century, gradually began to advance. They started jute mills in Bengal and cotton textile mills in Bombay under Indian ownership.

The first cotton mill started functioning in Bombay in 1854. By 1866, the number of mills increased to 13 and to 32 by 1876. Thereafter it registered a steady increase with 47 in 1881, 49 in 1885, 67 in 1891and 69 in 1905. By the closing years of the 19th century, the textile mill industry in Bombay employed over a hundred thousand workers.

Those who had initiated this process were the Banias and the Parsis who had been functioning since a number of years before the commencement of British domination in the trading and meneylending sectors. If we go into the family history of each of them, we can find that they belonged to that section which had earlier served the feudal lords and later the British. They, therefore, can be rightly designated as the commission agents of foreign capitalists or compradors. They realized that their growth was linked with the maintenance and growth of foreign domination. Thus, they functioned as devout loyalists of the British during the period 1857-59 and thereafter. (It may be noted that a textile mill established by one of them, Jamshedji Tata, was named the Empress Mill, to commemorate the ascension of Queen Victoria as the "Empress of India".)

But once they stepped into the sphere of industry and started making progress, they found that there were some contradictions between their own interests and the foreign vested interests. Consequently, they began to turn themselves into a section which, on one side, was "devout loyalists" of the British and, on the other, opposed to the policies of the British rulers. The most prominent representative of this

section was the Tata family. The founder of this industrial house was Jamshedji Tata, who started as an agent purchasing from producers materials needed for wars being conducted by the British and transporting them to the required centres. This work which he started in 1857 brought him considerable profits during the days of the war. Utilizing this money, he started trade with China and also entered the sphere of speculative transactions in cotton. Subsequently he ventured into many industries and founded the first steel mill in India. Now, the Tatas are one of the top monopoly industrial houses of India.

This process of industrialization was repeated in Ahmedabad. But, in Calcutta such a development did not take place among the Indian capitalists. Most of the industries in that region were established by the British. Later, when Indians started the enterprises there, it was not the Bengalis but the Marwaris who came from outside Bengal, who occupied positions. This is attributed to the differences in the landownership relations established by the British. The reforms introduced in Bengal were suited to the creation of a new landowning class. Specifically, the conditions created there were suited to the emergence of lawyers, journalists, intellectuals and leaders in the cultural life. The Zemindari system introduced through Permanent Settlement was not helpful for the emergence of an industrial bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, the Ryotwari system introduced in Bombay paved the way for the development of capitalism in the industrial sector also, as in the socio-cultural sphere. The Banias, the Parsis and the Marwaris of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan were engaged even earlier in trades and money-lending. As a consequence, they did not find it difficult to establish industrial enterprises in Bengal, even before the Bengalis entered the field, in addition to starting industries in Bombay and Gujarat.

The development of modern national independence movement in India was a combined result of the industrial capitalism that began to emerge in Bombay and the

socio-cultural renaissance in Bengal led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others.

VII. EMERGENCE OF INDIAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

One of the results of the rise of industrial capitalists as a class was the emergence of a new scientific discipline which may be called "Indian political economy".

The early actions of the British in India resulted in the creation of two new sections among the people: the new (capitalist) landowners and a section of educated men who had acquired knowledge of European culture and in other scientific disciplines through modern educational institutions. It may be said that a majority of the latter section came from among the new landowning families.

With the increase in the number of people belonging to those two sections and with the growth of their organized strength, movements for social reforms and cultural renaissance emerged. But, the modernization of social life envisaged by these sections remained confined mostly to the spheres of family relations and cultural movements. The social reformers and leaders of cultural renaissance among them did not have the perspective of bringing about an industrial revolution as in Europe, which laid the foundations for modernization there. The section with such a perspective appeared only during the last decades of the 19th century.

The most eminent among that section was Dadabhoy Naoroji (1825-1917). The most respected among the earlier leaders and founders of the nationalist movement, he was known as the "Grand Old Man" of India.

He was not merely a political leader; he was also the founder of research in Indian economics, who examined the problems of Indian economy in the light of modern bourgeois political economy and adopted Indian national interests as the basis for such examinations.

The conclusion of his studies, which he formulated as what was known as the "theory of drain", pointed to the fundamental difference that existed between the free countries like England and the dependent countries like India in the production of wealth, its distribution and utilization. The essence of the theory was that, while the wealth produced in England through the labour of the workers of that country was utilized to meet the various needs of the people of England, a considerable portion of the wealth produced by the Indian labour in India was being drained out to England.

Dadabhoy's studies were based on statistical data published officially by the government and on the theories of modern political economy. The administrators in England were all Englishmen. The salaries and allowances earned by them were being spent within that country. Consequently, the expenditure incurred by the government of that country turned into the income of one or the other section of the people of England.

In India, on the other hand, the administrators were mostly Englishmen. Only a part of their salaries and other income was spent in this country; a considerable portion was drained out to England. Moreover, the salary of an English official was far higher than that of an Indian official doing the same job. Besides, India had to bear the expenditure for the wars being fought by the British and for the armed forces maintained for the sole purpose of her imperialist expansion which India never wanted.

Similarly, he examined carefully the developments in the various spheres of the economic life of the country, such as exports and imports, commerce, public debt, the declining handicraft of India, etc. Dadabhoy showed that an amount not less than 20 million pound sterling was being drained out to England annually out of 50 million pound sterling collected as tax from the people of India every year. He further showed that as a result of this decades old "drain" India was getting more and more pauperized.

With his studies also began the technical process of

estimating the national income in India similar to that in vogue in other countries where bourgeois economics had developed. As V.K.R.V. Rao, a noted economist, has stated, the national income he had calculated at a time when the technique was in its infancy, was by and large error-free even according to the methods of calculation of the later days.

The politically dependent status of India was crucially relevant to all these calculations. Dadabhoy had no doubt that India's political slavery was responsible for her economic decline and poverty. His studies thus gave rise to a new method of investigation for the first time in the history of India, combining economic analysis with laying of the foundation for political agitations. Several articles and booklets containing Dadabhoy's economic analysis were published, and among those was a book entitled *Poverty and un-British rule*. The title of this book itself is meaningful. On one side, there was a sharp criticism of the economic policies of the British (a plain speaking of the fact that it was these policies that were pauperizing India more and more). On the other side was the trust expressed in the statement that this cruel exploitation was "un-British". This was the basic approach of the Congress leadership and of Dadabhoy Naoroji, one of the founder leaders of the Congress, till the end of the First World War.

Dadabhoy was not an isolated individual. Many of his contemporaries too had made analyses of this type. Modern Indian (bourgeois) political economy was a new branch of knowledge initiated by these personalities and developed hand in hand with the advance of the national movement in India.

As we know, modern bourgeois political economy originated at the hands of Adam smith, David Ricardo and other English economists, on the basis of the situation obtained in Europe in general, and in England in particular. Marx enriched it in accordance with the interests of the working class. In India, too, a bourgeois political economy was emerging. It was bourgeois in character in the sense that it was

trying to study the Indian situation from the point of view of bourgeois political economy. On the other hand, it was Indian in the sense that it was trying to establish that the British rule was endangering India's national interests.

The names of two eminent personalities among those who, besides Dadadhoy, gave rise to this discipline need special mention. Ramesh Chandra Dutt (1841-1909) made a significant contribution towards the study of agrarian problem, while Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842 to 1901) enriched the conclusions arrived at by Dadabhoy and Dutt and gave directions to the Indian people as to what they should do in the light of the circumstances that resulted from the British rule as explained by them. The theory that they together formulated, in a moderate tone though, was a firm challenge to the British.

None of them, nor any other bourgeois economist who followed them, was a revolutionary in the sense in which we understand the term today. They were at pain to make it clear that they were loyal to the Crown, but demonstrated with irrefutable data that India was getting pauperized under the rule of the British, the repository of their loyalty.

The social background of these three Indian economists, Naoroji, Dutt and Ranade, is both fascinating and educative.

Dadabhoy Naoroji went to England as a respresentative and partner of a Bombay trading family (belonging to the Parsi community), which had ventured into industrial capitalism. While working for the commercial establishment which sent him there, he studied various problems directly and indirectly relating to trade and actively participated in the political life of England. He also established contact with the Liberal Party to which he felt closeness and appealed to his colleagues in the party to bring about changes in the government's policies towards India in conformity with its ideologies. The economic analysis and political agitation he conducted were the results of this work.

Dadabhoy was the direct representative of the industrial

capitalism that was emerging in India in the middle of the of the 19th century.

Like Dadabhoy, Ranade also belonged to Bombay. He had, however, no direct links with industrial capitalism. He started his career as a teacher in economics. Later, he held high positions under the government, including that of a judge. While holding those positions he had occasions to study the conditions in rural life, both as part of his official work and otherwise. As a result of these studies, Ranade came to the conclusion that it was essential to have an extensive industrialization programme for the prosperity of the people of India. He critically examined various theories of European economists and wrote several works. He also took initiative to form many organisations working for industrialization and economic progress on the basis of the ideas he formulated through his studies.

One of the important economic theories advanced by Ranade relates to the role of the government in economic development. Ranade pointed out that if the doctrine of laissez-faire followed by the British was pursued, a country like India would not be able to attain progress and that it had ceased to operate even in England. (It may be mentioned that Ranade too had argued for active governmental intervention to protect the interest of India in the competition between the weak India and the mighty Great Britian).

It is clear that it was this policy which was advocated by M. Visweswarayya half a century later in his book on Indian planning and subsequently by the authors of the Tata-Birla Plan and that the programme of setting up a public sector adopted by the Congress after independence was its natural culmination.

Ramesh Chandra Dutt was a Bengali. Born in a new landowning family, Dutt acquired modern education, obtained employment under the government and rose to a position which no Indian could aspire to achieve in those days. Based on the problems of the people which he had occasions to deal with as part of his official work, he examined and

studied through the viewpoint of an Indian, the decline that befell the Indian economy in general and agriculture in particular, under the British rule. Dutt irrefutably established on the basis of statistical data that the recurrent famines all over India were the inevitable result of the policies pursued by the British which had pauperized both the peasants and the artisans.

Besides these three, several others had analyzed the Indian situation prevailing at that time and sharply criticized the British rule. Some among them like Gopal Krishna Gokhale, were the leaders of the national movement in its early days. Their theories have not been specifically mentioned here, not because those were unimportant, but the theories advanced by these three themselves provided sufficient indication to the nature of India's (bourgeois) political economy that had begun to emerge following the rise of industrial capitalism in India.

Even in the earlier periods, works on political economy had appeared in India, for example, the *Arthasastra* of Kautalya in the Mauryan period. All such works represented the situation that prevailed in their respective periods. However, with the establishment of the British rule in India, new situations came to pravail, which differed fundamentally from those that prevailed in the earlier periods. The old ruling class had perished. A regime in which no Indian had any part to play had now come to exist. All attempts to end the foreign rule and to re-establish the old met with defeats they deserved. In place of the former ruling classes which made these attempts, new classes had begun to emerge, which were to conduct the freedom struggle in other forms and methods.

It was the industrial bourgeoisie that was in forefront of these new classes. The early time activities of Dadabhoy Naoroji who directly represented the bourgeoisie and those of Ranade and Dutt, though not directly representing that class, but imbibing its interests, constituted the declaration that the Indian bourgeoisie had attained maturity.

VIII. POLITICAL AGITATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Much before the works of Naoroji, Ranade and Dutt exposing the disastrous effects of the British rule on India began to appear, agitations in their primary forms had started first in Bengal and later in other centres against some of these ill-effects of the British rule and in defence of certain demands of the people. And certain organisations also began to emerge to carry on these struggles in an organized way.

As far as we know, the premier organization thus formed was the Academic Association started by Ram Mohan Roy in 1828. Although this organization was concerned primarily with religious and moral questions, it also organized debates on social and political issues.

It was led by members of the educated middle class who had been imbued with the ideas of bourgeois democracy that was gaining strength in Europe. Therefore, it functioned with a dual purpose of opposing the outmoded religious and caste doctrines, on the one side, and promoting such values as freedom and democracy, on the other. In 1838, the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge was also formed, which "discussed issues like trial by jury, freedom of the press, forced labour in government departments".[10]

Needless to say, these were not only indications to suggest that at least the educated middle class had started taking interests in general political issues but also a means to foster such interests among them.

In 1842, at the initiative of Dwarkanath Tagore, George Thompson, an English liberal politician, was invited to India. On his arrival in Calcutta, Thompson who had actively participated in organizing the anti-slavery agitation in England, began his political activities and propaganda among the groups on which Tagore had influence. As a result of these activities, a new organization, the Bengal British India

10. Tara Chand, *op cit*, p. 525

Society, was formed in 1843. The objects of the Society were "to collect and disseminate information relating to the condition of the people and the laws, institutions and resources of the country; and to employ such other means of a peaceful and lawful character...necessary to secure the welfare, extend the just rights and advance the interest of all classes of the Indian subjects".[11]

Meanwhile, another type of organization was formed in Calcutta in 1838, the Land Holders' Society, to protect the interests of the landowners. The object of this organisation was to defeat by legal means the attempt of the government to evict landholders from rent-free lands.

Following the formation of organizations of progressive, educated middle class and of the landlords, the idea of coordinating their activities through a single organization arose. Thus, the British Indian Association was formed in 1851. It began functioning with the objective of improving local administration and the system of government and to "acquaint the British public with the state of feeling in India with regard to its past and future administration". The association deputed a delegation to England in 1853 when a Bill was introduced in the British Parliament to bring out changes in the administration of the East India Company, to convey to the members of Parliament the views and demands of the people of India on that issue. One of the main demands raised by them was that Indians must have the right to elect members to the legislatures.

Similar kinds of activities were taking place in Bombay also. Deshmukh, who had been writing under the penname "Lokahitawadi" on common issues relating to the people, strongly advocated the formation of a 'Parliament' with representation of people from each town and district of India. In 1852 an organization, the Bombay Association, was formed in Bombay raising certain more moderate demands.

This organisation, founded by a group of eminent

11. Tara Chand, *Ibid*, p. 526.

public men including Dadabhoy Naoroji, also deputed a delegation to England in 1853 to exert influence on the British Parliament. The purpose of sending this delegation was to present certain charges of corruption in the administration and to make certain practical suggestions for administrative reforms. The suggestions included reorganization of the legislative councils, appointing Indians in higher official posts and establishment of universities.

In Madras, the Madras Native Association was founded in 1853. Like the organizations in Calcutta and Bombay. this organization also presented petition before the British Parliament on the Bill that was under the consideration of the Parliament. Explaining the "grievances and wants of the Presidency", the petition pointed out the unjust and oppressive nature of the Zemindari and Ryotwari systems under which the peasant masses were reduced "to the deepest poverty and destitution". The petition also pointed out the inefficiency, delay and expenses of the courts of law, inadequacies in roads, bridges and irrigation facilities and in the provision for education. It also suggested a reduction in public expenditure and to make the administration beneficial to the people.

It must be noted that all these developments were prior to the Sepoy Mutiny and revolt of 1857-59. They provide a general picture of how the educated middle class, including those who had come from the new landowning class, viewed the situations prevailing in the country in those days and the future progress of the people. It is not hard to discern that the views of these sections differed fundamentally from the views of those who later participated in the 1857-59 revolts, in two respects.

First, the insurrectionists tried to uproot the British regime which was extending its domination to wider areas and replace it with the old feudal regime. The educated sections, including those who had emerged from the new landlord class, on the other hand, wanted to establish in India the new (bourgeois) democracy that had emerged in Europe in general,

and in England in particular, as also the socio-economic system basic to the bourgeois democratic system.

Second, the insurrectionists tried to go along the path of armed struggle to defeat the British in order to achieve their aims. On the other hand, the educated middle class tried to achieve their aim by earning sympathy and support of the British public and the British government, through legal means.

Naturally, therefore, the educated middle class had no sympathy at all with the insurrectionists. In fact, the support extended by the successors of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and personalities like Dadabhoy Naoroji was an important factor in the success of the British in suppressing the revolt. If the country had to progress in accordance with their objective of gradually transforming India into an independent (bourgeois) democratic country with the sympathy and co-operation of the people and the government of Great Britain, the efforts of the insurrectionists must surely be defeated.

But, the expectations of these bourgeois democrats began to wane gradually. They began to realise that rather than modernizing India and leading it along the path of bourgeois democracy as they expected, the British were rejecting even the most moderate and just demands of the people to consolidate their domination over the Indian people. Shortly after the suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny and the revolt of 1857-59 and the consolidation of the British rule, conflicts started between the rulers and the members of the educated middle class. The experience they gained from these frequent conflicts taught them that the rulers would not budge a bit from their position unless political agitations were organized in a more extensive and determined way than what was built up in connection with the petition submitted to the Parliament on the 1853 India Bill.

The burning issues about which the democrats felt anxious was the government policy of denying opportunities to Indians for appointment in higher official posts. As we have noted earlier, this was one of the important issues included in the

petitions to the Parliament by members of the delegation from Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The Government, however, made the rules and regulations more rigorous to exclude Indians, disregarding these petitions. This attitude of the Government came under very severe criticism in the Indian press.

An event which gave an all-India importance to this issue took place in the meantime. A Bengali youth, Surendranath Banerji (1848-1925), secured a high rank in the selection for Indian Civil Service. To exclude Indians from the Service, he was harmed in various ways and was thrown out of service on flimsy grounds.

This evoked intense dissatisfaction and protest among the educated middle class, not only of Calcuta but throughout India. A strong opinion arose that an organized effort should be made to arouse the self-respect which was wounded by this act of the authorities and to launch an agitation for securing the rights of Indians. Utilizing this opportunity effectively, Banerji himself made a country-wide tour to mobilize public opinion behind this issue. He visited several places in the present Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Sind, Gujarat and Maharashtra and cities of Delhi and Madras.

It can be said that this was the first attempt to mobilize public opinion and to conduct an agitation. Quite naturally, this agitation had the full co-operation of the Indian press. Thus, the entire Indian language press became the voice of public opinion strongly criticizing the government policies. This annoyed the rulers who enforced a legislation to muzzle the language press.

But despite these measures the agitation did not cool down. On the other hand, this measure led to another agitation. This agitation turned out to be effective in that in 1882 the Government was force to rescind the Act which was brought into force in 1878.

The Arms Act passed in 1878, the famines that broke out in various parts of the country at the time, the pompous celebrations of the jubilee of the reign of Queen Victoria

even in the midst of the famine, the war preparations made in the North-West Frontier region and such other incidents created dissatisfaction among the people. And the educated middle class tried to organize agitations on each of these issues. Lord Lytton, the then Governor-general, became the target of the ire of the Indian people. Never before had the Government taken such reprehensible measures as it did during Lytton's time. The number of agitations organized by popular leaders also was unprecedented. On the occasion of his return to England after relinquishing the post, the English newspaper, *Bengalee*, wrote: To Lord Lytton must belong the credit of having done much by his repressive measures towards stimulating the public life of this country, and for this service certainly his Lordship will be entitled to the gratitude of our country.

While these agitations in defence of the rights and demands of the Indian people were going on. Englishmen in India were also carrying on an agitation in their own way. Ilbert, the then Law Member, had presented a bill in the Legislative Council for removing the existing discrimination between Englishmen and Indians in the Civil Service and to make same provisions applicable to both the sections. Englishmen who had been enjoying the privileges of racial domination, organized a country-wide agitation against this legislative measure. The newspapers run by them and the Indian language newspapers run by Indians came into clash with each other on the Ilbert Bill. In this conflict, the Englishmen came out victorious—the bill was passed with the amendments demanded by them.

This cruelly wounded the self-respect of the Indian people. It was a challenge to their patriotism and organizational consciousness. The fact that the government which was in power was one that not only disregarded their legitimate agitations and the just demands raised through these agitations, but also conceded the unjust demands raised by the Englishmen was an eye-opener to them. Moreover, when Surendranath Banerji, who was the principal character in the

incident which was considered to be the touchstone of the goodwill of the rulers, was prosecuted, they came to realize that there was no way left open before them other than that of powerful agitations.

These developments led to the convening of a national conference in December 1883 (28th to 30th) in Calcutta. Even earlier, organizations like the British Indian Association of Calcutta,the Sarvajanik Sabha of Poona, and the Mahajana Sabha of Madras had been functioning in an organized manner in their respective regions and had created the consciousness of the need for unifying their activities. It was as a result of several rounds of discussion held following this realization that the first national conference was held in Calcutta in 1883. This conference adopted resolutions raising the demands of establishing representative assemblies of the people, development of facilities for general and technical education, separation of judiciary from the executive, entry of Indians in government services and such other matters. It is needless to say that this constituted a counter-move to the agitation by the Englishmen againt the Ilbert Bill.

Following this, Surendranath Banerji undertook another tour of North India. The need for the unification of various political groups in different regions and for the establishment of a centralized organization was emphasized by him and other leaders. The formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was the result of these efforts.

5

INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS: THE EARLY YEARS

I. THE ENGLISH FRIENDS

The political agitations initiated in Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and other towns by the educated middle class had the support of a section of Englishmen, too. Many of them had, in fact, played an active role in developing this political agitation and in giving it an organized form.

Among these Englishmen, Allan Octavian Hume (1829-1912) is worthy of special mention. Hume, born in England as the son of one of the leaders of the Radical Party of England, joined the Indian Civil Service and came over to India. He had occupied many high official positions. Hume had, even while in service, many friends among the educated middle class. He understood the nationalistic sentiments that had developed among them and supported the movement that was developing as a consequence. On retirement from service,

he began openly expressing his sympathies with the political movement. Hume also played an important role in the preliminary work connected with the formation of the Indian National Congress, in 1885. Historians have even conferred on him the epithet of "founder of the Congress".

Hume was, however, not an isolated individual. Lord Dufferin, who was the Governor-General and Viceroy during the days of the formation of the Congress, had also not concealed from his friends his sympathies with the movement that was developing among the educated. When Hume formulated his plan for the formation of the Indian National Congress, he had the blessings and good wishes of Dufferin.

The latter had specified only one condition to Hume that the role he had played should not be revealed till he relinquished office and left India.

This stand was not one which was taken casually by two individuals, Dufferin and Hume. In fact, it was the historical development of a relatively long period that led them to take this stand.

Ever since India, as vast a country as it was, came under the direct rule of the British, there existed two main trends of opinion amongst the rulers as to how they should exercise their domination over the several millions of people of this country. One approach was to adopt a policy of using the brutal forces of law and arms. The other approach was one of building a social foundation for the British rule in India, by creating a generation of people "imbued with English culture", giving encouragement and assistance to the people to foster the ideology of bourgeois liberalism among them and encouraging the sections and organizations imbued with this ideology.

Broadly speaking, the Conservative and the Liberal parties that constituted the active force in British politics were the symbols of these two approaches—the Conservative Party symbolized the policy of "iron fist" and the Liberal Party symbolized the policy of "conciliation". When the working class became a force to be reckoned with in British politics

by the middle of the 19th century, the Chartist movement that represented the working class expressed its warm sympathies towards the nationalist movement in India.

Ernest Jones (1819-69) was a revolutionary, who actively participated in the Chartist movement and had consequently to undergo imprisonment. When the Sepoy Mutiny and the people's revolt broke out in India in 1857, he had through the columns of his newspaper wholeheartedly welcomed these movements. Jones wrote: One cannot be in doubt as to which side one should align himself. On which side were they, when the Polish people waged their liberation struggle against Russia? When the Hungarian people fought for their rights against Austria, on which side were they? When the Italians fought against the authoritarianism of Germany,France and of the Pope, on which side were they? In case there was justice on the side of Italy, or of Poland, then there is justice on the side of India, too. Can one justify Hungary's struggle? Then we can justify India's too. Does Italy deserve our support? Then India, too, deserves our support. Because India is also trying to secure what Poland, Hungary or Italy had tried to secure.

Not only Ernest Jones, who stood firm on the side of the working class, but even a section of the bourgeois politicians of England adopted this approach. And its echoes were heard in the ruling circles.

It has been stated earlier that several high government officials and members of Parliament had expressed the opinion that the struggle of 1857-59 was not just a Sepoy Mutiny but a people's revolt. It is true that the government acted in a manner diametrically opposed to this opinion. Still, this opinion persisted strongly. That was what was reflected in the policies of the Conservative and Liberal parties towards India. The bourgeois democrats in India were striving to solve the country's problems by maintaining cordial relations with the leaders of the Liberal Party as well as with the officials who were pursuing their line of approach and

soliciting their assistance. That was why the Indian political leaders decided to depute a delegation to England to seek the support of the members of Parliament when the India Bill of 1853 came up for their consideration. It was also for the same reason that the political agitators in India made attempts again to mobilize public opinion in England, in favour of India when several lively issues like the Press Act and the debarring of Indians from appointments in services arose.

This attitude on the part of Indians had its impact on the rulers too. The policies of the British Government towards India changed in accordance with the character of the party in power. When power changed alternately between the Conservative and Liberal parties, there were changes in the attitudes of the Governor-General and other officials sent by the respective parties to India, as well.

Among the Governor-Generals, Lord Lytton who was appointed during the Conservative regime and Lord Ripon, who came to India during the Liberal Party's regime, deserve special mention. Legislative measures like the Act for the suppression of freedom of the press, which met with protests from the Indian people, were enacted during the regime of Lytton, while that Act was withdrawn after the assumption of office by Lord Ripon.

Further, it was during the regime of Lord Ripon that local self-governing bodies like municipalities and taluk boards were constituded, thereby giving rise to the impression that the national demand for involvement of the people of India in the areas of legislative work and day-to-day administration was being granted in its primary form. Therefore, Indian political leaders had a special regard and affection for Ripon. In 1884, when he left India on relinquishing office, farewell demonstrations were held in various parts of the country. This was something new to the English bureaucrats. One of the officials among them, the then Finance Member Sir Auckland was astonished at this gesture and even worte a book on it. These incidents are mentioned here to point out that in the relation among the British administrators themselves

and between them and the Indian people, there were two distinct elements, one of hatred and the other of cordiality. It was one of these elements that was reflected in the attitude of the former British official, Hume, the founder of the Indian National Congress, and the then Governor-General, Lord Dufferin.

The picture will not be complete unless we state the objective circumstances that induced them to take up this stand. The political reality directly witnessed by Hume and Lord Dufferin was as much significant in this context as were the ideas of liberalism that had influenced a section of the bourgeois rulers of England. This compelled them to think hard.

The rapidly growing discontent among the educated people on issues like adequate share for Indians in government services, the constitutional structure, rights and powers of the legislative councils, etc., and parallel to this, the discontent of the people on the burning problems of life which sometimes converged—this was the reality of the situation that people like Hume perceived.

The discontent both among the common people and the educated middle class had spread all over the country. The riots that burst out in 1859 in the indigo plantations in Bengal were the result of the convergence of these two streams. The British owners of these plantations used to behave brutally towards the workers and the farmers. This led to growing dissatisfaction in many areas creating waves of protest among the educated middle class, too. Deena Bandhu Mitra, one of the leaders of the cultural renaissance movement in Bengal, wrote a drama, "Neel Darpan", exposing the cruel exploitation by the plantation owners. Another leader of the renaissance movement, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, translated this drama into English. This led to court procreedings and to the conviction of the accused. The case created a wide-spread wave of agitation on an unprecedented scale which compelled the Government to effect some changes in the relations between the plantation owners and indigo farmers.

The famine which spread all over the country in the 1870s created an explosive situation in the rural areas, although it did not lead to a combined agitation by the educated and the common people as in the case of the movement of the indigo farmers. The reports that the government received from various districts one after another were alarming. Hume who was holding a very high official position at that time, feared that a wide-spread revolt in one form or another would break out. He also realized that if the new landlords and the educated sections were to take up the leadership of this revolt, it would lead to a dangerous situation to the British rulers.

It was quite natural that in such a situation, many other British officials, and even the Governor-General Dufferin for that matter, shared the opinion with Hume. Not only his loyalty to the bourgeois liberal ideology but also the eagerness to protect the British rule from the danger it was facing brought them close to the educated politicians in India. They came to realize that the formation of an organization under the leadership of this section of politicians of India was essential to channelize in the "right way" the discontent that was rapidly spreading all over the country.

Following this, while efforts were being made by Hume to form the Indian National Congress, Surendranath Banerji was moving on a parallel line towards a national conference which was held in Calcutta in December 1883. A second conference was also held subsequently.

It was when the second conference was in session that the first conference to form the Indian National Congress was held in Bombay in 1885. By that time Surendranath Banerji had come to be regarded as an acclaimed leader throughout the country. Yet, he had not participated in the Bombay conference. On the other hand, W.C Banerji, who had kept away from the Calcutta conference, not only attended the Bombay conference but also presided over it.

The circumstance which led to the formation of two parallel organizations was an issue of controversy. One

argument was that Hume and Dufferin considered that a leadership role for Surendranath Banerji, who had been dismissed from Government service and had become well known as the leader of agitation, would not help the formation of an organization of the type envisaged by them. It was on that ground the National Congress was formed in place of the national conference led by Banerji. Another argument was that because of the lack of proper communication facilities among the various organisations working in different parts of the country, the two conferences were held unwittingly at the same time.

As far as we are concenered, it is not a relevant question which of the two views was correct. For, whatever might have been the circumstance under which the Indian National Congress was formed, Surendranath Banerji and his friends did join that organization before long and played a leading role in it as much as he did in the Calcutta conference earlier. He himself has stated that he and his other moderates friends had participated in almost all the conferences of the Indian National Congress, after its inaugural session held in Bombay in 1885, till they left the organization in 1917.

In 1885, all those who had become well known through their public activities had participated either in the second Calcutta conference led by Surendranath Banerji or in the first conference of the Indian National Congress. An all India organization which can be said to be of the bourgeois nationalist movement in India thus emerged in 1885-86. The bourgeois modernization movement which started through the different branches such as the social reform movement in the forms of Brahma Samaj and other organisations and the cultural renaissance movements that emerged simultaneously with it, the political ideologies and agitations that emerged as part of these cultural and social movements, and the Indian poltical economy initiated by Naoroji and others, attained a clear all-India political form. And in the emergence of this movement, the British officials like Hume and Dufferin, who were under the influence of the Liberal Party of England and

the liberal political approach that controlled it, played an active role.

II. TOWARDS CONFRONTATION

As we have seen, the Congress which was started under the initiative of Hume and with the knowledge of the Governor-General had received the assistance and co-operation from the British officials in India in its initial days. The Governor-General had invited the delegates to the second conference of the Congress in Calcutta in 1886, to his official residence for a treat. Similarly, when the next conference was held in Madras, the Governor of that province entertained the delegates to the conference at his official residence.

But a radical change came about in the official attitude towards the organization when the activities of the Congress became intensified and the leaders decided to raise the demand for administrative reforms more vigorously. Perhaps not quite in line with the expectation of the official circle, the Congress did not remain content with holding a meeting once in a year and dispersing after passing certain resolutions. Instead, the Congress got itself engaged in mobilizing public opinion by publishing pamphlets and other materials sharply criticizing the policies purused by the government and conducting campaigns by holding public meetings. And the top echelons of the officialdom veered round to the view that no Englishman employed in govenment service should associate with the activities of the Congress or express sympathy for it. Earlier, offiicials used to attend the meetings of the Congress, which had now been banned.

The very same Lord Dufferin who had encouraged Hume in his efforts to form the Indian National Congress, later wrote: "There is a mischievous busybody of the name Hume whom Lord Ripon rather feted and who seems to be one of the chief stimulators of the Indian Home Rule movement.

He is cleverish, a little cracked, vain, unscrupulous man... very careless of truth."[1]

As we have seen, the main demands of the Congress were active role for the Indians in the administration and, as part of it, ending the monopoly of Englishman in government employment. The British authorities in India and England took a totally negative attitude towards this demand. They made out that those who raised these demands constituted a small minority among the Indian people and that a large majority of the people were not interested in such political agitations. They argued that since the "agitating minortiy" were Hindu Bengalis, Muslims throughout India and all other communities outside Bengal were aganist these demands. They even went to the extend of propagating that those who shed blood in the wars for the protection of the interests of both England and India were the "martial races" outside Bengal and that they were against the demands being raised by the "cowardly Bengali Hindus". Thus they did all what they could to turn the "martial races" and Muslims against the Congress.

Not only did they conduct propaganda of these sorts they also tried to obstruct in various ways the organized functioning of the Congress such as imposing ban on holding meetings in certain places, putting obstacles before travels and lodging facilties of the delegates attending conferences, and harassing those who were in the forefront of agitational and orgamizational activities. The congress had to face all these difficulties to function effectively.

However, none of these reduced the trust the congress leaders had in the British rule or the sympathy of those leaders who were taking active part in the British political life towands the congress. Besides Hume, there were many non-official Englishman who had taken part in the organizational activities of the Congress. Some of them had been even elected as president of the Congress. Charles Bradlaugh, a British M. P., had visited India and directly assisted the

1. Quoted in Tara Chand, *Ibid*, p 554.

political agitations of the Congress. Later he moved a bill in the House of Commons incorporating the demands raised by the Congress. The Congress, on its part, sent a delegation to England, which included, among Firozeshah Mehta, W. C. Banerji, Surendranath Banerji, R. N. Mudholkar and others, two Englishman, Hume and Elderly Norton.

The Government could not just ignore these agitations jointly conducted by the Congressmen in India and their English friends in England. When Bradlaugh introduced his bill in the House of Commons, the Government moved another bill in the House of Lords. Although the objects of the latter bill were stated to be the expantion of the represen-entative character of the Central legislalure and its rights and privileges, it was inadequate to serve the purpose, since the bill was really meant for "incresing the opportunities of the Government for acquainiting itself with the wishes and feelings of a select section of upper class Indians". Moreover, LordCurzon,introducing the bill on behalf of the Government, categorically stated that "for the illiterate and voiceless millions who constituted the people of India, no system of representative government could be devised".[2]

The demand of the Congress was the right of the people to elect the members of the legislature which was strongly supported by a section among the members in the Parliment. However, the 1892 Act rejected even the conception of election and introduced, instead, the system of nominating the members by the Governor-General, subject to the approval of the British Government.

The provision was to nominate six additional official members and 10 non-offiicial members to the Central Legislative Council. This proportion of the newly nominated members was fixed in such a away as to ensure that the non-official members in the council did not constitude a majority in the Council.

The provision was to nominate four out of 10 non-official members on the recommendation of the provincial legislatures,

2. Tara Chand, *Ibid* p 564.

one on the recommendation of the Chembers of Commerce of Calcutta and the remaining five members at the Governor General's discretion. In nominating members in the last category, representation to the Muslim and other communities was to be considered, thus adopting the principle of communal representation for the first time.

Not only the strcture of the Central Legislative Council, but also the rights and privileges of the members, both accepted and denied, did not satisfy the Congress. Although members had the right to interpellate and to discuss the budget after its presentation in the House, thy did not have the right to vote on the budget. It is needless to say that even if the right to vote to members was allowed, there was no question of defeating the Goverment in the House in which nominated members constituted a majority. As such, the denial of voting right to the members, as also the denial of the right to the people to elect non-official members revealed the real purpose of the Government. This revealed that the Government would not give the people's representatives a place in the legislature, nor would it concede even the official members enjoying the confidence of the Government the right to vote in the House.

It was within a period of seven years of the formation of the Congress that a bill with such unsatisfactory provisions was passed in the British Parliament. And even for this, the Congress in India and its English friends, including members of Parliament, in England had to do hard work. And all of them were, without exception, people with unflinching loyalty to the British rule. In every conference or meeting, speeches were delivered and resolutions passed declaring loyalty to the British royal family and government. Despite all these, the British government rejected even the moderate demands raised through legitimate means by an organization led by these "out and out loyalists".

Naturally, a thought arose among some congressmen as to whether it was not advisable in the prevailing circumstances to give up the path so far pursued and to adopt other means

of struggle. This thinking, in fact, led to the emergence of a new (radical) leadership against the (moderate) leadership in the Congress of the earlier days. We shall return to the emergence and growth of this new leadership later. Presently we shall only examine the nature of the changes that came about in the relationship between the new landlord-bourgeois classes which gave birth to the Congress, and the British rulers.

As pointed out earlier, a section of the trading bourgeoisie in India had gradually transformed themselves into industrial capitalists, after the British capitalists who first came as traders consolidated their power and entered the sphere of industrial production in a limited way in India.

It was the clash between these forces that was basic to the critiques of Indian political economy by Naoroji, Ranade and Dutt and the agitations based on these critiques. Basic to the demand raised by the Congress for elected people's representatives and for an administration under their control was the desire to have a government to realize the hopes and aspirations of the Indian bourgeoisie which was developing gradually.

This contradiction between the British and Indian bourgeoisie was, however, getting intensified day by day. For, under the firmly rooted British rule, capitalism was developing and the major share of this development was that of the British and a small portion, of the Indain capitalists. This situation led, on the one side, to the intensification of the dissatisfaction among the Indian capitalists and, on the other, to the growth of self-confidence that they would be in a position to exert pressure on the rulers through organized agitation. Thus, the Congress was waging a batle for the needs of a class which had emerged with growing dissatisfaction, on the one side, and with developing self-confidence, an the other.

Monopoly capitalism emerged on a global basis during the closing years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. As an inevitable consequence of this, the contradictions between the dominant monopoly capitalists and other sections of capitalists intensified, resulting in fierce

conflicts between them. As a matter of fact, it was as a part of this development that contradictions arose between the ruling British bourgeoisie and the Indian bourgeoisie which was aspiring for power.

By the closing years of the 19th century, Indian capitalists had attained a considerably strong position in the cotton textile industry. They had even gone ahead of the British in this industry by the year 1898. (Out of the capital invested in this industry, two thirds belonged to India, and the remaining one-third to the British.) But, in the jute, woollen, paper, sugar, tea, coffee and indigo sectors, three-fourths of the capital was British owned. Indians lagged behind not only in the matter of ownership of the capital and in the management, but also in the number of highly skilled technical hands like engineers. The Indian capitalists naturally desired to develop overcoming these weaknesses.

The contradictions between the British and Indian capitalists were getting intensified in the background of the situation in which the people of India as a whole were being subjected to exploitation and misery under the British rule.

In all other countries, one of the natural consequences of the development of capitalism was a reduction in the number of workers engaged in agriculture and other related spheres and an increase in the number of workers employed in industry and mining. What happened in India was the opposite. The percentage of those employed in industries and other related establishments decreased from 16 in 1881 to 15 in 1901. On the other hand, the percentage of those engaged in the agricultural and other related sectors increased to 74 from 75 during the same period. In other words, without econmic progress and modernization which should have resulted from development of capitalism, India became a victim of increasing misery arising out of it.

William Digby, a British economist, was one who had fully sympathized with the national aspirations of the people of India. In the estimation of the national income of India. William Digby ranks next only to Dadabhoy Naoroji.

According to his estimate, India's national income during the early years of the 20th century was 392.4 million pound sterling. Of this, 50 million pounds were appropriated by the princes, Zamindars and other feudal lords. Bankers and mofussil moneylenders and rich traders, numbering only 75,000, appropriated 75 million pounds. An equal amount went into the hands of 750,000 small and medium size traders.

Thus, while an amout as high as 200 million pound sterling passed into the hands of a minority consisting of feudal lords and traders, a large mojority of the common people received only 190 million pounds.

Digby's estimate revealed that while the contradiction between the Indian and British bourgeoisie were intensifying, the contradiction between the feudal-bourgeios classes and the masses of people had also become a factor which could not be ignored. This latter contradiction was, in a sense, a part of the former. This was because, as pointed out earlier, following the suppression of the revolt of 1857-59, the British rulers had deliberately pursued a policy of appeasing the feudal lords. As a result of this policy, not only the princes and the big landlords, but even the moneylenders and wholesale traders intensified their exploitation of the people and it was as an inevitable result of this that recurrent famines broke out in various regions of the country during the closing years of the 19th century.

Out of the 49 years from 1860 to 1908, 20 were famine years. Many of these famines resulted in large-scale starvation deaths. The toll of famine deaths was five million in 1876-77, 4.5 million in 1896-97 and 1.25 million in the year 1899-1900. The famines tell the story of the cruel feudal exploitation.

The famines and other forms of miseries of the people were issues highlighted by the Congress in the anti-British agitation. In the annual conferences of the Congress as well as in the local conferences, attention was focussed on these issues in the speeches delivered and resolutions passed. Relief operations were organized in the famine stricken areas by social workers. As part of the activities connected with such

issues, Congressmen also carried on propaganda severely criticizing the policies of the government. That was why the Congress was able to turn itself as an organization rallying the common people—first the poor middle class and gradually the workers and peasants—behind the Indian bourgeoisie which was fighting against the British bourgeoisie to protect its own class interest.

III. HINDU REVIVALISM: THE UGLY FACE OF NATIONALISM

In the previous sections we have referred to the various movements in India developed with the objects of liberating the country from the British rule and leading the society on modern bourgeois lines. We have seen that the common factor underlying all these movements was the modern bourgeois political development and that the Indian National Congress was the logical extention of this development.

Another movement, distinct from them though it may appear, but playing an active role in the development of bourgeois nationalism, also emerged in the same period. This was the movement for the revival of ancient Indian culture and religious beliefs, the traces of which could be found in the movement of social reforms and cultural renaissance led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. It may be recalled that Ram Mohan Roy who took the initiative in modernizing Hindu society, its customs and practices, strongly opposed the propagation of Christianity and the evangelical mission of the priests. In the process of modernization visualized by him, he incorporated elements of the ancient Hindu culture. Thus the movements for social reform and cultural renaissance like the Brahma Samaj of Bengal and the Prarthana Samaj of Maharashtra emerged as movements of Hindu revivalism, although they put emphasis on modernization.

Some of the other movements like the one led by Jyotiba Phule of Maharashtra were, as we have already noticed,

based on the slogan of upliftment of the backward castes, including the untouchables. The aim of these movements was to raise socially and culturally the communities oppressed under the caste system which was an integral part of the Hindu social system, by purveying them the wealth of the ancient Indian culture. For them, cultural renaissance and Hindu revivalism were merged together. (The most manifest form of this movement in Kerala was the movement started by Sri Narayana by establishing temples and monasteries exclusively for the non-caste Hindus.)

Simultaneously, attempts were also being made to revive the ancient Hindu culture independently of the movements for modernizing the Hindu society. Typical examples of such movements were those started by Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in Bengal, the Arya Samaj movement of Dayanand Saraswati in Punjab, and the Theosophical Society of South India (this movement was formed in other regions of India also, but it was not as popular there as it was in the South). These movements, however, contributed indirectly to the growth of bourgeois nationalist movement.

Following the suppression of the revolt of 1857-59, a general feeling had developed among Indians that the administrative and socio-cultural systems of the British were superior to the Indian social system and culture. The attempts made by the bourgeois social reformers and political leaders, from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to the founders of the Indian National Congress, were to end this condition and to modernize Indian society and establish a political-administrative system which could be on a par with the British system.

The Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society, on the other hand, tried to create a feeling among the people that there was no basis at all for their inferiority complex. The basic approach of Swami Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswati, Madame Blavatsky and other leaders who initiated the Hindu revivalist movements, was based on their claim that an advanced civilization existed in India when the ancestors of the present

British rulers were living like savages. They also claimed that although some distortions and deviations affected the culture for some time subsequently, the people of India could revive and re-enliven that ancient Hindu culture by overcoming the ill-effects of the distortions and deviations. They asserted further that if the people of India strove to carry out this process of revival, they could challenge and end the Western domination. Of all these movements, the one started by Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was the most prominent. Brought up in an orthodox atmosphere, he reached the Dakshineswar temple wherefrom he conducted his early activities as the priest of the temple. Soon his name spread as a man of peace who would solve the problems of his devotees through sacrifice. In short, he was a devout person and an idealist untouched by even a tinge of bourgeois social reform, cultural renaissance or urge for national independence.

Nevertheless, even under this idealism and spiritualism Sri Ramakrishna's preachings and deeds did provide a fertile soil for the growth of modern bourgeois nationalism. For, although born and brought up in an atmosphere of absolute orthodoxy, his teachings and practices contained elements which were distasteful to orthodox Hindu culture. His spiritual teachings and practices surmounted religious and caste distinctions. He tried to convert people into devotees of *Kali* and *Shiva*, whether they be Brahmins or non-Brahmins, Muslims or Christians. In fact, he became the priest of the temple of *Kali*, challenging the then existing communal practices and customs. Later, he also tried to adjust himself with Muslims and Christians by studying their scriptures and practices.

Thus, he built a new spiritual movement which, although devoid of modernism, stood above the caste distinction, religious superstitions and prejudices which were considered as black spots in the fabric of the Hindu society.

Even the new generation of the bourgeois intellectuals working with the aim of modernizing the society and holding

modern outlook which was distinctly different from that of Ramakrishna, were attracted towards him. Lawyers, doctors, professors, high officials in government service and such others became the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Many scholars engaged in a comparative study of the philosophy of Hinduism and of ancient Greece and modern Europe designed to establish the superiority of Indian culture and civilisation found Ramakrishna's spiritual teachings and practice of meditation attractive. The eminent leader of social reform and cultural renaissance in Bengal, Keshab Chandra Sen, was one among such scholars.

One of the young disciples of Ramakrishna who rose to eminence and fame was Narendranath Dutt. He was attracted towards Sri Ramakrishna at a time when he (Narendra Dutt) was seeking some means to overcome certain family problems after the completion of higher education. He soon became a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, and after the demise of his master, became the foremost amongst the founders of an order of *Sanyasins* pledged to propagate the message of teachings of Sri Ramakrishna throughout the world. As the leader of the order of *Sanyasins*, he adopted the name of Swami Vivekananda and it was in this name that he, later on, became famous.

The tours Vivekananda conducted to propagate the message of Sri Ramakrishna throughout India and abroad were ostensibly a movement for the propagation of Hindu religion. But in effect, it turned out to be a movement for the resurgence of India's soul which was being trampled upon by foreign rulers and for challenging their culture. The address he delivered at the world religious convention held in Chicago and the appreciation it received from the intellectuals of the Western world helped Indians to overcome their sense of inferiority. It also helped to bring into conscience the feeling that the Indian people were inheritors of a cultural legacy capable of challenging the foreign overlords dominating them.

Like those of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda's discourses

were also concerned ostensibly with spiritual matters. He tried to interpret and propagate the ideology of *Vedanta*. But, unlike Ramakrishna, Vivekananda in his discourses and correspondence made observations, even overtly to some extent, that were helpful to the development of modern bourgeois nationalist movement. He even made statements which were apparently against the religious establishment and priests. For instance, as disclosed by one of his disciples, Vivekananda once stated that when poverty and misery were rampant in the country, it was not the time to give religious speeches. "After these were abolished he would give religious discourses." He also expressed at times the views that the poor, the destitute and the weak were the real gods, and that priests should be kicked out. The urge for national independence could be discerned throughout his discourses.

The Arya samaj which emerged in Punjab under the leadership of Dayanand Saraswati was in many respects different from the movement that developed under the leadership of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. The Arya samaj was formed as a movement which directly came into clash with Islam and Christianity. Lectures and other literature published under the auspices of the Arya Samaj openly criticized and condemned Islam and Christianity. It was the Arya Samaj that raised the issue of banning cow slaughter which later on led to Hindu-Muslim riots. Books like the *Satyartha Prakash* written by Dayanand Saraswati, which created religious prejudices leading to communal clashes were of the same nature as the anti-Hindu books published by foreign missionaries. Nevertheless, there was much in common between the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement and the Arya Samaj. Both the movements were proud of the heritage of the ancient Hindu civilization. In that sense, both the movements showed the tendency to keep away from the non-Hindus in India, instead of building unity with them. This approach helped only to isolate the non-Hindus from the struggle against foreign domination, to the same proportion as it helped to attract Hindu masses to anti-British

struggle by creating the feeling that national independence meant the revival of ancient Hindu culture.

The Theosophical Society was a movement which did not manifest such a defect. The reason for this was that it did not develop into a long-standing all-India movement as did the other two movements. This relatively short-lived movement remained confined to South India. This movement attained popularity and eminence only at the close of the First World War when one of the eminent leaders of the movement, Dr (Mrs) Annie Besant, organized the Home Rule Movement against the British rule. And at that time it was a movement striving to organize all sections of the Indian people on the basis of a single political slogan above religious considerations.

The move for Hindu revivalism in India was, however, not confined to these three movements. In fact, the Hindu revivalist movement acquired, in the beginning, the position of a movement integral to the left-wing nationalism that emerged following the formation of Indian National Congress. The 'extremist' section of the Congress led by leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the secret revolutionary organizations which were formed in various parts of the country were all linked with the Hindu revivalist movement. The *Ganesh* festival organized by Tilak, the *Durga Pooja* and *Kali Pooja* organized by the revolutionaries of Bengal, and the Ayyappa Seva Sangh of Kerala and various other organizations formed in line with them were the products of the Hindu revivalism developed under the bourgeois nationalist movement. And the ideology behind these organizations was the intellectual creations of Hindu intelligentsia, like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who raised the slogan of *Bande Mataram* in accordance with the concept of *Bharat Mata* (Mother India). In this ideology can be seen the eagerness to attain independence with the blessings of the goddess Devi, the "annihilator of the enemy".

It may be stated that the urge for Hindu revivalism represented the inherent weakness of bourgeois nationalism

that had attained maturity with the emergence of the Indian National Congress. For, the movement had to take into account the religious sentiments of the Hindus who formed a majority of the population, if it wanted to become popular among the masses beyond the limited circle of educated elites. It had to conduct campaign in a style and language corresponding to these sentiments and, for that purpose, had to create symbols and epics. So they had to devise such agitational programmes as would rouse the people against the foreign rulers, on the one hand, as was the case with the *Ganeshotsav* and *Sivaji Utsav* organized by Tilak, and against other sections of the people like the Muslims and others, on the other.

There was another side of the coin. When a Hindu revivalist movement is organized as part of nationalism, it is but natural that a counter-movement of Islamic revivalism should emerge. When these two revivalist movements came into a clash with each other, the contradictions between the higher and lower castes within the Hindu society would come out, with the latter along with other religious minorities like the Sikhs and Christians, building their own characteristic revivalist movements. The British rulers naturally tried to intensify and utilize these contradictions among the various sections of the people to cause the disintegration of the national movement.

This was what really happened. Needless to say that 15th August 1947 represented the final act of the tragic drama which resulted from it.

IV. THE BEGINNINGS OF ISLAMIC POLITICS

We have already noticed that the Muslims as a community played a more active role than the Hindus as a rule, in the 1857-59 uprisings and which led ultimately to the emergence of the Indian National Congress. They had generally kept themselves aloof from the 'extremist' and mass movements

that had taken place in the course of the growth of the Congress. Except for a few individual Muslims, it was the Hindus who provided the leadership and the ranks to these movements.

Besides, it was the Muslim elites who lent their support to the British rulers when the latter unleashed repression against the extremist and mass movements, on the plea that the development of these forces posed a "danger". And the Muslim masses, on the other hand, could not participate in the anti-imperialist movement because of this stance of the elites.

When the British established their domination over India, it was the Muslim Emperor of Delhi and the Nawabs under him that lost the ruling power. As such, a feeling grew up among the Muslims, irrespective of their social position, that the British usurped power in India, dethroning the Muslim rulers who were in power for a few centuries. The anti-British feelings that developed as a consequence led to several local revolts culminating in the revolt of 1857-59.

There is also another factor which deserves special mention in this context. In a number of countries to the west of India the rulers were Muslims. The majority of the population of those countries was also Muslim. Of these, Turkey was ruled by the Khalif who was the revered leader of the entire Islamic world. The British and the other imperialist powers of the Western world were waging aggressive wars against these Islamic countries, including Turkey, and were forcibly occupying them.

Britain was growing as an imperialist power, having her sway over a vast area embracing Turkey, Egypt, the Arab countries, Iran and northern Africa. France, Russia and other capitalist powers were also growing in a similar way. Consequently, indignation of the Muslims was rising against the Western imperialist powers in general and against Britain in particular. This was what motivated the Muslims to actively participate in the various anti-British revolts, including the revolt of 1857-59. This also made the Muslims

desist from sending their children to modern educational institutions established by the British. Thus, while the richer sections of other communities were striving to modernize their social life through modern education, adopting the mode of life of the educated and entering the field of bourgeois financial enterprises, the richer sections of the Muslim community kept themselves aloof from such efforts. Their children continued to carry on their education in the traditional *Madrassas*. The life style and outlook of the richer sections were also those of the old feudal society. And the community did not provide social reformers and leaders like Ram Mohan Roy, Ranade and Naoroji.

In short, no social reform and cultural renaissance movements were built up by the Muslim community. Nor did they develop modern politico-economic thoughts as products of such social and cultural movements. The Muslim community in general, with the exception of a handful of individuals, had kept itself aloof from the organizations formed in various regions before the formation of the Indian National Congress and even from the Congress after it was formed.

There were, of course, a few individuals among Muslims who came to realize that such an attitude was dangerous. These individuals were aware of the strength of Britain and other imperialist powers, as also of the circumstance that led to their acquiring this strength. They also realized that it would be disastrous to repeat the revolts of the type that took place in 1857-59. They were convinced that they could advance as a community only if their children were provided with opportunities for acquiring modern education and adopted other means for bringing about modernization. Clashes occurred frequently between them and those who wanted to live the life as before.

Syed Ahmed Khan was one of the eminent leaders who took position in the progressive camp and fought against the orthodox sections. Like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and others, Syed Ahmed Khan also stood for social reforms and cultural

renaissance. He was well-known for introducing modernization in the Muslim community and the resultant renaissance. His contributions in the field of education in particular are significant.

The Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental School, started in 1874, was upgraded to a college in 1878. This institution was later developed into the present Aligarh Muslim University which played a very important role in the modernization of the Muslim community. The teachers as well as the young generation Muslims who got education in that University were capable of shining not only in the field of education but also in different aspects of the social and political llfe. These efforts, which later came to be known as the "Aligarh Movement" helped to bring about a transformation in the Muslim community, in the same way the diverse movements ranging from Brahma Samaj to the Indian National Congress brought about transformation in India as a whole. Thus this educational institution came to be the centre of social reform and cultural renaissance movments of the Muslim community.

Ahmed Khan's view and outlook were distinctly different from those of his contemporary Muslim scholars and the other leaders of the Muslim community. Even in matters relating to religion, his views and those of the *Ulemas* came to clash with each other. His interpretation of Islamic religious ideas and theories was not relished by the *Ulemas* and other orthodox sections among the community. He gave vent to his opinion, as opposed to the view held by other leaders of his own community, that the Sultan of Turkey had no rights as the Khalif.

Though Syed Ahmed Khan started his activities holding modern religious views, experience taught him that if he held fast to these views he might alienate the common people of his community. Consequently, he confined himself to activities in the field of education. He knew quite well that the transformations in the field of education would inevitably exert an influence in all the other fields and that the Aligarh

Movement would develop into a manifold movement for social reform.

Ahmed Khan also tried to bring about a fundamental change in the political outlook of the Muslim elites. The revolt of 1857-59 had made him think deeply about it, as it did the leaders of other communities. But unlike many other leaders, the revolt and the vindictive measures taken by the government did not disappoint him. He, in fact, concentrated his attention on the lessons one had to draw from the revolt and the subsequent events.

Syed Ahmed Khan considered it essential to bring about a fundamental change in their relationship with the Britsih rulers by ending the confrontation and establishing a relation based on cooperation. He was convinced that only by cooperating with the British authorities could the community make progress. He tried to make the community accept this view and in this he was successful to some extent.

Ahmed Khan developed his political approach with the perspective of establishing a relationship of coorperation with the non-Muslim communities too. In a book he wrote analyzing the causes of the 1857-59 revolts, he criticized the policy of the British authorities of keeping Indians—both Muslim and non-Muslim—from higher official positions. Thus he made it clear that the political slogan raised by the leaders of the non-Muslim communities before the formation of the Indian National Congress was the slogan of the Muslim community as well.

Similarly, he laid emphasis on the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity in many of his famous speeches. For instance, in a speech delivered at Patna on 27th January, 1883 he told his audience that the terms Hindu and Muslim only indicated religion. All residents of India, whether they be Hindus, Muslims or Christians, constituted a single nation. The days were gone when the inhabitants of a country were regarded as different nations on the basis of religion. Similar themes could be found expressed in his other speeches and writings.

But a change came over in the political attitude of Syed Ahmed Khan with the formation of the Indian National Congress in 1885. He thought that a minority community like the Muslims would be adversely affected if the administrative power was passed on to the elected representatives of the people of India as demanded by the Congress. Syed Ahmed Khan came to the conclusion that in order to avoid such an eventuality, it was necessary for the Muslims to organize independently and demand special status for them in the democratic set up demanded by the Congress. This showed that Syed Ahmed Khan began to go back from the position he had taken earlier as expressed in his speech cited above.

It was quite natural for the British rulers to adopt an attitude giving all encouragement to this idea of Muslim separatism. It was essential for them to curb at all costs the movement for independence and democracy that was emerging rapidly against their rule. And they cleverly utilized the contradictions and mutual suspicion between the Hindus and Muslims as an effective means to curb such a movement. For instance, Lord Dufferin, the then Gevernor-General of India, told a Muslim delegation: "Descended as you are from those who formerly occupied such a commanding position in India, you are exceptionally able to understand the responsibility attaching to those who rule."[3]

The British took particular care to rouse the feelings of pride in the minds of the Muslim elites who considered themselves to be the descendants of the Emperor of Delhi and of the Nawabs, by making similar references both officially and unofficially. Britons of the Aligarh College which was the main centre of activities of Syed Ahmed Khan, too, consistently tried to rouse these feelings among the Muslims.

All these gradually conjured up in the minds of the educated sections of the Muslim community a feeling that a democratic administrative set up as demanded by the Congress posed a danger to them as a minority community and

3. Quoted in Tara Chand, *Ibid*, p. 366.

that they must stand with the British to avoid such a situation. Needless to say, it was this feeling that subsequently led to the formation of the Muslim League and to the frequent clashes between the Congress and Muslim League which culminated in the division of the country into India and Pakistan.

It must be stated specifically that the burgeois politicians belonging to the non-Muslim communities were equally responsible, as were the bourgeois politicians of the Muslim community and British rulers, for the development of such a situation. For, as indicated earlier, bourgeois politics of the Indian National Congress emerged and developed in close cooperation with Hindu revivalism. All the foremost bourgeois political leaders, including Tilak and Gandhi who were regarded as above religion and caste, used Hindu concepts and symbols for political propaganda. Though this was done with the good intention of attracting the attention of the common people, they tended to create the impression that what they meant by independence was the revival of ancient India with Hindu domination.

This naturally created missgivings in the minds of non-Hindus, as also among the non-caste sections of the Hindu community. Consequently, in order to secure their future position, the Muslims started organizing themselves independently, followed by Christians, Sikhs and the depressed and backward classes among the Hindus. And the British rulers cleverly utilized the differences and contradictions amongst these various sections to secure their own position. These were the factors that lay behind what later on developed into the 'communal question'.

The bourgeois nationalists in general shut their eyes to this reality and tried to make it appear that the communal problem, which culminated in the division of the country into India and Pakistan, was the creation solely of the Muslim elites and the British rulers.

6

THE TILAK ERA

I. "SWADESHI" AND "SWARAJ"

World capitalism underwent a basic change towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. Monopoly capitalism or imperialism came into being during the time. Wars among the imperialist powers, revolutionary struggles of various nationalities against imperialism and struggles for socialism under the leadership of the working class within the imperialist countries—all this became more widespread and intense, and a new world political situation came into being with all these characteristics.

It was during this period that parties of the working class grew in strength in Germany, France, Italy and other European countries and gained considerable voice in their respective parliaments. In Britain too, which was relatively lagging behind other countries in this respect, an independent party of the working class was formed and it began to participate in the elections. It has to be specifically mentioned

here that Engels, during the closing years of his life was writing articles and letters warmly welcoming these developments and giving practical guidance to the activists of these parties.

The waves of these developments swept over the independence struggle in India, too. When a branch of the Indian National Congress began to function in England, the activists of that organization were initially depending on the Liberal Party; with the formation of the Labour party, it became a mighty sympathizer and advocate of the Indian independence struggle. The activists of Indian independence movement also established relation with the working class socialist movements in Europe and America.

It is on record that Dadabhoy Naoroji and Madame Cama participated in two different conferences of the Second International. Later, Madame Cama and her colleagues established contacts with various revolutionary groups all over Europe, when they started organizing revolutionary groups challenging the leadership of Naoroji and others. They sought the help and cooperation of the revolutionaries in France, Germany and Russia for securing arms and training in their use.

Lala Lajpat Rai, one of the renowned 'extremist' leaders of India stated: It is beyond doubt that the struggle for independence in India receive liberal support from the international forces. The struggles and victories of the working class of England, the sacrifice made by the revolutionaries of France and their ultimate victory, the efforts of the Italians and their victory, the continuous struggles of the peoples of Russia, Poland, Finland and Hungary, of the nationalist forces of Europe, inspire and strengthen us.

Apart from these, certain other events of historic significance also occurred during this period. In 1896, an Euorpean imperialist power, Italy, clashed with Abyssenia (Ethiopia), an African country, and met with defeat. England had to undergo a lot of difficulties in the Boer War of 1899-1902. Revolutionary movements emerged in Asian countries like

China, Persia (Iran) and Turkey. In 1905 an European power, Russia, was defeated by an Asian power, Japan. Following this, workers and other toiling people of Russia conducted a revolution against the Czar's regime. As a part of the revolutionary nationalist movement in China, a move was afoot to boycott American goods.

The waves of all these developments swept over India, too. Even Swami Vivekananda whose activities confined mainly to spiritual plane, wrote to one of his friends on the Russo-Japanese war: "The Japanese seem now to have fully awakened themselves to the necessity of the present times... "Come, be men! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad. See how nations are on the march. Do you love men? Do you love your country? Then come, let us struggle for higher and better things; look not back, no, not even if you see the dearest and nearest cry. Look not back, but forward."[1]

This new enthusiasm found expression in the Indian National Congress, too. The Congress, formed with the moderate objective of working for limited administrative reform through petitions to the British officials in India and to the rulers in Britain, began to change itself into a fighting organization with more radical objective and adopting more intensive agitational forms of struggle. An intense conflict between the extremist Congress leaders who were trying to bring about this transformation and those who wanted to maintain the Congress as a body for submitting petitions.

This conflict led to a split in Congress, which we shall examine later along with the circumstances that led to the split. Here we will deal only with the changes that occurred in the economy of the country which gave rise to these developments.

The British, as we know, first come to India as traders selling goods produced in their country and taking Indian goods to their country. It was the East India Company which

1 *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, (1964 Edition), pp 43-44.

obtained first the Charter from the British Crown for carrying on the trade and subsequently obtained from the Emperor of Delhi and the provincial rulers the administrative rights to safeguard their interests.

When the administration gradually extended to cover the entire country, the Company realised that it was not enough for them to confine their activities to commercial transactions and that they must also engage themselves in agricultural and industrial production. Accordingly, they entered the fields of modern capitalist plantation, primary industries for processing raw materials and the railways and transportation network building essential for these activities.

Since the Company's administration was not helpful in all these activities, the administration was gradually brought under the control of the British government. Finally, the administrative powers were fully transferred to the government. Following this, the nature of the British rule once again underwent a change towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

As we know, the main characteristic of monopoly capitalism or imperialism is the export of capital. So, the British monopoly capitalists were not satisfied merely with the availability of cheap raw materials for the British industries or high prices obtained for the British industrial goods. They must also use India for investing part of their profits in England as capital in order to earn more profits. They knew that investment in India where cheap labour and raw materials were available would enable them to earn higher rates of profit. Consequently they formulated and pursued such policies as would serve these purposes.

As an inevitable consequence of this, the British were perforce led to introduce limited industrialization and the resultant social transformations in India. At the same time they would not do anything which would endanger their domination over India. For, they knew that if industrialization were to take place in India as independently and rapidly as it occurred in England, it would result in the

emergence and development of an independent bourgeoisie in India challenging their domination over the country. Therefore, they took all precautions to ensure that no indigenous industry, except those under their direct control and ownership, developed in India. With this aim in view, they took a number of steps including the imposition of export and import duties and fixation of railway and shipping freight tariffs in a manner detrimental to the interests of indigenous industrialists. They also utilized their administrative power to control the production and prices of industrial raw materials in which they had invested capital. In short, they exerted their control over the administration for the purpose of preventing the free development of capitalism in the country.

However, as pointed out earlier, a capitalist class which was capable of challenging the power to an extent developed rapidly, though under the shadow of the British rulers. In fact, Indian economists like Naoroji and Ranade were the spokesmen of this class. The Indian National Congress was formed subsequently by them and other sections of the bourgeoisie.

Thus, when both the British monopolists and Indian capitalists invested their capital in industries in India, their respective interests came to conflict with each other. It came to manifest itself in clear terms in the beginning of the 20th century. The capital invested in India by companies registered in England during the period of the Russo-Japanese war and the upsurge of the freedom fighters inspired by the outcome of that war, was 96.7 million pound sterling, which was thrice the total investment of capital by all the companies registered in India. This shows that the companies registered in England enjoyed a dominant position in India. Moreover, a considerable number of industries registered in India were either owned or controlled by the British.

However, the number of industries registered in India and the volume of capital invested were rapidly increasing. Between 1897 and 1906, the capital invested by companies

registered in India increased by 36.8 per cent. In certain sectors of industry, including the textile industry in Bombay, Indian capitalists had predominance. The British had sought to control some of these industries directly by means of managing agency system and indirectly through governmental policies. It was done with the clear objective of preventing the development of Indian capitalism. The resultant conflicts led to the slogan of *Swadeshi* and triggered a socio-political movement based on it. The Indian capitalists realized that just as the British capitalists exert influence on their government for the protection of their own interest, so there was a need for them to influence the rulers both in Britain and in India to protect their own interests. But this was of no avail, because the British government was biased towards the British capitalists whenever there was a conflict between the interests of the British and Indian capitalists. So, the latter came to realize further that it was necessary for them to adopt agitational path, rather than depending on petitions and representations. The leaders of the independence struggle suggested the people of India come forward to safeguard the interests of Indian capitalists in the same way as the government came forward to protect the interests of the British capitalists against the interests of the Indian capitalists.

The situation got aggravated in 1905. *Swadeshi* at that time was the symbol of 'extremist' politics, which had been developing as a socio-economic movement over the past quarter of a century. From 1880, voices of protest were being raised in Western India against the crisis of Indian industries. Even at that time, *Swadeshi* had become a slogan symbolizing patriotism. This is evident from the fact the new textile mill established by Jamshedji Tata in 1885 was named the "Swadeshi Mill". Mass organizations like the Sarvajanik Sabha of Poona adopted *Swadeshi* as the sole means to liberate India.

The *Swadeshi* movement which, till then, was confined mainly to the socio-economic sphere, acquired political significance with the new political advance started in 1905. At

that time, along with the "constructive" approach of encouragement to indigenous industries, it also included the "agitational" content of boycott of foreign goods. Just as the slogan of *Swadeshi* in the socio-economic sphere, so the slogan of *Swaraj* also came to be raised in the political sphere during the same time. An agitational significance to this slogan was provided by Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal, popularly known as the "Lal-Bal-Pal" triumvirate. It was they who placed before the people a programme of action comprising *Swadeshi*, boycott of British goods, and a national education policy, and strove to get this programme adopted by the Congress. It was again they who openly stated that the aim of the freedom fighters was not administrative reforms, as demanded by the Congress earlier, but an administrative system in which Indians have as much share as the Englishmen have in England. Interestingly, these slogans were adopted by moderates also. For instance, Dadabhoy Naoroji, a moderate leader, raised this slogan in his speech delivered as the President of the Calcutta session of the Congress in 1906. A resolution adopted by that conference also accepted the *Swadeshi* and other slogans of the 'extremists'.

As we shall see in the following chapters, this represented only one stage in the conflict between the moderates and extremists in the Congress. The Calcutta session, in fact, helped not to bring about a unity between these two sections, but to prepare the ground for further conflicts. However, the adoption by the moderate-led Congress of the two slogans, *Swadeshi* and *Swaraj*, which had hitherto been identified with the programme of the extremists was a significant development in the history of the freedom struggle.

The conflict between the British rulers and the Indian bourgeoisie had now become sharper than ever before. The Congress, which emerged as the mouthpiece of the Indian bourgeoisie and the freedom movement under its leadership, had reached a turning point. In order words, the movement

for independence had now passed from the stage of infancy and entered the stage of adolescence.

II. MASSES ON THE POLITICAL SCENE

As we had noticed earlier, the inspiration for the new anti-imperialist upsurge was the conflict between the rising capitalist class in India and the British capitalists who were tightening their grip over the Indian economy. This was, however, not the only element that inspired the movement that emerged during this period. Another element of equal or more significance was the conflict between the upper classes and the common people.

With the growth of the British and the Indian capitalists, a working class had also begun to emerge. In the early stage of the growth of capitalism, workers in India, as elsewhere in the world, had to toil hard under conditions of extremely cruel exploitation. During the early years of the 20th century, for instance, the working time in the factories was, on the average, 12 hours and 7 minutes per day. In some factories, it was even 14 hours. In Bombay, workers had to toil for over 12 hours (in some factories which had started using electric power it was between 14½ and 15 hours). In Broach it was 14½ hours, in Agra 13 ¾ to 15¼ hours, in Lucknow 13¾ hours, in Sholapur, 12½ hours to 13½ hours, in Delhi 13½ to 14½ hours and in Amritsar and Lahore, it was 13 to 13¾ hours. (The figures are from the data published officially by the Factory Labour Commission.)

This, along with low wage levels, burden of debts and dependence on contractors and middlemen, led to discontent among the workers and to disturbances. Often they were forced to resort to strikes.

Details of strikes that burst out in Bombay and Ahmedabad, though not in an organized way, were given in the Commission's report cited above. The Commission's report also gives instances of wage increase and other demands of

the employees in Bombay and Ahmedabad the employers were forced to concede and of strikes in places like Agra and Madras.

In many such cases, the workers had to face the Indian capitalists who were being supported by the British capitalists, administrators, and the British Press. Thus, while clashes were taking place between the Indian and British capitalists, on the other side, clashes were also taking place between the Indian capitalists and workers.

In the agricultural sector, too, class conflicts were getting intensified day by day. The practice of investing capital in the agricultural sector had become universal as a natural consequence of the development of capitalism. But, this investment of capital did not serve to modernize agriculture, as it did in Europe, because modernization in the industrial sector that was required for the modernization of agriculture using machinery and new technologies was not there. On the other hand, the rulers made conscious efforts not to bring about such a modernization.

Capital was used for the purpose of purchasing ownership rights on land. It became the practice of the rich to give loans at high interest rates to the small and middle peasants and force them to sell their land in the event of failure to repay the loans. As a result, the new rich became landowners; on the other side, the small and middle peasants became landless. Thus, while the contradiction between the feudal landlords and their tenants continued, there began another contradiction between the new rich trying to secure ownership of land and the farmers who were deprived of their land. Both contradictions were getting sharpened day by day.

Further, caste-domination, related to land owned by the feudal lords, but more deep-rooted than feudal domination itself, the declining rural industries, absence of land reform or industrialization required to provide employment to those who were formerly engaged in rural industries and the consequent growing unemployment—all these made the life of the

rural people more and more miserable. The tax system introduced by the British and the cruel way of collecting taxes led to the pauperization of the majority of the rural people. Famines, epidemics and deaths became common. Instead of trying to solve these problems, the government continued to function in a most inhuman way.

And a new generation of leadership had also started coming up from among the educated sections of the people. Teachers,lawyers, journalists and various other salary-earning sections of people and students were increasing in number. As noted earlier, the influence of the world revolutionary advance had spread among them. The arrogance of the British bureaucrats was hurting the self-respect of the people. Books and journals giving details of the exploitation and oppression by the British capitalists and high officials roused their ire. The inspiration for self-sacrifice in the fight for independence and democracy gave them a new life.

These were what lay beneath the emergence of radical politics. The forces behind the 'extremist' political movement that emerged under the leadership of the Bal-Pal-Lal triumvirate were the middle and poor sections of the people in the urban and rural areas. This was what differentiated the new generation of extremist political leaders from the leadership of the Congress in the earlier period.

Lok Manya Tilak was the most eminent among the extremist leaders—the foremost among the earlier generation of national leaders who laid down everything for the service of the country. The heroic struggles he carried on consistently against the rulers made him the target of their hatred. He was respected and held in high regard even by foreign intellectuals for his scholarship and deep learning, but to the power drunk bureaucrats he was an anathema. On more than one occasion he had to undergo the extreme rigours of the prison life which wrecked his health. But he was able to achieve what none of the previous generation of leaders could achieve: He became the most respected leader of the poor and middle class people in the rural and urban areas.

Even at the beginning of his political life, Tilak manifested the characteristics of the new generation which he represented. Wielder of a sharp pen, Tilak started two journals, *Kesari* in his mother tongue Marathi, and *Maratta* in English. He utilized the columns of these journals to expose the misrule of the bureaucrats and to advocate the cause of India's independence. Even in the early days of these journals, Tilak and his colleague Agarkar were convicted for publishing articles exposing the misdeeds of the Dewan of the princely state of Baroda in the name of the Maharaja of that state. (In the history of modern nationalist movement, journalists undergoing punishment was not common.) Public contribution for the conduct of the case and the enthusiastic reception accorded by the people to Tilak and Agarkar as they came out of jail on completion of their term of imprisonment were almost the first instance of such events in the political life of India. This was an experience which eminents like Ranade, Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta and Gokhale could not even dream of.

This ocurred in 1882, before the formation of the Indian National Congress. The selfless work in the service of the country that Tilak carried on for nearly four decades since then has gone down not only in his life but also in the annals of the Indian history.

During the 1896-97 famine in Maharashtra, when the administration was callously eager to collect taxes from the famine stricken people, Tilak openly opposed and exposed the unlawful acts of the rulers by citing the regulations governing famine affected areas. He called upon the people to resist the unlawful tax collection in an organized manner. "It you have money, pay the tax, but you are not liable to pay the tax by selling your cattle, land and other properties", he advised the common people in the rural areas.

Before long, another distress overlook the people of Maharashtra when the epidemic of plague spread all over the region. The Government took measures to provide treatment to those afflicted by the disease and to ensure that it did not spread. But the authorities who had no relations with the

people assigned the relief work to the police and military. The latter, on the other hand, organized the 'epidemic relief work' in a manner in which they, without any human consideration, entered homes and harassed women and children. Strongly opposing this, Tilak fearlessly exposed the misdeeds of the bureaucrats. He openly declared that the people had the right to take defensive actions against those who entered their homes and behaved discourteously.

This was the reason for his second term of imprisonment. He was charged with "instigating the people to violence". The prosecution argued that Tilak was the force behind the murder of two officials, one an Englishman, who had earned notoriety for their misdeeds in the relief activities in the plague-affected areas. The judge who tried that case recorded that Tilak had no part in the murder. Yet he was convicted. The judge decreed that the very political activities of Tilak who had no loyalty and affection for the British rulers were punishable.

These two incidents in the life of Tilak revealed the close links the extremist leaders of the new generation had with the masses. At that time, there was no organized trade union or peasant movement. But the movement that developed under the leadership of the Bal-Pal-Lal triumvirate drew the masses, including industrial workers and the peasants, into the political arena. The extremists formulated a programme of action which included *Swadeshi, Swaraj*, national education and resistance to oppression by the bureaucrats and exploiters. Industrial workers, peasants and other poor sections of the people in towns and villages were inspired. Gradually the working class started using the weapon of strike, their struggles went beyond the limits of struggles for wage rise and reduced working hours and other immediate economic demands; they took the form of political strikes.

The first political strike in the history of India took place when Tilak was sentenced to imprisonment for the third time in 1908. Now the strike was on a common political issue. As Lenin stated, this was an "open declaration of the

maturity of working class in India". Tilak's conviction also gave a new form of struggle, *hartal*, which later came to occupy an important place in the freedom struggle. On the day of delivery of the judgement people had collected in the court in large numbers. To avoid them, Tilak was whisked away by the backdoor. The people protested against this in strong terms. Shops and markets were closed, students boycotted classes and wore black badges. Workers, students and traders acted in unison to express their strong protest. The people of Bengal had already developed this method of struggle in connection with the partition of Bengal. Its adoption in Maharashtra, to demonstrate people's respect and affection for Tilak, gave the movement an all-India character.

The role Tilak and his colleagues played in giving shape to the people's protest has rightly been placed high. Justifiably, these leaders earned the love and respect of historians as well as of the masses. There is one thing, no less important than the courage and sense of self-sacrifice these leaders displayed, which needs special mention here. People had risen with a class consciousness and with the strength of organized action. The greatness of these leaders lay in the fact that they were able to gauge this force and give an organized form to it. And it was this fact which distinguished them from the leaders of the earlier generation.

III. THE "DIVIDE AND RULE" TACTICS AND SETBACKS

We have noticed that the Congress which was formed with the blessings and help of a section of British bureaucracy and purely on the basis of moderate programmes, declaring loyalty to the British, faced opposition and vindictive actions from the authorities before long. Over the years, this opposition and vindictive actions became stronger. The formation of an extremist section under the leadership of Tilak and others and the adoption by the Congress, as a

consequence of the activities of this section, of the programme of *Swadeshi* and *Swaraj* added fuel to the fire of this opposition and vindictiveness.

The very first method used by the rulers to nip in the bud the movement that was developing into a threat to their domination was to subject individual leaders of the movement to repression. Even before the formation of the Indian National Congress, Surendranath Banerji in Bengal and Tilak in Maharashtra had to undergo imprisonment. With the emergence of the Congress organization and the rise of extremist tendencies, the repression became more severe.

Since, however, the rulers found that the movement was not showing any signs of weakness even under these repressive measures, but, on the other hand, was steadily advancing, they sought to use other means to suppress it. As part of this strategy, Lord Curzon, the then Governor-General, formulated and implemented a plan to partition Bengal.

At that time, the Province of Bengal was a source of strength and inspiration for the independence movement in general and for extremist tendencies in particular. It was a movement that had taken roots equally in the city of Calcutta and in the eastern districts of Bengal. The Congress leaders in general, and the extremist sections within the Congress in particular, were able to organize the Bengali speaking population of this area, as they were successful in organizing the Marathi speaking people in Bombay, as an integral part of the national movement. The partition of Bengal was a political device to break the unity which had grown out of this movement. The authorities used the ploy of "administrative convenience" to justify the partition. But there was enough evidence to show that the real motive was political. Three Bengali speaking districts were part of Assam. The Province of Bengal at that time consisted of the rest of the Bengali speaking districts, Bihar, Orissa and Chota Nagpur. The argument justifying the partition was that since the province comprised a vast area, it was necessary to partition it in the interest of administrative efficiency.

The notes and letters of Governor-General Curzon and various other high officials, however, showed that the real reason for the partition was something else. Those who stood in the forefront of the political agitation not only in Bengal but all over India were the educated middle class (the *Baboos*) who were, through their writings in Bengali newspapers and their speeches, turning the masses against the British rulers. The advance of the movement could be effectively checked only if facilities for such activities were denied to them. In the words of Curzon: "The Bengalis who like to think themselves a nation, and who dream of a future when the British will have been turned out and a Bengali Babu will be installed in Government House, Calcutta, of course bitterly resent any disruption that will be likely to interfere with the realization of this dream. If we are weak enough to yield to their clamour now we shall not be able to dismember or reduce Bengal again, and you will be cementing and solidifying in the eastern flank of India a force already formidable and certain to be a source of increasing trouble in future."[3]

If the intention was to reduce the size of the province solely in view of administrative efficiency, then this could have been accomplished by removing Hindi and Oriya speaking areas and the tribal territories from Bengal and by adding to it the Bengali speaking areas of Assam. Instead, the plan was to create a new province comprising the districts of eastern Bengal and Assam and to retain the Hindi and Oriya speaking areas and tribal territories in Bengal as before.

The consequence of this was not only the break up of a linguistic group; it also led to the intensification of the linguistic contradictions and quarrels between the two states, one comprising Bengali and Assamiya speaking areas and tribal territories and the other comprising Bengali, Hindi and Oriya speaking areas and tribal territories. Further, because

3. Curzon Papers, Curzon to Brodrick, 17 February, 1904, cited in Tara Chand, *Ibid*, Volume III, p 311.

Dacca was the capital of the new province of East Bengal and because the majority of the population of that region were Muslims, the partition plan would help create the impression of liberating the Muslim population from the Hindu domination of the undivided Bengal.

Thus the plan to partition Bengal helped the rulers to disrupt the unity of the Bengali people and to sow the seeds of Hindu-Muslim conflict in the entire population of India, thereby dividing and weakening the anti-imperialist forces.

The result was, however, different. Voices of protest began to rise high throughout Bengal even as the news of partition began to come in. State-wide meetings and demonstrations in which hundreds and thousands of people participated were staged. There were even meetings in which as many as 50,000 people participated. Students, lawyers, employees and others came out on the streets donning black badges in token of sorrow. Mass protests were registered in various forms like strikes, boycott of classes and *hartals*.

These were not confined to Bengal alone. Political activists in the other provinces also came out to express their solidarity with their brethren in Bengal who were under such a cruel attack. Resolutions demanding the repeal of partition of Bengal were passed by the Indian National Congress and all other political-social organizations.

It was as an integral part of this agitation that boycott as a form of struggle which was advocated earlier by the extremists, came to be practised throughout the country. Before this, the programme of boycott of foreign goods had been carried out in certain places, but without political motives. Now, it was accepted as a form of political struggle.

Even before the official notification relating to the partition appeared in the press in India on 6th July 1905, an opinion had been expressed that a boycott action should be carried out to express protest against the proposed partition. The programme was, however, given an organized shape only on 7th August by the decision taken at a convention held in

the Calcutta Town Hall. This convention was preceded by a mammoth demonstration in which students and youth who had already taken a pledge of boycott at various local meetings and thousands of others who had not yet taken such a pledge, participated.

As indicated earlier, it was not simply a boycott of foreign goods. The boycott action spread to various sectors and took various forms. For example, shoemakers refused to repair the shoes of Englishmen; cooks and domestic servants from Orissa refused to serve masters who used foreign goods; washermen took a pledge that they would not wash foreign clothes; priests declared that they would not conduct marriage ceremonies where foreign cloth was used. Thus, various sections of people implemented the programme of boycott in their respective spheres.

Though this agitational programme was carried out more strongly in Bengal, its waves swept over other regions of the country as well. The anti-partition agitation and the boycott programme which was a part of it helped the extremist section which had come forward with a new militant programme of *Swadeshi*, *Swaraj* and national education to win the acclaim of the Congress ranks and of the people of the country as a whole. It was as a sequel to the sweeping waves of this agitation that Dadabhoy Naoroji, who presided over the Congress session at Calcutta in 1906, came out with the declaration that *Swaraj* was the goal of the people of India.

This session also justified the boycott movement launched in Bengal to protest against partition and declared that it would be continued. Even moderate leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and others raised voice in protest against partition and justified the boycott agitation that was being carried on in Bengal. It was in this background that resolutions were passed at the session on issues like *Swadeshi*, national education, etc., and on the need for extending to India the form of government similar to that existed in the self-governing colonies of Britain.

Thus the plan for partitioning Bengal, designed to create a split in the nationalist movement, really helped to develop national unity based on an extremist programme. The agitations and boycott of foreign goods, which started merely as an expression of sympathy towards the brethren of Bengal became an integral part of the all-India political movement for *Swaraj*. The situation developed in such a way that even the stark moderates came to realize that they could not function without giving due consideration to the intense anti-imperialist feelings of the people.

This revolutionary upsurge, however, had its own weaknesses. The movement was constrained by two limitations which enabled the rulers to create a split in the anti-imperialist feelings of the people, which rose first during the partition days in Bengal and later spread through out India and got reflected in the 1906 Congress session.

First, although the Calcutta session adopted almost all the slogans including *Swadeshi*, *Boycott*, and *Swaraj*, which the extremist section had raised, the leadership of the organization remained with the moderates. What happened at the Calcutta session was only a temporary compromise between the moderate leaders like Pherozeshah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Rash Behari Gosh and Surendranath Banerji, on the one side, and the extremist leaders like Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai, on the other. As the circumstance which compelled the moderates to reach a compromise with the extremists, (ie., the atmosphere of the mass upsurge following the partition of Bengal) began to change, the former came to the fore once again. This, in fact, formed the background of the controversies at the Surat session of the Congress and the split that followed.

Second, the Hindu outlook of the nationalist leaders including the extremists and the Islamic outlook of the new generation of political workers who were emerging from among the Muslims, gave rise to misgivings and lack of confidence between the two communities. This weakness, which later on affected Indian politics as a whole, was cleverly

utilized by Curzon and his successors in the partition of Bengal. The rulers deliberately tried to create the feeling among the Muslim elites that they would be able to establish their domination in the new province which included Muslim majority areas. And this was successful to a large extent. The Nawab of Dacca and other elitist leaders who had earlier participated in the anti-partition agitation subsequently turned out in favour of partition. The Muslim elitist leaders also got the inspiration from the rulers to raise new demands concerning the rights and privileges they must have in Indian politics and to form a new organization, the Muslim League.

In spite of the existence of two conflicting groups in the Congress and of the conflict between the Congress and the League engineered by the rulers, the Government had to revoke the partition and re-unite Bengal into one province in 1911. In other words, the British rulers came to realize that the mass sentiment expressed in the anti-partition agitations was just and irrepressible.

IV. SPLIT IN CONGRESS

Dadabhoy Naoroji's presidential address and the resolution passed at the 1906 session of the Congress at Calcutta inspired millions of Indian people. But the session angered the British rulers. They had anticipated that the growing conflicts between the moderate and the extremists would weaken the Congress organization and that it would finally split at the Calcutta session. But that did not happen. Instead, both moderates and extremists declared unitedly that the aim of the Congress was *Swaraj*. The Calcutta session prepared the ground for an agitation including the programme of boycott which was declared just and reasonable, even though its purpose was limited to opposing the partition of Bengal.

The disillusionment and ire of the rulers over this development found expression in the 'Times': The split

between the moderates and the extremists who are the avowed enemies of the British rule, which seemed imminent has now been obviated. But the price that the moderates had to pay for such a development was that they had themselves to accept the extremist policy to a very large extent.

It became clear to the rulers that this unity based on agitational programmes must be broken at any cost. The "Times", which entertained the hope that the best way to disrupt this unity was to isolate the moderate leadership by means of threats and pressure, stated: The statement made by the President in his address, opposing the partition of Bengal, was endorsed by the session in the form of a resolution. The convention also declared that 'boycott' was a just form of agitation. The courts may, however, differ from this declaration.

It is quite evident that this was a clear warning that in case the Congress went ahead with the programme of agitation in accordance with the decisions of the 1906 Calcutta session, the organization would have to face dangerous consequences.

Even without such a warning from the rulers, the leaders of the moderate section had already begun to feel that it was essential to arrest the advance of the extremists. They came to realize that the millions who had rallied behind leaders like Tilak and the new generation of activists who responded to their call were raising the Congress from an organization of petitioners and supplicants into a fighting body. They feared that if this move was not checked, they would lose their hold over the organization and that it would pass into the hands of the extremists.

Even at the Calcutta session of 1906, the opinion was in favour of Tilak presiding over the session. Even the arch moderates could not oppose the proposal under the political atmosphere created by the life of Tilak based on sacrifice and the role he played in the adoption of anti-British agitational programmes. At the same time, Naoroji was respected by the extremists because of the role he had played

in exposing the exploitatation and other anti-people policies and measures of the British rulers. Tilak withdrew his condidature as he felt that it would not be proper for him and Naoroji to contest for the presidentship.

Since the Calcutta session adopted *Swaraj* as the objective and the agitational programme, including boycott, to achieve it, it was felt that a new leadership capable of implementing the programmes was necessary. Efforts to have Tilak preside over the next (1907) session were on. The moderates opposed this move as before. On the other side, the extremists also started making organized efforts for a change in the leadership. Even as preparations for the Congress session started, conflicts were expected on the election of the president and on other items on the agenda.

It was decided at the Calcutta session that the next session would be held at Nagpur. The prevailing practice was for the Reception Committee to select the president. Therefore, there was a keen competition between the two camps in enlisting members to the Reception Committee. Though extremists were relatively strong in Nagpur, they did not have the three fourths majority in the Reception Committee required to elect the president. Thus, the functioning of the Reception Committee including presidential election, came to a standstill. It was in these circumstances that the moderate leaders of Bombay decided to shift the venue of the session from Nagpur to Surat which was their strong hold.

Tilak withdrew his candidature because he felt that in the atmosphere of conflicts it would not be helpful if he offered himself as a candidate. Instead, Tilak proposed the name of Lala Lajpat Rai who had by then returned to the country from Rangoon where he was exiled by the British government.

Lalaji was also an extremist like Tilak. That was why he was subjected to repression by the government. In the circumstances, the proposal to make him the president frightened the moderate leaders. In fact, Gokhale opposed this proposal on the plea that in case the government was

unnecessarily annoyed, it could suppress the organization in a moment.

Ultimately, the moderates decided to put up Rash Behari Ghosh as their candidate for the presidentship. It was widely known that Ghosh would unleash a sharp attack on the extremists in his presidential address. Besides, thoroughly diluted versions of the various resolutions adopted at the Calcutta session were being made in the camp of the moderates. On the other hand, the extremists were determined to repeat once again the resolutions adopted at the Calcutta session. Thus, every one thought that Surat would witness a keen conflict between the two camps.

On behalf of the extremists, Tilak had, at the very outset, made one point clear: They had no desire to see a split in the Congress, because they had nothing to gain from a split. They were, however, firm on the point that the Congress should firmly adhere to the resolutions adopted at the Calcutta session; they would stoutly oppose any attempt to dilute them.

The Reception Committee of the Surat session under the leadership of the moderates laid all kinds of obstructions before the extremists. It was a practice to organize reception to prominent Congress leaders during the session. The Reception Committee did not organize such receptions to Tilak, Lajpat Rai and other extremist leaders. But this did not affect them. It was revealed clearly that the masses were not with the moderates. For, at a reception organized by the extremists, vast masses participated. This incident remained an instance of pettiness on the part of official leadership of the Reception Committee.

Although the Reception Committee could not prevent the people of Surat from declaring support to the extremist leaders, the moderate leadership succeeded in defeating the radicals at the conference. The extremists desired to preserve the unity of the Congress at the same time, while standing firm on the policies and programmes adopted at the Calcutta

session. In his address at the reception accorded to him, Tilak, in fact, made this point clear.

As was made clear by Tilak himself and by Lajpat Rai, what they considered more important was the policies and programmes of the Congress, rather than who should preside over the session. They made clear through dialogues and writings their readiness to withdraw from the contest for presidentship, if only the Congress adhered to the decisions of the Calcutta session. If, on the contrary, there was any departure, they would express their opposition, including in the election of the president.

But the moderate leaders had already taken a decision to go back from the Calcutta decision and therefore, were not prepared to arrive at a compromise with the extremist leaders. Efforts made by Tilak and other leaders for direct negotiations yielded no result.

The office bearers were not prepared even to distribute the draft resolutions in accordance with the practice usually followed in conferences. They shrugged off the responsibility on the lame excuse that there were no facilities for getting the drafts of the resolutions printed. Further, they proposed a constitution with several conditions which were not at all acceptable to the extremist section of the organization.

It was in this background that the Surat session started. After the welcome address, with the announcement of Rash Behari Ghosh's candidature for the presidentship, the session became noisy. The reason for the confusion was the refusal of the moderates to adhere to the resolution passed at the Calcutta conference as a condition put forward by the extremists for avoiding contest for the presidentship. Because of the confusion that prevailed, the day's session had to be suspended. Throughout the day, efforts were made by the extremist leaders to negotiate a settlement, but the moderate leaders were unbending. So, the next day's session started in a tense atmosphere. The extremist leaders knew that they would have to fight out issue by issue.

Tilak demanded in writing that he be given an opportunity to speak on the issue of presidentship soon after the names of the presidential candidates were announced. Simultaneously, he also requested that he be called to speak, since he had a positive proposal that would help conduct the proceedings of the conference in a cordial atmosphere.

This was the final effort made by Tilak to ensure the smooth conduct of the proceedings by resolving the differences amicably. But, the moderate leaders were not prepared to recognize the spirit of Tilak's conciliation. They rejected his request for being called to speak.

But Tilak felt that he must speak with or without permission and so he mounted the dais and began to speak. This was the beginning of a confrontation between his followers and opponents. Charges and counter-charges were made against each other; one section charged that Tilak was forcibly ejected from the dais and the other section charged that the followers of Tilak had rushed to the dais armed with sticks. Meanwhile, slippers fell on the moderate leaders Pherozeshah Mehta and Surendranath Banerji. With this the conference was adjourned.

The extremist leaders countinued their efforts at conciliation even after these incidents. Following discussions with those who were acting as mediators, Tilak wrote a letter to them: In regard to the matter discussed by us today, taking into consideration the best interests of the Congress, my party and myself are prepared to withdraw our objection to the election of Rash Behari Ghosh as the President of the twentyeighth session of the Indian National Congress, to forget and forgive the past and to work together in future subject to the following conditions. Firstly, a resolution should be adopted in respect of each of the issues like Swaraj, Swadeshi and Boycott, clearly declaring that we stand firm on the resolutions passed last year. Secondly, in case there is any reference against our party in the Presidential address of Dr. Ghosh, it should be given up.

The moderates were not at all interested in reconciliation. They held a separate meeting of those who favoured them and adopted resolutions and a new constitution for the Congress.

The new provision which they incorporated in the constitution was designed to prohibit all agitational programmes, including boycott. They thought that since the radicals would not accept this provision, it could be used to expel any Congressman from the organization if he started working with a radical perspective.

And this was exactly what happened. The moderates and the extremists who functioned in two different camps within the same organization became two parties and the moderates started using the name of "Indian National Congres". Subsequently, the Congress and other parties had split more than once and on many such occasions physical fights, including hurling of slippers, had taken place, as it happened in the Surat session of the Congress. Also fierce controversies had risen over the responsibility of this or that faction for the split. As in the case of these splits, in the present split also what used to be made the point of controversy was the legality of actions of groups and individuals in incidents that led to the split. But the real issue is not the legality of this or that action, but the policies and approaches that led to the disruption of unity. Why did such a situation arise in the Congress in 1907?

There was a powerful section within the leadership of the Congress which wanted a change in the futile policies pursued by the Congress for about two decades. Behind them were millions of people belonging to all sections and strata of the population. There was another section in the leadership which, frightened by these developments, wanted to prevent it at all cost. The situation had now reached a level where it was impossible for both the sections to co-exist within the organization. What happened in Surat was just an explosion of this situation.

Here it must be stressed that the extremists throughout worked in a concliatory manner. They knew that if the Congress remained a single united organization, the people would support their programme. On the contrary, the moderates thwarted all attempts at reconciliation, They knew that a concliatory attitude towards the extremists would endanger their future. In sum, the threat issued by the British rulers through the "Times" soon after the Calcutta session had its effect.

V. THE CULT OF THE BOMB

The split that occurred in the Congress at Surat gave green signal to the rulers to unleash a fresh wave of repression. The victims of this repression were the Congressmen of both the moderates and extremist sections and politically conscious individuals, organizations and newspapers.

Even before the Surat session, the Viceroy had issued, in May 1907, an ordinance empowering local authorities to prohibit public meetings and prohibiting the holding of public meetings without prior permission. There were also indications that further repressive measures were in the offing. The ordinance was designed to place obstacles before all forms of legitimate political activities.

Many, including the Secretary of State for India, Lord Morley, questioned the desirability of such measures. But the Government of India secured the approval of the British government on the plea that these measures were essential to face extremist politics which, according to them, was gaining strength in India. The decision taken by the moderates at the Surat session to part company with the extremists helped them to take this course. The authorities went ahead with the expectation that the moderate leaders would lend support at least indirectly to these repressive measures.

In 1908, the Press Act was enacted which empowered authorities to close down the publication of any newspaper and confiscate any printing press at the discretion of the District Magistrate.

The Explosives Act was another measure which provided for deportation for 14 years of any person found in possession of a bomb or the materials for making bomb or any person assisting in the making of bomb. The act also contained another provision for deportation for 20 years of any person who exploded or intended or tried to explode a bomb.

A third Act empowered the authorities to ban any organization which they found to be functioning in a manner prejudicial to the law and order of the country,and to imprison any person participating in the activities of a banned organization, and to confiscate any building, property or material found to be used for the activities of such an organization.

In brief, the legislations passed in this period were designed to curb the activities of political parties and mass organizations.

Even the moderates could not but protest against these measures. They pointed out that the curbs on the activities of organizations would only create further discontent among the people in disguised forms. They accused the government of unleashing repressive measures which would only facilitate the rapid growth of the extremists and revolutionary groups among them, who were being sharply criticized by the moderates.

True, the targets of attack of the government were the extremists and revolutionary groups. For example, Tilak was prosecuted and sentenced under all these acts. Similarly, many other extremists were arrested and imprisoned under the provisions of these Acts. Many were sentenced to transportation for life. The publication of the newspapers *Bande Mataram*, *Sandhya* and *Yugantar* had to be discontinued.

At the same time, actions were also taken against several newspapers which could not at all be considered to be sympathetic to the extremists. This and the restrictions imposed

on political propaganda through public meetings created obstacles in the way of the functioning of even the moderates. The repressive measures introduced on the pretext of curbing the activities of the extremists and revolutionary groups were in effect turned against the activities of all those who were interested in politics.

It was in these circumstances that another movement emerged throughout the country as different from the extremist movement led by Tilak and others, but grown in concert with it to some extent. Like the extremist movement, this new movement, which was variously known as 'terrorist movement', 'revolutionary movement', etc., was against the 'petition politics' of the Congress under the moderate leadership. Like the extremists, they also were of the opinion that no problem could be solved by submitting petition to the authorities. But the alternative to the 'petition politics' suggested by the extremists, i. e., conducting agitations with the support of the people organized through meetings, demonstrations and newspapers and other publications did not satisfy them. Along with the agitational programme suggested by the extremists they considered it necessary to physically eliminate the hated government officials by using fire-arms or bombs. And for this purpose, they had been organizing secret groups, collecting arms and training the youth in their use.

This movement had its beginning towards the closing years of the 19th century in Bengal and Maharashtra. The first act of murder attributed to this movement took place in Maharashtra. A British official, who was regarded as the symbol of the barbaric acts of the bureaucracy in the name of providing relief to the people of Maharashtra in the days of famine and plague in 1897, was murdered, along with another British official. We have already mentioned this incident and the action taken by the government against Tilak, foisting on him the responsibility for it. In fact, Tilak had nothing to do with this incident. It was organized by a secret organization formed independently of the movement

led by him. If at all this group had any connection with the movement led by Tilak, it was only the indignation of the people at the brutalities committed by the officials, and the desire to resist such acts. The accused in the killing were sentenced to death. This, however, did not destroy the movement. Instead, certain secret groups in the name of 'Abhinav Bharat' sprang up all over Maharashtra. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the leader of movement, subsequently shifted his activities to England and tried to start a revolution in India with whatever help he could get there. This group, with branches all over Maharashtra, played a prominent role in developing a revolutionary movement not merely in Maharashtra but also all over India. Savarkar was arrested in England. While he was being brought to India with police escort, he tried to escape but was again caught by the police. This incident had became a legend.

During the same period, a revolutionary organization called Anushilan Samiti was formed in Bengal. The Samiti and other revolutionary organizations were organized by young men inspired by the radical oriented journals like *Yugantar*, and other publications. These organizations formed under the leadership of Aurobindo Ghosh, his brother Berindra Kumar Ghosh and others presented before the members a programme giving the details of an armed confrontation with the British rule by organizing revolutionary activities. The organization that emerged in Bengal was more widespread and stronger than those formed in Maharashtra.

As we have seen earlier, the murder of two British officials in 1897 occurred in Maharashtra before the formation of the all-India movement based on the extremist slogans of *Swdeshi*, *Swaraj*, etc. The growth of the extremist political movement and the repression let loose by the government following the split in the Congress at Surat strengthened this trend. Unlike the isolated incident in Maharashtra in 1897, political murders began to occur on a wider scale. Although the first incident among these occurred in Bihar, the target of the revolutionaries was an official who had given orders for whipping in

public some young political activists of Calcutta. But the attack aimed at this official, who was subsequently transferred to Muzzaffarpur in Bihar, fell on the wife and daughter of another official. Both of them were killed in the attack.

Of the two accused in this case, one, Profulla Chakki, shot himself dead soon after his arrest and the other, Khudiram Bose, was sentenced to death. In the course of the investigations connected with this incident, the police caught a sizable amount of arms, including bombs and dynamites as well as several individuals connected with the arms. A case known as the Alipore Conspiracy Case was instituted against them. The Public Prosecutor and a Deputy Police Superintendent connected with the trial were shot dead. Fifteen of the accused were sentenced to life imprisonment, but the foremost leader of the organization, Aurobindo Ghosh, escaped.

The activities of the secret organizations in Bengal did not, however, subside with this trial. The accused who were sentenced to death for the Muzaffarpur murder and those imprisoned in the conspiracy case were honoured as martyres and heroes. Hundreds of young men and women were attracted to the politics of the bomb. The feeling began to grow rapidly among the people of the younger generation that in the context of a political situation wherein even the moderate leaders of the Congress, leave alone the extremists like Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal, were unable to function freely and independently, there was no way other than physically eliminating the British officials and their Indian henchmen.

It has been estimated that not less than 64 persons belonging to such categories as high police officials, officials of the lower ranks who had earned notoriety for cruel acts of repression, police spys and prosecution witnesses, were killed at the hands of revolutionaries in Bengal between 1907 and 1917. The revolutionaries also committed a series of robberies in order to raise funds for their activities. An official estimate put the number of robberies committed during this period at 112 and the amount thus collected at Rs 700,000.

Although much smaller in scale, similar secret groups were also formed in other provinces like Bihar, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan and Madras. There, too, political murders were committed. Several young political workers were arrested and imprisoned in connection with such incidents as also in circumstances unconnected with them. They also had to face conspiracy cases, transportation for life and other repressive actions.

During the same period, revolutionary groups emerged amongst the Indian residents in England and other European countries, in America, Canada, etc. Efforts were also made to co-ordinate the activities of the Indians living abroad. "India House", the residence of Shyamji Krishna Verma, the Indian Home Rule Society organized by him and the periodical *Indian Sociologist* published by him became the centres of activities of Indian residents in London. Verma, Madame Cama, Savarkar (who as we have noted earlier had shifted his activities to England), Har Dayal and others tried to establish relation with Indians residing in the European countries and in American. They started working as a revolutionary group in concert with, but independent of, the moderate-led Congress as well as the extremist group within the Congress. Later, when the World War started, these groups prepared plans to start a revolution utilizing the favourable circumstances created by the war and securing arms and other assistance from international sources and in cooperation with the patriotic sections of the Indian army.

These revolutionary activities which were carried on in various places in various forms made one thing clear: No step or measure being taken by the rulers to put out the urge for independence of the people was adequate to achieve the ends. The younger generation expressed their anti-imperialist feelings secretly where it was not possible to express it openly, and carried out political activities illegally, where functioning in the legal way was denied to them. Now they were ready to face with 'bomb politics' the authorities who were

suppressing even the agitational politics of the moderate leadership.

This was a trend that appeared at a certain stage in the revolutionary movement not only in India but all over the world. For example, this line of thinking influenced the youth in Russia before the emergence of the proletarian revolutionary movement under the leadership of Lenin. Even Lenin's brother was influenced by it and he made an attempt on the life of the Czar, for which he was sentenced to death. They, however realized later, as Lenin stated soon after this incident, that "this was not the path of the Russian revolutionaries". Russia made its revolution only when the working class and other labouring masses came to realize that it was not a group of adventurists settling accounts individually with rulers notorious for anti-people acts but the masses fighting organized battles to overthrow the exploiting classes, that decided the future of the revolution. Referring to the experience of the working class strikes that took place in India at that time, Lenin stated that in India too, the same forces had started emerging. But the younger generation of Indian revolutionaries failed to realize this fact at that time.

VI. THE BEGINNING OF HINDU-MUSLIM CONFLICTS

The rulers realized that the tempestuous independence struggle sweeping across the country could not be suppressed by repressive measures alone. So they decided to use certain other means. One such means was to isolate the entire Muslim community from the independence struggle, thereby creating the impression that the community as a whole was with the British.

A move in this direction had already been started towards the end of the 19th century. But it was only after the rise of the country-wide protest agitation against the partition of Bengal that an all-India political organization

of the Muslims—the Muslim League—was formed parallel to the Indian National Congress.

Not only on the question of partition of Bengal but also on several other issues that came up later in the history of the freedom struggle, the imperialists used this organization to split the freedom movement. When they were ultimately compelled to leave the country, they were able to devide the country into Indian Union and Pakistan and to earn the support of the Muslim community on that score.

The Machiavellian tactics used by the British and the policy of the Muslim League leadership helpful to make the tactics effective, had rightly been criticized by the nationalists. It is undisputable that the British rulers consolidated their domination in India by creating a division between the Hindus and Muslims and utilized the communal feeling of the Muslims to curb the urge for freedom, and that the Muslim leaders did acquiesced in it.

This does not, however, complete the real picture of Indian politics over a span of three quarters of a century. For, medieval India, though not as dark as the British historians have painted it, was marked by both friendship and contradictions between Hindus and Muslims. And the history was viewed from that perspective. There has been a widespread tendency to characterize the people's fights against the autocratic rule of Muslim rulers and Zamindars in the medieval India as fights between Hindus and Muslims without perceiving the reality that basic to such fights was the contradiction between the rulers and the people.

For instance, when the Marattas waged a struggle under the leadership of Shivaji towards the end of the Muslim empire, that struggle was characterized as a fight between the Hindus and the Muslim rulers. Again, when Shivaji commemoration festivals were organized by Tilak, it was interpreted as an anti-Muslim as well as an anti-British move.

When the British advanced step by step and ultimately established themselves as rulers in Delhi, the capital of the Mughal Empire, a majority among the Muslim community

felt that their own community was thrown out of power. That was why the Muslim masses were more active in the 1857-59 popular revolt than the Hindu masses. In the period before the revolt, on the other hand, the members of the Muslim community were lagging behind the Hindus in acquiring English education and the resultant modernization. It was only after the failure of the revolt and the rapid modernization among the Hindus that efforts began to be made to introduce modernization in the Muslim community under the leadership of Syed Ahmed Khan and others. As a natural result of this, the Muslims were far behind the Hindus in modern education and consequently in employment in the government, in politics, commerce and industry. They feared that members of the Muslim community would be pushed out in the competition for success in these fields.

During the same period, agitations to secure a bigger share for Indians in government jobs and in the administration had already started under the initiative of the Hindus who had made advance in these fields. The Indian National Congress was, in fact, organized for this purpose. Members of the Muslim community with a sense of realism could foresee that the government would be compelled to yield to the slogans of the Congress to the extent the agitation organized under its leadership gained strength. The Muslim elites feared that in the event Indians got more jobs and political power their community would be behind others in this regard. This was basic to the attitude of Syed Ahmed Khan and other leaders towards the Congress in its initial stages. It was the opinion of Ahmed Khan at that time that taking part in the anti-government agitations and supporting the Congress would be detrimental to the best interests of the Muslims. He therefore advised the members of the Muslims community to concentrate exclusively on efforts to improve socially and educationally.

It was this fact of the attitude of non co-operation on the part of a large majority of the Muslims towards the Congress that the British rulers utilized them against the Congress.

But it must be pointed out that the elitist leaders of the Muslim community only refrained from cooperating with the Congress; they did not directly oppose the Congress.

A change in the situation came about with the partition of Bengal and the consequent agitation against it. The propaganda let loose by the British that the Hindu dominated Congress was opposing the partition because the new (East Bengal) province was under the control of the Muslims considerably influenced the Muslims. Even those Muslim leaders who generally supported the political demands of the Congress, rallied themselves against the Congress on the issue of the partition of Bengal.

A Muslim delegation headed by the Aga Khan went to Simla and submitted a representation to the Viceroy on the 1st October, 1896. The memorandum related to the loss of the status once enjoyed by the Muslims and the concessions they must get from the government to compensate for their lost status. Following this, the All India Muslim League was formed at a meeting held in December that year.

It is an irrefutable fact that some British officials had a role in sending the delegation to Simla and also in the formation of the Muslim League. And for that reason the opponents of the League sought to labell the organization 'agents of the British'. But if this contention were to be accepted as such, the Congress too would have to be labelled similarly, since certain high British officials had played a prominent role in the formation of this organization.

It is true that there was a difference between the two. Although the Congress was organized with the help and assistance of British officials, it gradually adopted anti-British attitudes and policies. The authorities encouraged the Muslim League with a view to weaken the Congress.

It is, however, indisputable that in the initial stage the British officials came forward to form the Indian National Congress with a view to giving the general political consciousness developed amongst the educated middle class and the discontent of the people an organized form, thereby

preventing this discontent from going "beyond the limit". Similarly, in the later stage, they took interest in the formation of the Muslim League in order to give an organized form to the growing discontent among the new generation of educated Muslims and to turn that community against the Congress, thereby consolidating their own position.

So, this raises the real question as to why the process of development of dissatisfaction among the entire people and of political consciousness among the educated in the first stage took the form of an exclusive politics of Muslims and its organization, the Muslim League, in the second stage.

A factor relevant in finding an answer to this question has been indicated earlier. The Hindus entertained the idea that independence from British rule would mean the revival of the old Hindu-dominated society in India, while to the Muslims, it meant the re-establishment of the Muslim domination of the days of Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire. Inevitably, these opposing meanings of independence came into conflict with each other. The political leaders belonging to both the communities cannot escape from the responsibility for this development.

Even before the partition of Bengal, another event had occurred arousing the feelings of the people of both the communities. Urdu was the official language throughout North India from the time of the Mughal rule. Hindus contended that since Urdu was not the language of the majority of the people of the region, the language of the majority, namely Hindi, must also be given the status of official language. On 8th April, 1900, the Government of United Provinces accepting the plea, directed that petitions to the government written both in Urdu and Hindi would be accepted and that government notifications would henceforth be published in both the languages.

Muslims resented this order. They organized protest meetings throughout the Province against this measure which they considered would deprive the Urdu language of the prominence it had during the period of the Muslim rule. On

the other hand, the Hindus organized meetings supporting the government order. Thus, the relations between the Hindus and the Muslims became extremely tense.

Evidently, the issue based on which the Muslims conducted their agitation was unjust. It must be noted that the fight of the Muslim elite at that time was not over the right to use Urdu as a language of a minority, a demand for which their own descendants and all democratic minded people had to fight later. On the contrary, they were obstinate in their demand that the majority must not have the right to use their language, Hindi.

Nevertheless, it will not be true to state that the Hindu-Muslim dispute was the creation of this and similar unjustifiable demands raised by the Muslim elites. For, there were the elements of Hindu revivalism in the views of Hindu nationalists before and after the inception of the Congress, even after the emergence of an extremist section within it. For example, one could see clearly the Hindu outlook in the works of the famous Bengali writer Bankim Chatterjee, and in the writtings and speeches of the extremist leaders like Tilak, Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghosh, Bipin Chandra Pal, etc. Even the most respected of the extremists, Tilak, had stated that all Indians must be true to *Bhagavat Gita*, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* and that they were the common family property of all Indians.

Bipin Chandra Pal and other Bengali extremists, on the other hand, regarded service to the country as the worship of "Devi", and their political activities were directed towards creating such an atmosphere. And Aurobindo Ghosh, the most eminent among them, subordinated politics and history to the outlook based on religion. (This motivated him later to give up politics and become a *Sanyasin*.) Lajpat Rai went a step ahead and put forth the idea of forming a separate political organization of the Hindus. In short, the origin of Hindu politics that helped the emergence in later years of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak

Sangh (R.S.S.) could be seen clearly in the political outlook of these extremist revolutionary leaders.

This is not intended to underestimate the role played by these leaders in building up the anti-British movement. Undisputedly, they were the respected and revered leaders of the people. But they all tried to forge anti-imperialism, patriotism and the desire for the country's freedom in the mould of the Hindu outlook which they inherited from the past. For this reason, their political activities, on the one hand, attracted the Hindu masses into the freedom movement, and on the other, turned the non-Hindus, especially the Muslim masses, against the freedom movement or, at least, made them indifferent to it. This is the fact.

Thus, parallel to this rising waves of the anti-imperialist movement based on Hindu revivalist outlook, the educated generation of the Muslim community began imbibing the outlook of Islamic revivalism. It was in this background that the British rulers devised the plan to partition Bengal. The direct result of it was an intense conflict between the Hindu and Muslim masses. The Hindu masses considered that the partition of Bengal would equally endanger the common interests of the country and the interests of their own community. The Muslims, on the other hand, regarded that the Hindu leaders in general and Congress leaders in particular were intent on wresting from them their legitimate rights. The British rulers utilized this situation as an ideal opportunity to create conflicts between the two communities in order to disrupt the unity of the freedom movement.

The seeds of discord thus sown in the days immediately following the partition of Bengal led to a divided independent India in 1947.

VII. POLICY OF APPEASEMENT

The British rulers came to realize that their policy of repression and of creating a division between the Hindu and

Muslim communities would not help in curbing the intense urge of the masses for freedom and in stemming the advance of the mass movement arising out of it. They, therefore, decided to adopt yet another tactic.

As we have seen, the Congress had gone into the hands of moderate leadership following the split in the organization. The government soon began its moves to appease the Congress with a new slogan of "rallying the moderates behind the British rulers".

The Secretary of State for India was the well known liberal, John Morley. Personally, he was opposed to the partition of Bengal and to the policy of suppression of the agitation against the partition and of the *Swadeshi* movement. But, under the pressure of the British officials in India and of the government, he was compelled to justify the steps taken by them and defend them in the Parliament. He was also compelled to state repeatedly that the partition of Bengal was a *fait accompli*, which could not be revoked.

The partition of Bengal and the repression unleashed by the government caused embarrassment not only to Morley in England, but also to leaders like Gokhale in India. Obliged as they were to take care of the feelings of the people of India, they could not but oppose the acts of the Government. At the same time, they were frightened by the development of the movement against these acts in which people were participating in thousands. They realized that the government actions would only make the situation get out of control and enhance the influence of the extremists.

It was to get out of these difficulties that certain proposals for "administrative reforms" emerged out of the parallel efforts made by some liberal-minded rulers under Morley in England and the moderate political leaders like Gokhale in India. At a certain stage, the leaders of these two sections exchanged their views in this regard, and even arrived at some informal understanding.

It was when the tide of anti-partition agitation was rising high in the country that the Prince of Wales (who later became

King George V) visited India. Attempts were made to turn the country-wide boycott movement into a movement of protest against the royal visit. But, the moderates under the leadership of Gokhale were able to stall this attempt. Even so, the prince felt the intensity of the feelings of the people of India during his visit. He became convinced of the impossibility of suppressing the movement merely by resorting to repressive measures.

He advised Morley that the government policy should sympathetically view the feelings of the people, while at the same time taking a firm stand on the maintenance of law and order. This advice strengthened the hands of Morley.

It was at this same time that the moderate leadership in India made certain moves. In a speech delivered in the Central Legislative Council in March 1906, Gokhale pleaded with the Viceroy to appease the educated sections of the people by giving them more and more opportunities to participate in the administration of the country.

Soon after that Gokhale left for England. During his 10-week stay in England, Gokhale and Morley held five rounds of talk, as a result of which certain formal understandings were arrived at between them. Morley assured Gokhale that the number of elected representatives in the central and provincial legislatures would be increased, with more powers to the non-official members. He emphasized, at the same time, that "self-government", even as demanded by the moderate section of the Congress, was unacceptable and warned that if the Congress still pursued an agitational course raising more demands or stressed on the re-unification of Bengal, the government would not implement even these limited reforms.

Morley added that he knew that it would be difficult for Gokhale to accept this position in toto, since it was difficult for the moderate leadership of the Congress to take a stand against the slogans of *Swadeshi* and *Boycott* which had the backing of a powerful popular movement. Similarly, he wanted Gokhale and other leaders to appreciate the difficulties

that Morley and his colleagues were facing and requested him to work with such a perspective.

Gokhale did not accept this request, nor did he reject it openly. But, the subsequent events showed that Gokhale had already decided to cooperate with the Government as requested by Morley.

The Surat session of the Congress was held about 18 months after the Gokhale-Morley talks. As we have seen earlier, the issues before that session were those that were raised in the talks: Whether the Congress was moving towards a struggle for the revocation of the partition of Bengal and for self-rule (*Swaraj*) or towards a compromise with the British rulers. As we also know. this was the question that separated the extremists and the moderates from each other.

Owing to the intense anti-British feeling of the masses, Gokhale could not make even his colleagues of the moderate section accept the conciliatory approach towards the rulers as suggested by Morley. It took more than an year for him to bring them round to accept that position. At the first session of the Congress held after the Gokhale-Morley talks (the Calcutta session), resolutions accepting the radical programmes at least partially had to be passed. It was after constant and streneous efforts after this session that the moderates were able to obviate the "nuisance" of the extremists and re-organize the Congress on completely moderate lines.

Morley also had to remove a number of obstacles from his path. The majority of bureaucrats in India, including the then Viceroy Lord Minto and a considerable section of political leaders in England held views opposed to that of Morley. However, through persistent efforts, he was able to remove all the obstacles and come up with a new administrative scheme known as the 'Minto-Morley reforms'.

These administrative reforms came into effect through an Act of the British Parliament and the rules framed under it. The number of members in the central and provincial legislatures was increased along with the proportion of the elected members in these bodies. However, official members still

constituted a majority (36 out of 68) in the central legislature. The non-official members constituted a majority in the provincial legislatures. But, since they included nominated members, the official members and the nominated non-official members together constituted the majority. Not only in representation but also in the matter of rights of the members, the new constitution contained some provisions which were comparatively progressive. It gave members the right to discuss financial matters including the budget, and vote on them. It also gave them the right to bring issues of public interest under discussion. Till then the members had to remain satisfied with just listening to the replies given by the government to the questions raised by them. Under the new system, they could also raise supplementary questions, providing opportunities to bring out the truth on the matters that were raised through questions.

But, even these wider powers given to the people's representative did not make the rulers responsible to them. For, any resolution passed by the legislatures was only recommendatory which could be either accepted or rejected by the government. For these reasons, the new "administrative reforms" were not acceptable even to the moderates who felt the need to further improve both in the representation and the rights of the representatives in the legislature. There was another provision in the new Act which strengthened this feeling. It related to the provisions added on the pretext of giving "the Muslim community the representation they deserve."

It must be noted in this connection that the ideas that emerged in the Morley-Gokhale talks held in 1906 were basic to the provisions in the reforms stipulating the nature of people's representation in the central and provincial legislatures and the extent of the powers of the people's representations. We know that Morley sought the cooperation of Gokhale with the assurance that while the demands for legislatures with elected majority and governments responsible to the legislatures were clearly unacceptable, something

would be done on these matters. At the same time, the authorities, both in England and in India, were striving to split the independence movement by organizing the Muslim community and by creating an impression that their demands were being conceded. It was around this time that the visit of the Muslim delegation to Simla and the formation of All India Muslim League took place. Therefore, the Parliamentary legislation embodying the proposals for "administrative reforms" and the rules framed thereunder by the Government of India came up giving importance to the "Hindu-Muslim problem". For instance, of the 27 members to be elected to the Central Legislative Council, 13 were to be from general constituencies and six from constituencies reserved for Muslims. Of the remaining eight members, six were to be elected from constituencies reserved for landlords and two from traders' constituencies. Similar was the pattern of representation in the provincial legislatures with constituencies reserved for Muslims, landlords and vested interests.

This was a provision that created discontent and resentment even among the moderates. This was indeed the primary form of a problem that later bothered all those who were involved in Indian politics. It was for the above reasons that the first conference of the Congress held after the details of the "administrative reform" were made known, passed a resolution opposing the different provisions in the Reforms Act. including the provision to allocate separate constituencies for the Muslim community. It must be remembered that the extremist section of the Congress at this stage, i.e., in 1909, was outside the organization.

If this was the position of the moderates, it was no wonder that the reaction of the extremists was much stronger. They declared that the Reforms Act was only a shadow of "administrative reforms". The leaders of the extremists, including Tilak, were at that time in prison and actions were being taken against the rank and file. The press had been gagged. Thus, the Reforms Act came into force at a

time when the voice of the extremists was not likely to be heard.

The moderates, on the other hand, felt that despite the limitations, the provisions contained in the Act would, to some extent, help protect the interests of the classes and the sections of the people they represented. They thought that the new provisions would be useful to the landlords and those who were holding dominant positions in the spheres of trade and industry in protecting their respective interests and for the politically active intellectuals in becoming the leaders of the nation by utilizing the forum of the new legislatures. They also felt confident of utilizing the provisions of the Act to secure more and more powers. Thus the slogan of "rallying the moderates behind the rulers", which had so far remained on paper, was becoming a practical reality.

An event that demonstrated the direct result of this stand of the moderates occurred very soon. The new legislature constituted under the 1909 Reforms Act met. One of the legislative measures that came up for discussion before the new House was the one that was designed to curb the freedom of the Press. It sought to prevent by law not only such obviously violent activities as political murders, robberies and conspiracies, but also to make it a punishable offence to oppose in any manner the continuance of the British rule. Even the moderates, true to their declared principles, ought to have opposed this measure. But Gokhale and his colleagues, who were members of the new Central Legislative Council, supported these measures. Expressing satisfaction at this stand of the moderates, Viceroy Minto said: The expanded Central Legislative Council which fully represents the Indian interests has given approval to the Act which can rightly be called "repressive". They agree with the Government that it is for the well-being of the country. Thus it has been proved that giving more representation to the Indian communities and interests does not weaken the British administration, but further strengthens it.

But, there was another issue which remained unresolved. The authorities realized that the people would not remain peaceful until the partition of Bengal was revoked, and finally had to revoke it in 1911, forming a new province comprising Bihar and Orissa, restoring the old province of Assam and forming a united Province of Bengal.

For the first time in the history of freedom struggle, the government was forced to yield to the might of the popular agitation. The result: a new principle of "one province for the people who speak one language" was also brought into practice. This was the beginning of a series of incidents which became famous in the later days of the freedom movement.

VIII. THE SOUTH AFRICAN STRUGGLE

Following the reunification of Bengal, there was a thorough change in the Indian political scene. Before we start examining these developments, it is, however, necessary to make a reference to the problems of Indians in South Africa and their struggle to solve these problems.

Thousands of people in India finding it hard to live in the country owing to the growing pauperization of the rural population had left the country after the establishment of the British rule in India. Among the various countries they went in search of means of livelihood, a large number of them reached South Africa and settled down there as labourers. Amongst those who thus migrated to South Africa included also merchants, lawyers, teachers and persons occupying such other high positions.

There was one problem of life which all members of the Indian community had to face in South Africa, irrespective of the economic and social positions they occupied. The South African rulers were the Whites with the racist outlook of White superiority. The racist White regime treated even those Indians who were occupying a relatively better position in life as members of an inferior race. Feelings

against this discriminatory treatment stirred the entire Indian community residing in South Africa.

It is true that this problem was not peculiar to South Africa. It was the common practice of the European imperialists to ignore and humiliate the Blacks and coloured people. It was, in fact, the protest against the policy of the British rulers in India of excluding Indians from all high official positions and keeping them off the administrative machinery that led to the slogan of "Swaraj" and to the agitational programmes based on that slogan. The problem of Indian residents in South Africa was distinct from those of the Indians settlers elsewhere. It consists of the fact that a mass movement had developed in South Africa against the racial discrimination followed by the White rulers. And this movement had won the sympathies of social and political organizations, including the Congress. Resolutions relating to the problem of "South African Indians" were adopted in many of the Congress sessions and several public meetings organized in various parts of the country. It had thus become a part of Indian politics.

The topmost leader of this struggle was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi who subsequently held sway in the Indian politics as its undisputed leader for nearly three decades, and came to be revered as 'Mahatma' Gandhi. At that time he was not connected with the internal political developments in India. But the struggle he conducted for Indians in South Africa had earned the sympathies of the Congressmen, Leaguers and other no-party leaders. Even the founder of the Tata family, Ratan Tata, the Nizam of Hyderabad. the Aga Khan and many others contributed to and collected funds in aid of the South African Indian struggles. In fact, the attack on the Indians in South Africa had caused concern to a wide range of political leaders in India, from the extremists organzing struggles for "Swadeshi" and "Swaraj" to those advocating protection of their special interests as a community.

The programme developed by Gandhi to resist the White

racial domination was *Satyagraha*. Later, in the years following the First World War, this came to be used widely in Indian politics also. We shall examine later the various stages of this struggle in India, the various forms it took and other related matters. However, certain features characteristic of the struggle of South African Indians must be dealt with here, because these were the features which appeared in different forms later on in the Gandhian method of struggle in India.

One of the features, as just indicated, was that the struggle was launched and developed by rallying the entire community of South African Indians, irrespective of their status in life, whether they be rich or poor. Its main force was provided by the illiterate and the till then helpless common people. The contribution of the 'Gandhian form of struggle' which was in its infancy, was that it inculcated self-confidence and a sense of self-reliance in them. D. G. Tendulkar, the biographer of Gandhi, described an incident as follows.

> A Tamil man in tattered clothes, head-gear in hand, with two front teeth broken and his mouth bleeding stood before the young barrister (Gandhi). Gandhi was shocked to see this spectacle and persuaded him to put his turban on and behave like an equal. It was a new experience to the poor slave. Balasundaram, as this poor visitor was called, was serving his indenture under a well-known European resident of Durban. His master beat the helpless worker till he bled. Gandhi sent for a doctor to secure a certificate and took the injured man to a magistrate. It was not Gandhi's desire to get the employer punished but he wanted Balasundaram to be released from him. Like the slave, the indentured labourer was the property of his master. Gandhi succeeded in transferring him to some one else. Balasundaram's case reached the ears of every indentured labourer as far as Madras and Gandhi came to be regarded as their friend.[4]

4. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, Bombay, Vithalbhai K Jhaveri and D. G. Tendulkar, 1951, Vol. 1, p 52.

Following such other incidents, a new sense of self-confidence grew among Indian workers in South Africa. They were able to stand firm in an organized manner with surprising courage in the struggles to protect their rights. Nearly 6,000 coal miners went on a strike. Particularly, the women workers who participated in the strike demonstrated heroism and organizational consciousness in an unprecedented manner. On a historic demonstration staged in connection with the strike Tendulkar wrote:

> The strike was in full swing and the stream of labourers still continued by rail and road. Two women with grim courage reached Charlstown though their little ones died on the way. One of the children died of exposure on the march and the other fell down from the arms of its mother while she was crossing a stream and was drowned. But the brave mothers refused to be dejected and one of them said: We must not pine for the dead who will not come back to us for all our pining. It is the living for whom we must work.[5]

Gandhi had numerous such experiences which had inspired him throughout his life time. Speaking at a felicitation meeting in his and his wife's honour at Madras several years later, Gandhi said:

> If one-tenth of the language that has been used in this address is deserved by us, what language do you propose to use for those who have lost their lives, and therefore finished their work, on behalf of your suffering countrymen in South Africa? What language do you propose to use for Nagappan, Narayanaswamy, lads of seventeen or eighteen years, who braved in simple faith all the trials, all the sufferings, and all for the motherland? What language do you propose to use with reference to Valliamma, a sweet girl of sixteen years, who was discharged from Maritzburg prison, skin and bone, suffering from fever to which she succumbed after about a month's time? You have said that I inspired those great men and women,

5. *Ibid*, p. 170.

but I cannot accept that proposition. It was they, the simple-minded folk, who worked away in faith, never expecting the slightest reward, who inspired me to the proper level, and who compelled me by their great sacrifice, by their great faith, by their trust in the great God to do the work that I was able to do. ...They deserve the crown which you would seek to impose upon us. ...These young men deserve all the adjectives that you have affectionately but blindly lavished on us....[6]

A movement of this kind had not yet emerged in the freedom struggle in India. The tendency to draw inspiration from organized struggles of ordinary labourers, as it was in the case of the struggles of South African Indians, was absent even in the extremist movement led by Tilak or in the revolutionary movement which emerged independent of, but inspired by, the former, leave alone the movements led by the moderates in the Congress and the Muslim League which was formed to challenge it.

Even Tilak who ventured to take the message of agitation and struggle to the rural masses perishing under the spell of famine and epidemics and to the industrial workers fighting for reduction of working hours, wage rise and other demands, failed to get inspiration from the illiterate and helpless masses of people, as Gandhi got in the course of his work in South Africa. Tilak who could inspire the people using his enormously talented leadership and living an exemplary life of self-sacrifice could not get inspiration from the people and return it to the people giving it an organized form, as Gandhi was able to do. Even before Tilak could think in terms of transforming the *Swadeshi* and boycott movements into a resistance movement, Gandhi had already put into practice such a form of struggle.

The same holds for the revolutionary movements of Bengal and other parts of the country during the closing period of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. True, the revolutionaries who had thrown themselves into the fire of

6. *Ibid*, pp. 200-201.

struggle, ready to sacrifice their lives and everything that they had in the struggle for the liberation of the country, rightly earned the love and respect of the people. The soil of our country is reddened with their blood. But these revolutionaries depended mostly upon their own individual heroism and militancy. They could not create, as Gandhi did, heroes like Valliamma, Nagappan, Narayanaswamy, etc., following the Balasundaram incident in South Africa. They failed to perceive that the main condition for a successful revolution is the creation of thousands of such heroes and heroines through organized struggles.

Before closing this section, it is necessary to specially mention here a feature of the Gandhian method of struggle which appeared in primary form in the South African struggles but matured only subsequently. Although Gandhi was able to get inspiration from the masses of the people and evolve a method of struggle based on the inspiration thus derived, his general political perception was different from all others hitherto prevalent in Indian politics. All the social and political movements in India, from the social reform movement led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy to the radical and revolutionary movements in general arose as a part of the efforts to modernize India along the capitalist line. This tendency towards modernization was discernible even in the movements initiated by Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, the Arya Samaj and the Muslim League, which appeared in the grab of conservatism. Gandhi, on the other hand, tried to pull India back by millenia, instead of modernizing it. The rudimentary form of this Gandhian perception could be seen in his *Hind Swaraj*, written in 1908, in which he sharply condemned not only the British rulers but also the symbols of modern civilization they introduced in India, such as the railways, post and telegraph, telephone and even the modern medical science. He believed that the metropolitan cities of India like Bombay and Calcutta were socially decadent and that they were destroying the people. He declared that "India would not really be free unless it completely unlearned

what it had learned in the past fifty years" and that the railways, hospitals, lawyers, doctors, etc., should cease to exist.

This retrogressive outlook did not, however, negatively influence the South African struggle. In that struggle launched for the solution of a relatively simple issue, socio-political perception of a fundamental nature was not of much relevance. Later on, however, when the same method of struggle was used in India's internal politics, the merits and demerits of the Gandhian outlook stood out. The people in South Africa and India could perceive only the anti-imperialist character of the South African struggle.

IX. AGITATION FOR LINGUISTIC STATES: ITS BEGINNING

The echoes of the struggle of the people of Bengal against the partition of the province were heard in other provinces also. The revocation of the partition led to the formation of a province comprising areas with people speaking a single language, in place of the earlier multi-lingual province created for the sake of administrative convenience. This, in turn, led to the creation of a sense of solidarity among the people speaking other languages, which developed, later on, into a general demand for a reorganization of provinces on linguistic basis.

With the successful termination of the struggle against the Bengal partition, a section of the people speaking the Oriya language and who were till then in Bengal, and the people of Bihar speaking Hindi became part of a new province (Bihar and Orissa). The struggle also foiled the plan of the British to split the Bengali speaking people who were till then in one province. A new province consisting entirely of people speaking Bengali was formed. It was the first monolingual province formed after the establishment of British rule in India.

Similarly, the people of Andhra expressed the desire to have a state of the Telugu speaking people. The Andhra Mahasabha formed in 1911 for this purpose was the organization which stood in the forefront of the agitation for linguistic states in the country.

Even before this, the Congress, then led by the moderates, had decided in 1906 to organize a separate provincial committee for Bihar in accordance with its constitution. Bihar was then administratively a part of Bengal. This decision was made, apart from meeting the needs for organizational activities, to help the Bengalis in their anti-partition agitation. In effect, it also strengthened the desire of the people of Bihar, Orissa and Andhra for their respective linguistic provinces.

At this stage, the agitation for the formation of linguistic states was in its primary form. It took nearly a decade for this agitation to take a full and clear form. Even so, the formation of a monolingual province of Bengal and the emergence of linguistic provinces at least as a goal in Bihar and Andhra constituted an important event in the national movement in India. One of the sharp weapons that the British used against the Indian patriots who declared national independence or *Swaraj* as their objective was the "disunity of the Indian people". In India there were several castes, religions and languages; it was the British who brought them under a single government; if the British left the country, they would start fighting each other as before—this was the argument advanced by the British.

A fitting reply to this was the growth of the national movement and the development of the various national languages as an integral part of that movement. And these were precisely what unified the Indian people by raising their consciousness on modernization and Indian nationalism above caste, religious and linguistic considerations.

The bourgeois democratic movements in India, including those led by social reformers like Ram Mohan Roy and the Indian National Congress and its moderate and radical

sections, accomplished two tasks simultaneously. First, they gave rise to a pan-Indian movement which stood for the modernization of Indian society and the liberation of India from the British rule as their objectives. Second, as a part of this, they published newspapers, periodicals and books in different Indian languages and organized and addressed public meetings and conferences. In this process, a new language style was developed that suited these purposes.

The bourgeois democratic movement raised the various sections of the people speaking different languages to the position of nationalities, each with specific national characteristics of its own as an integral part of the Indian people fighting for a common goal and with a common perspective. That is, it became clear that the development of the consciousness of solidarity among each of the different nationalities like the Bengalis, Maharashtrians and so on, was not an obstruction in the path of development of a common national consciousness among Indians, but they were complementary to each other. It is well known that except for Tamil and the 'dead' languages like Sanskrit, Pali, etc., all other Indian languages were evolved relatively recently. In the ancient period, Sanskrit and several *Prakrit* dialects were used in Northern India. With the growth of Buddhism, Pali also rose to the level of Sanskrit as scholars used it for literary purposes. In Southern India, there were several dialects known as *Kodum Tamil* and *Sen Tamil* during the same period. That is, both in the North and in the South, there existed a literary language used for scholarly and administrative purposes and several vernaculars used by the common people.

This situation continued to exist until the last six or seven centuries when standard literary works appeared in the different vernaculars. One of the consequences of this was that with the growth of vernaculars into literary languages, scholars and poets began to emerge from among the people of the lower castes, like Ezhuthachan and Kambar in the South and Tulsidas, Kabir and so on, in the North. Thus developed languages like Malayalam and Tamil in the South and

Hindi, Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujarati, Bengali, Assamia, and so on in the North and North East as national languages. And the old literary language *Sen Tamil* transformed itself into a new popular literary language by absorbing words and idioms from dialects spoken by the common people.

But, there was a limitation inherent in the progress made in this period. Although the language that came to be used for literature were those of the common people, the content of the new literature was religious. For example, Ezhuthachan, Tulsidas, Kabir, Ramdas and others expressed the contents of the works written in Sanskrit in languages understood by common people. Therefore, the literary works of this period spread only among the people of a particular religion. But, whereas the works of Sanskrit scholars with religious contents catered only to a small minority of the higher strata of society, the new litterateur who emerged from the lower castes spread the religious contents of these works among the masses. This was, in fact, the contribution they made to the growth of their respective languages.

But, the masses belonging to other religious groups had no interest in this body of new literature. To them they were as distant as was the Sanskrit literature. That is, this literary venture did not help the development of a new literature with modern secular outlook that could be imbibed by all people speaking the same language.

A change in this situation was brought about by the bourgeois democratic movements from the social reform movement led by Ram Mohan Roy and others to the moderate-extremist political movements which assumed different forms at different stages. It was at this stage that a literature with contents which were of interest to all sections of the people speaking the same language, irrespective of caste or religious differences, and a style suited for this purpose developed. The new Indian languages thus developed fostered cultural and social solidarity among the people speaking these languages above caste and religious considerations. This solidarity and a body of literature which gave expression

to it, in fact, emerged through the efforts made to accomplish the dual task of modernizing the Indian social system and liberating India from political slavery. Along with unifying each of the national groups on the basis of language and culture, certain common goals and outlooks acceptable to all of them were placed before the Indian people.

The Bengalis stood at the forefront in this process. They were ahead of others in the movements for social reform and cultural modernization as well as in political consciousness. The 'Bengali Babu' became a nightmare for the British rulers. If they devised the plan to divide Bengal with the intention of breaking the unity of the Bengalis, the nationalists inside and outside Bengal conducted organized agitations equally vigorously to spoil the goal of the British. Other nationalities which sympathized with the agitation carried on by the Bengalis found their own future in the anti-partition agitations. That was why people in other parts of India as well expressed their desire, though not in clear and strong terms, to have linguistic provinces of their own.

But, the demand for linguistic provinces suffered from a serious limitation at that time. The demand was then raised only in relation to those parts of India which were known as "British India". The nationalist leaders of those days could not even imagine the incorporation of the princely states in the linguistic provinces visualized by them.

Even the leaders of extremist political orientation did not think of changing the then existing authoritarian rule or the borders of the princely states. Some of them even regarded the princely states as the model for *Swaraj*.

The agitation for linguistic provinces started with the demand for the formation of Andhra for the Telugu speaking people. But, at that time, the leaders of the agitation envisaged only the separation of the Telugu speaking areas from the existing composite Madras Presidency. A considerable section of the people speaking Telugu resided in the Telengana area of the princely state of Hyderabad. It took another three decades even for the idea of "Vishal Andhra"

incorporating the Telengana region of Nizam's Hyderabad to emerge.

The Telugu speaking areas of the Madras Presidency alone would have constituted a large state. Therefore, it was thought practicable at that time to bifurcate the province into "Andhra" and "residual Madras State". But, this was not the case with the Malayalam and Kannada speaking areas of Madras. The Malayalam speaking area in the Presidency was just a district (Malabar) while the Kannada area was made up of two or three districts which were not contiguous. So, it was difficult to bring all of them together to form a separate Karnataka province.

Moreover, a majority of the people speaking Malayalam and Kannada was in the princely states—the Malayalis in Travancore and Cochin and the Kannada speaking people in Mysore and nearly a dozen other small princely states. Therefore, the demand for linguistic states assumed practical relevance only when it was possible to abolish the princely states altogether and reorganize the people, scattered over different areas, on the basis of language.

We have seen that Maharashtra stood second only to Bengal in the development of bourgeois democratic movements. But, there was no movement there for a separate Maharashtra as in Andhra. The reason is the same as in the case of Kannada and Malayalam speaking people. Maharashtra was part of Bombay Presidency in which there were Gujarati and Kannada speaking people as well. A majority of the latter two was, however, in the princely states. A section of the Marathi speaking people was also in Marathwada which formed part of Nizam's Hyderabad. Thus, to form separate states for the Marathi, Gujarati and Kannada speaking people, it was essential to liberate the people from the autocratic regimes in the two large states of Mysore and Hyderabad, and in about 300 small princely states in Gujarat and over a dozen states in Karnataka, and integrate them with the people in "British India". And this was exactly what happened. In 1953-54 Madras province

was bifurcated into Andhra and the residul Madras State. But, Vishal Andhra, Aikya Kerala, Samyukta Karnataka and Samyukta Maharashtra states were formed only in 1956 and thereafter, when the political atmosphere was created to abolish the bigger princely states like Hyderabad, Travancore, Mysore, Baroda, etc., and to unify the population speaking different languages with their brothren in other states.

Bengal was a state which did not have such a problem. There was not one princely state within the Bengali speaking areas. Moreover, till the partition of Bengal, the Bengali speaking people were all within one state, which, however, included the Biharis and the Oriyas. With the successful culmination of the anti-partition struggle, the Biharis and Oriyas were separated, leaving only the Bengalis in the new province. This led to the question being raised among the Telugu speaking people as to why they should not be separated from the Madras Presidency to form a separate state, since a separate state of the Bengalis had already been formed by separating the Biharis and Oriyas from the erstwhile composite Bengal.

7

WAR-TIME NATIONAL UPSURGE

I. "ENEMY'S ENEMY, THE FRIEND"

The British rulers had a definite aim in view in revoking the partition of Bengal, in encouraging the moderates against the extremists and in preparing the ground for the emergence of the Muslim League. And that was to stem the advance of the national struggle, and as a part of the strategy, to isolate the extremists from the moderates and the Muslims from non-Muslims. To a great extent, they were successful in their attempts. But, this success was only temporary.

There were inherent contradictions in the policies adopted by the rulers to stem the tide of the national struggle, which began to surface soon after the beginning of a new upsurge more powerful and widespread than the anti-partition agitation.

As we have seen earlier, the rulers thought it possible to rally the Muslim community in favour of the partition and

against the basic slogans raised by the anti-partition agitators. But, what happened really was something different. As the Muslims as a community decided to enter into politics, they began to turn against the Hindus, on the one hand, and against the British, on the other.

When the rulers, yielding to the pressure of the general nationalist movement, decided to unify Bengal, it shook the rapport which the leaders of the Muslim community had with the rulers at the time of the emergence of the Muslim League. The founders of the Muslim League described this decision as an event which proved the "stupidity of rallying against the sister communities with the help of foreign powers".

Furthermore, before long, circumstances arose wherein many of the big and small West Asian Muslim countries, including Turkey, got into a war against Britain. The Balkan War of 1912 and the First World War which erupted two years later, created anti-British feelings among the Muslim masses of various countries, including India. That is, contrary to the expectations entertained by the British rulers when they encouraged the formation of the Muslim League, the organized public opinion of the Muslim community began to take an anti-British turn. It was in that direction that world politics and Indian politics had turned.

These circumstances brought many Muslim youths, like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad who later became eminent in Indian politics, to anti-imperialist politics. Azad has referred in his autobiography to the criticism made by the Arab and Turkish revolutionaries of the stand taken by the Indian Muslims of not participating in the struggle for Indian independence, when he visited the Arab countries in 1908. The Urdu newspaper *Hilal*, which he started on his return to India, played a significant role in spreading the ideas of revolutionary politics among the Muslims.

Maulana Mohamed Ali, who later played a leading role in the Khilafat movement, brought forth the antagonism between England, on the one hand, and the Islamic nations

like Turkey, Persia (Iran) and Morocco, on the other, and to its repercussions on the Indian Muslims. He also referred to an incident in which he himself came into conflict with the government in 1913. Briefly, things were moving in a direction which created doubts in the minds of the British rulers as to whether their hope of utilizing the Muslims as an organized community against the other sections of the people would be belied.

If the attitude of the Muslim community which had, at least temporarily, rallied against the national independence movement was of the nature stated above, it is needless to speak of the attitude of the Indian revolutionaries at home and abroad. Although the decision to revoke the partition of Bengal and to introduce new administrative reforms served to appease the moderates, it did not cool down the fire of intense feelings of the extermists and the revolutionaries in India. On the other hand, it actually intensified it further. Thes developments created in them, the hope of bringing the rulers down to their knees, if only revolutionary actions were carried on in a more determined and organized manner.

The revolutionaries living outside the country in the background of the Balkan War and the First World War, however, adopted the attitude of "the enemy of the enemy is the friend". They formulated a plan to enlist the support and assistance of the governments of Germany, Japan, America and the post-revolutionary Russia (at the end of the war) and the governments of the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan and other West Asian Muslim countries to the movement for India's national independence. They concentrated their efforts in Germany, since they thought that Germany, being the most powerful enemy of Britain, would naturally take interest in weakening it.

The German ruling circles thought that large-scale export of arms for the use of the Indian revolutionaries and providing them training in their use as well as the technical knowhow to make bombs and other equipments would create a new situation in India, compellnig the British to deploy a

considerable section of their army from the European front to India, which would, in turn, change the course of the war in Europe in their favour. This was the hope the rulers of Germany had entertained in cooperating with Indian revolutionaries.

Accordingly, discussions were held between the German Government and the Indian revolutionaries living in Germany with a view to serve the interests of both the parties. A committee to aid India, consisting of Indians and Germans as members, was formed to assist the revolutionary activities in India. All these developments took place within a month after the outbreak of the war between Britain and Germany. This committee was later on reorganized with the Germans withdrawing from it.

We have already noted that Indian revolutionaries were active in many countries like England, France, Canada and America. Many of these countries were directly opposed to Germany in the war. Consequently, Indians in these countries could not expect to get help from them. In fact, the governments of these countries, as participants in the war against Germany, were keen to ensure that no activities against the interests of Britain took place in their countries. So, as the war broke out, Germany became the centre of activities of the Indian revolutionaries living abroad.

In the initial stages of the war, America remained neutral and Russia was against Germany. But, towards the end of the war, the situation changed drastically. America allied itself with Britain and France against Germany,whereas Russia, where a new Bolshevik Government was established following the October Revolution of 1917, kept out of the war. In the circumstances, the anti-British revolutionary activities which were being carried out in America during the earlier stages of the war came to an end. At the same time, the Indian revolutionaries sought to get in contact with the post-revolutionary Bolshevik government of Russia.

Germany remained the main centre of the organized activities of the overseas Indian revolutionaries during both

the initial and later stages of the war. It was from Germany that delegations were sent to America and other countries to coordinate the activities of the revolutionaries in all countries. In fact, the Berlin committee functioned as the centre to make arrangement for sending to India as much arms and trained personnel as possible.

In the early stage of the war, when America had remained neutral, a German diplomatic office functioning there made arrangements to acquire large supplies of arms, ammunition and other weapons. There was a plan to buy 8000 fire-arms and 40 lakhs bullets and other materials and ship them to India secretly. The necessary funds for this purpose were provided by the German government.

Similarly, various other activities were planned in countries like Japan, China, Indo-China, Philippines and Indonesia. The Islamic countries of West Asia rendered assistance in a more open manner. Several Muslim revolutionaries from India visited these countries and established relations with the rulers there. Utilizing this opportunity, many non-Muslim revolutionaries also followed them. Several revolutionary organizations emerged in which revolutionaries belonging to the different communities could work together.

As a result of all these activities a "Provisional Revolutionary Government" was formed in Afghanistan in December 1915, with Raja Mahendra Pratap as President, Barkatulla as PrimeMinister and Obeidulla as HomeMinister. This revolutionary government become another centre of revolutionary activities as the "Aid-India Committee" of Berlin.

Side by side with the activities of the revolutionaries in Berlin and other centres, plans had been made to organize anti-British insurrections in India and the neighbouring countries. In Singapore, a military mutiny was carried out. Of the two military contingents stationed there, a British battalion had been shifted leaving an Indian battalion to guard the area. There were about 300 German prisoners in their custody. Taking this opportunity, the organizers of the mutiny tried to

free the German prisoners and arrest or even kill the high military officers. They also planned to organize the military personnel to kill the Englishmen and liberate Singapore from the British. Similar plans were also made in Burma and several other South East Asian centres to organize mutiny and liberate the region.

Within India, arrangements were made to organize countrywide revolts using the arms to be obtained from America and other countries. The main role in these activities was played by the revolutionaries of Bengal, the Muslim revolutionaries of Punjab and the surrounding areas and the revolutionaries who had arrived from America, Canada, Japan, China, Philippines and other countries taking the pledge to work for a successful revolution in India. There was also a small leadership core to coordinate the activities of the various revolutionary groups spread over areas from East Bengal and Orissa to Punjab and to organize revolts on a prescribed day in accordance with a plan made for the purpose. This was the most well organized venture ever undertaken after the 1857 revolt.

But, the plan failed to materialize. Although the ship carrying arms supplies from America reached the specified place on schedule, they did not reach the destination on account of the failure of the plan to receive and distribute the shipment.

The military revolts and similar other ventures also ultimately failed. The details of the revolts planned in India were made known to the authorities through the British spies who had infiltrated into the leading group organizing the revolt, enabling the authorities to crush the revolt before it broke out. Thus, this revolt also met with the same fate as did the earlier revolts like the one in 1857. Many of the participants became victims of arrests and repression. The British began to take action further to consolidate their power with the satisfaction of having totally suppressed the planned revolts.

For the revolutionaries, however, this defeat was, in fact, the begining of another upsurge, as it had often been the case with earlier setbacks. Even before the end of the World War, the anti-imperialist movement had begun to gain strength in various other forms, which turned into a country-wide mass upsurge in the post-war years.

II. THE MATURED BOURGEOISIE

As we have seen, both the revolts of 1857 and those that took place during the World War ended unsuccessfully. However, there is a significant difference between the revolts of these two periods.

The First World War broke out after the rise of a new (bourgeois) class leadership in place of the old decadent feudal domination. In 1857, this new class in India was growing in its womb. Consequently, it could give rise only to social reform movements of the type started by Ram Mohan Roy and others as the primary form of bourgeois development. Since its aim was to appreciate and copy the British civilization, rather than conducting an anti-British struggle, the leadership of the 1857 revolt was in the hands of the feudal forces. That is, the bourgeois modernization movement that emerged in the form of the social reform movement was against an anti-British struggle. One the other hand, the First World War broke out after the Indian bourgeoisie rose to the position of leadership of an organized national movement which, started with raising slogans of social reform, entered the phase of raising economic and political demands.

In the years immediately preceding the war and during the war, Indian bourgeoisie recorded an unprecedented growth. Rather than confining themselves to light industries like cotton textiles, they entered the field of heavy industries considered to be the heart of industrialization. In the years immediately preceding the war, the first steel mill in India was established with the initiative of the Tata

family. This was the first heavy industry estabished in Asia with the exception of only Japan, which constituted the economic evidence to the maturity the Indian bourgeoisie had attained.

All industries in India including this steel mill grew on an unprecedented pace during the war. Under the conditions of war, the Indian Government could not but increase production in the Indian industrial sector and use Indian industrial products. They were thus compelled to an extent to go back on the earlier policy of discouraging the development of Indian industries.

At the same time, Indian capitalists came into contact with capitalists in countries like America and France who were interested in a victory of the British camp in the war and sought their cooperation in the development of industries in India. For instance, Tata made an attempt to nogotiate with the American capitalists for the expansion of the steel mill. Though it did not succeed, it helped to maintain the relations in the years to come. The progress the Indian bourgeoisie achieved in the economic field got reflected itself in the political field. They no longer handled Indian politics as "the most loyal subjects of the Crown" as before, but firmly demanded certain political rights in return for the assistance they rendered to the rulers under the prevailing world situation in general, and in the war in particular. That is, the Indian bourgeoisie had grown as a class confident in its growing strength, and working with the objective of gaining self-rule, step by step, through negotiations with the British.

The split in the Congress and the formation of the Muslim League were regarded at that time as a setback to an advance in this direction. But that was not the truth. The moderate leaders of the Congress after the split, the extremists functioning as a separate party outside the Congress, and the Muslim League formed with the blessings of the British rulers against the Congress—all of them were

working, though in different forms, in accordance with the aspirations of the Indian bourgeoisie.

Even the moderate-led Congress incorporated in its constitution the objective of self-rule within the British Empire. It may be recalled that it was on this issue that the moderates and extremists had fought within the Congress. The moderates had now accepted the objective suggested earlier by the extremists. Both sections had made it clear that the differences between them were not on the objective but only on the means of achieving the objective. Nor was the Muslim League opposed to the aim of self-rule; what they were demanding was the due share of the Muslim community after India was granted self-rule. Thus, although divided into three camps, the Indian bourgeoisie constituted one class with a common objective of self-rule.

The policies and programmes proposed and sought to be implemented by the revolutionaries to achieve this objective were acceptable to none of these sections. None of them subscribed to the programme of conducting a revolution in India with the assistance of the anti-British powers, including Germany, on the principle of "enemy's enemy is one's friend".

At the same time, none of them was prepared to accept and meekly submit as "loyal subjects of the British" to whatever the British rulers did. On the contrary, they did not hesitate to press India's right to self- government and to carry on agitations to win that demand, simultaneously rendering all possible help to the British in effectively conducting the war. In other words, they all adopted the policy of gaining more power by taking advantage of the crisis the rulers were facing and also of the fact that they needed India's assistance in facing the crisis. Thus, in 1916 the Congress and the Muslim League jointly accepted, in principle, the objective of self-government for India and decided to bring pressure on the rulers for administrative reforms with wider powers to the Indians. As a first step towards realizing this objective, they reached an understanding on the

share which the Muslim and non-Muslim communities should get under the new extended powers. Simultaneously, steps were also taken to remove the impediments in the way of extremists rejoining the Congress, thus paving the way for restoring unity in the Congress.

Although these efforts fructified only two years after the commencement of the war, the work in this direction had started much earlier. Thus, a Hindu-Muslim convention was held in Allahadad in January 1911. The convention in which 60 Hindu and 40 Muslim representatives participated, however, failed to arrive at a decision. But Gokhale who played a prominent role in the convention, advised that the "misgivings in the minds of the Muslims about the domination of the Hindu majority should not be dismissed lightly".

Following this, talks were held between the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League in different forms and at different places. The leaders of both the organizations were convinced that the power to be shared between them could be won from the British only if they resolve the differences between them and stand unitedly.

Similar efforts were also made to bring about a reconciliation between the moderates and the extremists within the Congress. But no progress could be made in these efforts until the beginning of the war, mainly because many of the extremist leaders were either in prison or were subjected to other forms of repression.

The situation began to change soon after the outbreak of the war. Tilak was released from prison. The urge for restoring unity within the Congress was also strong among the moderates. Many made efforts to bring the extremists back in the fold of the Congress by holding discussions with Gokhale and Tilak separately. After his release from the prison, Tilak also was holding an attitude helpful to bring about unity. He unambiguously declared that he for one did not approve of violence as a means to win the demand for self-government. Denying that he and his party were following the policy of boycott, Tilak pointed out that many prominent

members of his party were functioning as members of municipalities and legislatures. He had overtly and covertly approved of their activities.

Nevertheless, it was not easy to restore unity between the moderates and extremists in the Congress. Leaders like Pherozeshah Mehta and Gokhale of the moderate group continued to maintain hostility towards the extremists as before. Only after the passing away of these two eminent leaders could unity be restored in the Congress.

As a result of the efforts made for about six years, unity in the Congress was achieved in 1915. The reunited Congress and the Muslim League expressed their opinions on the details of the administrative reforms that India must achieve. Both the organizations held their respective annual conferences at the same place (Lucknow) to give approval to the proposals of administrative reforms prepared jointly by them. It became clear that the Indian bourgeoisie, divided into two organizations (the Congress and the League), had a common objective and a common practical programme. True, this unity was not enduring; the two organizations continued to clash with each other. As a result of capitalist development, new generations of bourgeoisie began to emerge from among the various communities which hitherto had remained backward. This new generation of the bourgeoisie from among the non-Brahmins in some provinces, the depressed castes all over India and the Christian and Sikh religious minorities, etc., began to form their own organizations, as did the Muslims earlier, and raise the question of sharing power. It was as a natural consequence of this that the "communal question" became an integral part of Indian politics, which culminated in the partition of the country into Indian Union and Pakistan. The ordinary bourgeois nationalist is unhappy about this development and put the blame on the British as well as on the Muslim communalists. But he never bothers to go deep into the historical background of these developments. India is a country with two major religions, the Hindus and the Muslims, in addition to other

religious minorities, and several castes among the Hindus themselves. The bourgeoisie that emerged from among these different religions and castes possessed the character of their respective religions and castes. Therefore, although they have uniformity and common interest with regard to bourgeois development, these different bourgeois sections have to protect the interest of the bourgeoisie belonging to their respective religions and castes. The bourgeois nationalist does not understand that this is the fact that underlies the "communal question".

The Lucknow agreement of 1916 was the strongest evidence to show that the Indian bourgeoisie had realized the fact that despite the difference in interest as members of particular castes and religions, they belonged to the same class and have to stand united to face the British rulers. The same realization was witnessed also at the Round Table Conferences and in various negotiations. Although each maintained its identity, they adopted an approach of jointly raising the common demand before the rulers and fighting each other on the details with regard to the winning of the demand.

As noticed earlier, the revolutionaries were trying to organize an anti-British revolt with the help of Germany and other world powers. As distinct from this, the moderates, the extremists, the Muslim League and all other bourgeois politicians took the attitude that "England's need is India's opportunity". Realizing that organizing a revolt was dangerous, they not only kept themselves away from it, but also formulated the strategy of agitation and negotiation on the belief that if enough pressure was exerted on the British, it would be possible to gain more powers step by step leading finally to self-rule.

Later events proved that this strategy was more 'practical' than that of the revolutionaries. The class forces, particularly the class conscious working class, capable of ending the British rule by revolutionary means had not yet developed. Therefore, the freedom struggle was fought under the leadership of the bourgeoisie who had already become strong

enough to carry on that struggle. And it was the bourgeoisie alone which has benefited from independence, because it was into their hands that power was transferred 31 years after the Lucknow Pact, and it was only a handful of monopolists capable of collaborating with foreign monopolists and the landlords that were able to grow further by exercising this power. The masses of people, on the other hand, were getting more and more pauperized as an inevitable consequences of capitalist development. Furthermore, the freedom struggle culminated in the division of the country into two, and in the death of millions of people in communal riots.

The Indian bourgeoisie acquired the capability to bargain with the British rulers and to exert pressure on them with popular support. And this was what became manifest in Indian politics during the war.

III. THE HOME RULE LEAGUE

The moderates feared that if the Congress constitution and rules were amended enabling the extremists to take part in its activities, the entire organization would go into their hands. Subsequent events proved that this fear was not unfounded. For instance, Tilak was accorded grand receptions by the masses of the people all along the way to the Congress session held for the first time after the split. And in the Congress session held a year later, Mrs. Annie Besant, who had been a supporter of the extremists, was elected president. The moderates had hitherto been keeping the party presidentship as their exclusive preserve by defeating the proposals to elect Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai to that position. Now a person of radical orientation had been elected president. This was a clear indication of the political changes that had come about during the war.

This was a development which caused anxiety to the British rulers as well as the moderates. The Home Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council wrote in a secret despatch

in January 1913: "The position is one of great difficulty. The Moderate leaders can command no support among the vocal classes who are being led at the heels of Tilak and Besant."[1] It was this situation that motivated the Government of India to propose certain administrative reforms to placate the moderates.

But the political evaluation made by the moderates went wrong in one respect. They thought that things would be all right if the extremists were denied re-entry into the Congress. This was totally baseless, for, the extremists were able to propagate their own political line even while remaining outside the Congress. Besides, a capitalist class had already developed in the country, determined to widen its power by exerting maximum pressure on the rulers. The extremists were, therefore, in a position to carry on their work in accordance with their own political outlook, irrespective of whether they were inside or outside the Congress.

A new political organization, the Home Rule League, appeared on the scene as the organizational form of the activities of the extremists. To be exact, two organizations of the same name emerged in 1915, one formed by Tilak in Maharashtra and the other by Annie Besant in Madras.

Tilak had been released from prison in the middle of 1914. The scene he witnessed in the country on his release appeared to him to be entirely different from what it was when he was taken to the prison. Accordingly, he proposed certain changes in the polices and programmes of his party. The main theme of this change was the new outlook of the bourgeoisie: "England's need is India's opportunity".

It may be recalled that Tilak brought forth the radical politics as opposed to the politics of the moderates, stressing the need to organize agitations to achieve *Swaraj*. Many thought that he would advocate opposition to the British, denying the assistance needed by them more than ever before on account of the situation created by the war. Instead, he openly declared willingness to fully cooperate with the British

1. Reginald Craddock, quoted in Tara Chand, *Op cit*, p 450.

to win the war. He suggested formation of a 'citizens' army' with large-scale recruitment from among the people to fight the war. He thought that training in arms and experience in warfare for a people who had been disarmed under the British rule would help brighten the future of India. Accordingly, he engaged himself in the recruitment of the people to the army on a big scale.

This was only one aspect of Tilak's political outlook. The Home Rule League which was organized under his initiative represented the other aspect of his political outlook. Tilak argued that if Indians were to be motivated to participate actively in the war efforts of the British, they must be convinced that the success in the war would help them realize their political objective and that India should be granted 'home rule'.

Accordingly, the Home Rule League was formed in April, 1916 in Maharashtra. Though it was under his initiative, he was not even an office bearer of the organization. Through his journals he gave the widest possible publicity to the idea of Home Rule. Explaining the need to form such an organization, he wrote: It has generally been accepted that the time has come for organizing public opinion in favour of 'Home Rule' and for launching an agitation for it. The authority for taking up this task with responsibility naturally lies with the Congress. The moderates have, however, rejected the proposal for organizing a Home Rule League on the plea that the Congress was engaged in the task of preparing a scheme for self-government. The Congress, being a big, unwieldy and loosely organized body, is unable to evolve a scheme for Home Rule and to work actively for the political success of that movement. As such, there must be some one to do the primary base work for this. No time can be lost in this regard, any further. The League will be an organization that intends to take the initiative in this regard.

Even before the release of Tilak from prison, Annie Besant had started an agitation for home rule with its centre at Madras. She also had carried her activities to England.

Since, unlike Tilak, she was one of the recognized leaders of the Congress, Mrs. Besant introduced a resolution in the Congress proposing the formation of a separate organization, Home Rule League, to carry on the work for home rule. The Congress, however, rejected the resolution. Instead, it appointed a committee with Mrs. Besant as a member to "formulate a scheme for self-rule". Mrs. Besant was therefore committed to abide by the decision till the committee completed its work. As soon as that work was over, she felt herself free to organize the Home Rule League without going against the decisions of the Congress. Thus, the Home Rule League was formed in Madras in September 1916.

Although the Home Rule League was born as two parallel organizations under separate leaderships, the aims and objects and the immediate programmes of both were identical. Both campaigned with the aim of organizing popular agitation by rallying the people behind the demand of maximum autonomy possible within the British Empire and to reach its echo in the domestic politics of England.

In the words of Mrs. Besant, "The price of India's loyalty is India's freedom". In other words, England need not expect unconditional assistance from India to face the situation created by the war and it will get India's full cooperation only if her right to independence was recognized.

Subsequently, when she was elected president of the Congress, she had stated in her presidential speech:

> Early in the war, I ventured to say that the war could not end until England recognised that autocracy and bureaucracy must perish in India as well as in Europe. The good Bishop of Calcutta, with a courage worthy of his free race, lately declared that it would be hypocritical to pray for victory over autocracy in Europe and to maintain it in India.[2]

2. A. M. Zaidi, The Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress, Volume VII, New Delhi, Chand and Company, 1979, p.171.

She said that India demanded home rule for two reasons. One was inevitable and of vital importance and the other, too, though not of the same importance, had its own significance. The first was that freedom was the birth-right of every nation. India's interests had been subjected to the interests of British imperialism without her consent. The second was that India's economic resources were not being utilized in the most useful way for India. This would be evident if the expenditures incurred on elementary education and on the army maintained mainly for imperialist aggression were compared with each other.

Although formed as two parallel organizations, one under the leadership of Tilak and the other under Mrs. Besant, the emergence of the Home Rule movement was an important event in Indian political history. Sir Subramonia Iyer, who was the President of the Home Rule League led by Annie Besant (he was a former Judge and acting Chief Justice) wrote a letter to President Wilson of the United States stating: We are today a slave nation. We have been chained. But, if we are promised Home Rule immediately, we shall be able to send 5 million men to the war within 3 months and five million more in another 3 months.

Iyer's letter caused a stir internationally. It came to the notice of the Congress of the United States. Britain's refusal to concede the demands of the people of India came under criticism in various other countries. Even in England, it raised a lot of furore. Montagu, Secretary of State for India, characterized the letter as "shameful". In protest, Iyer renunciated his titles of 'knighthood' and 'Dewan Bahadur'. Tilak also sent a letter to the president of the Peace Convention held at the close of war, in which he pointed out that a free India would be a great source of strength to the world organization that was to be established.

The leaders of the Home Rule movement did not confine themselves to writing letters to the rulers of foreign countries. A delegation led by Lala Lajpat Rai was sent to the United States to attract the attention of the American people to Indian

freedom. According to a report sent by N. S. Hardikar, a member of the delegation, he addressed meetings at 83 places. He mentioned specifically the reception accorded to him in colleges, newspaper establishments and other institutions.

Tilak and Mrs. Besant endeavoured to strengthen the support of the democrats in England, who claimed to be fighting against autocracy, and of countries allied to Britain. Behind this effort were the masses of India on the one side, and the Indian bourgeoisie who were gaining self-confidence, on the other. Thus, under the leadership of the extremists who had been pushed out of the Congress a decade earlier, India witnessed a political urge with a clear aim and perspective.

A word about the name of this movement and the organization. As we have seen earlier, the aim of the movement as formulated first by the extremists under Tilak and subsequently accepted by the Congress was "Swaraj". There is a history behind the selection of the term "Home Rule" in place of *Swaraj*. It was the time when the people of Ireland were engaged in a fierce battle. The central slogan of that struggle was "Home Rule for Ireland". Its echo was heard in India. The term "Home Rule" indicated that the Indian people were fighting for the same objective for which the Irish people were fighting. There is also an indication that the methods of struggle used in Ireland would be employed in India too. The Home Rule agitation in Ireland in 1916 assumed the nature of the revolutionary struggle which was well known as the 'Easter Revolt'. Thousands of Indians inspired by that struggle rallied under the banner of the "Home Rule League". India had never witnessed such a widespread mass movement before.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

The emergence and growth of the Home Rule movement angered the British rulers. They decided to take repressive

actions against the organizers of this movement as they did against those who started similar movements earlier. In particular, actions were taken again against Tilak and Mrs. Besant.

Though the Bombay High Court set aside the government's demand of security for good behaviour served on Tilak, the government prohibited his entry into certain provinces. Similar ban orders were issued against other leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal. Mrs. Besant was interned along with her two colleagues.

None of these actions, however, weakened the movement. On the contrary, these actions only helped to strengthen the loyalty of the people to this movement and their opposition to the government. Protesting against these actions, Subramonia Iyer declared that he was prepared to undergo punishment for standing firmly by the Home Rule movement even if the government were to ban it. Following the example set by him, nearly 2000 persons, among whom were popular leaders, registered their protest. Protest meetings were held all over the country.

In the background of the country-wide protest, the All India Congress Committee met and demanded the release of Mrs. Besant and her colleagues. To back up this demand, it elected her the president of the session.

As noted earlier, the Muslim League was working independently of both the Home Rule League and the Congress. But it participated in the protest against the suppression of the Home Rule movement. It was decided to start a peaceful resistance struggle jointly by the Congress and the Muslim League to protest against repression.

Thus, the repression unleashed by the government to destroy the organization formed to fight for home rule gave rise to a country-wide agitation for the release of its leaders. The leaders of the movement earned the regard and respect of millions and turned out to be more dangerous to the rulers.

Realizing the danger involved in the agitation and also the futility of repressive actions, the ruling circles of both

India and England began to make fresh moves to appease at least the moderate section, if not the entire Indian political leadership.

Early in 1917, Austin Chamberlain, Secretary of State for India, emphasized the need to grant wider powers to Indians. Critically examining the administrative reforms proposals submitted by the Viceroy, Chamberlain pointed to the need to consider the change that had been brought about by the world war and to the "objectives of independence and national sovereignty" for which the Allied Powers were fighting. In particular, he exhorted the British rulers to consider the Russian (February) Revolution, the enthusiastic welcome it had received in Europe and America and its impact on Indian public opinion as well as on the attitude of the British towards the Indian problem and to take strong and courageous steps to meet Indian demands. It is clear that it was not the internal situations alone that led Chamberlain to take this stance.

This also makes it clear that even the British rulers were convinced of the correctness of the political evaluation expressed in the statement that "England's need is India's opportunity". Not only that the Allied Powers had not gained anything in the war, but, as the Russian Revolution showed, cracks were getting wider in their ranks. In the circumstances, alienating the Indian bourgeoisie would be detrimental to the imperial interests represented by them. On the other hand, if they could be appeased, it would be possible to collect enough men and material with their full cooperation and fight the war more effectively. These were the considerations that turned Chamberlain and other rulers to the path of administrative reforms.

There was yet another development. In Mesopotamia, the allied forces met with a miserable military defeat. The commission appointed to probe into the reasons for the defeat submitted its report in July 1917 attributing the defeat to the mismanagement on the part of the Government of India in

the conduct of the war and to acts of corruption indulged in by its officials.

The report created a big stir in England. The Government of India and the Secretary of State for India came under fierce attack in the Parliament. Montagu, then an Under Secretary of State for India, attacked the government in scathing terms: "The government of India is too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too antedeluvian to be of any use for the modern purposes we have in view."[3] Chamberlain was forced to resign as Secretary of State for India, and in his place, Montagu himself was appointed. Within a month Montagu made an important announcement in the Parliament: "The policy of H. M. Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire."[4]

The announcement, couched in a vague and ambiguous language though, created the impression that the British Government was now ready to recognize the content of the terms "Swaraj" and "Home Rule". But Montagu stated that the policy would be implemented in progressive stages, the timing and content of which were to be determined by the British and Indian governments "responsible for the welfare and progress of India". He further stated that what inspired them in taking this decision were the cooperation they were getting from those who got new opportunities and the confidence the Government had in the sense of responsibility they were showing. Montagu expressed the hope that there would be plenty of opportunities for a public discussion on these proposals.

In other words, the next step towards administrative reforms would come only if the British rulers became

3. Tarachand, *op cit*, Vol III, p.461.
4. *Ibid*, p. 463.

convinced that Indians were using the powers granted to them "to the satisfaction" of the rulers. The idea conveyed to the Indian leaders was that they could hope to reach the goal of Home Rule step by step only if they worked out the reforms to the satisfaction of the authorities. This did not satisfy the leaders of the Home Rule movement. They demanded a deadline for granting Home Rule. Presiding over the Congress session, Annie Besant suggested Home Rule before 1923.

The reaction of the moderates was different. They warmly welcomed Montagu's announcement characterizing it the "Magna Carta" of India. They tried to keep away the extremists as far as posssible, as they had done earlier at the Surat session of the Congress. They also tried their best to prevent installation of Mrs. Besant as the president of the Congress in the same way as they did earlier in the case of Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai. Only that they failed in their attempt this time due to the changed political climate in the country. There was a clear indication of another split in the Congress which had been reunited just a year ago at Lucknow.

There were also certain other developments following Montagu's announcement. One concerns the claims made by the Sikhs in Punjab and the non-Brahmins in South India. Since the demands put forth by the Muslim League had already been accepted in the proposals for administrative reforms formulated at Lucknow, no fresh demands were made this time on behalf of the Muslims. The Sikhs demanded the right to communal representation through separate electoral constituencies similar to that granted to the Muslims. Non-Brahmins also demanded separate representation or through reservation in general constituencies.

A more dangerous development that took place was the organized opposition of the I.C.S. and other service personnel, both serving and retired. No organized movement of this magnitude had been carried out by the British officials or non-officials in India since the earlier agitation against

Ilbert Bill. Now, with Montagu's announcement of reforms, they started organizing themselves on the apprehension of losing all the privileges they had hitherto been enjoying. They also organized communities like the Anglo-Indians and Christians and encouraged organized agitations of the native princes on the plea that they had the right to protect their own interests.

It was in this background that Lord Montagu visited India with the stated purpose of meeting the representatives of the various political parties and organizations and giving a concrete shape to the proposed reforms by ascertaining their opinions. But, in effect, this led to the weakening of the Home Rule movement by making the different sections and organizations take stands mutually opposed to each other. Just like utilizing the Muslim community and its political organization, the Muslim League, against the *Swaraj* movement immediately before the Minto-Morley reforms, so Montagu's visit to India turned out to be instrumental in providing opportunities to organize communities like the Sikhs, non-Brahmins, Christians and Anglo-Indians and uniting them with the native princes and official and non-official Englishmen.

Meanwhile, the war began to turn in favour of England. By the middle of 1918, Germany began to weaken, while the Allied Powers began to gain strength owing to the economic assistance received from the United States, compelling Germany to surrender in November, 1918. Lord Montagu wrote in his diary in February 1918: "I have kept India quiet for six months at a critical period of the war", adding that Indian politicians had nothing but his visit to think about at that time.[5]

The change favourable to England came not long after Montagu wrote this note in his diary. India's assistance, which Montagu had considered essential when he made his announcement, was not considered that important now in the changed circumstances. This was reflected in the new

5. *Ibid*, p 464.

administrative reforms proposal known as the Montagu-Chelmsord Report.

As we had noticed earlier, the meaning of the slogans "Swaraj" and "Home Rule" was that India should get the full right to self-government, at least by stages, of the same nature as the Dominions of Canada and Australia. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report was a total rejection of this demand. The Report made it clear that the concept of self-government referred to earlier in Montagu's announcement could be made applicable only in the case of local bodies like municipalities. Even at that level, there would be a few nominated members along with the elected ones. That is to say, they would not be fully elected bodies.

At the provincial level, there would be a legislative assembly with a majority of elected members. But, even there, there would be a number of nominated members. Furthermore, the administration would be in the hands of the Governor and a two-member Executive Council. The main feature of the new "reforms" was that one of the two members of the Executive Council would be an Indian and that certain unimportant portfolios would be assigned to ministers from among the elected members of the assembly. But, the Governor had the right to change the decisions taken by the ministers in relation to their respective portfolios. It was clear that since all the important portfolios were reserved for the Governor and his Executive Council and since the Governor had the right to interfere with matters within the powers of the ministers, these reforms did not even touch the fringe of the demand raised by the Home Rule movement.

In the case of the Central Government, the matter was still worse. There, the Governor-General and his Executive Council would exercise all the powers. The reforms at the central level pertained only to an increase in the number of elected members in the legislature and the extended right of members to ask questions. Another feature of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report was that it gave rise to a new force directly opposing the developing political movement in the

country. It contained the proposal to form a new body—the Chamber of Princes—designed to fight to protect the vested interests of the princes.

In brief, Montagu returned to England after formulating proposals that would render lifeless even the announcement that he was compelled to make in the British Parliament in August 1917 due to the international pressure created in the atmosphere of the First World War.

V. TOWARDS SPLIT AGAIN

The election of Annie Besant as the president of the Congress clearly showed that the moderates and extremists in the Congress once again started working unitedly. But the contradiction between the two groups started becoming sharper within months after the Congress session held under Mrs. Besant's presidentship. The immediate reason for this was the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals. The difference of opinion that existed between the moderates who cheerfully welcomed the proposals and the extremists who declared them totally unacceptable led the organization towards a split.

But this time, unlike the developments a decade earlier, the differences did not lead to the expulsion of the extremists from the Congress. In fact, the moderates left the Congress and started a separate organization, called the Liberal Federation.

Its beginning was in Bengal, and that too, before the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford report. The moderates in Bengal formed a new organization, the National Liberal League, and issued a statement: We must be prepared to give our accord and support to the positive side of the scheme, if it takes us a long way to our objective. On the contrary, if it falls short of our expectations, we must express our disappointment and protest against it.

The Bengal radicals who met after the publication of the Montagu-Chelmsford report, on the other hand, declared that the proposals for reforms were disappointing and unsatisfactory and that it would not lead to a responsible government. These conflicting opinions expressed by the moderates in Bengal before the publication of the report and by the radicals immediately after it gave rise to three main trends of opinion at the all-India level.

The first one was that of the moderates who regarded that the reforms were in the right direction and constituted "a real and substantial step towards the progressive realisation of responsible government". The second was that of the leftist section which maintained that basically and in details they were totally wrong and were beyond improvement. The third trend which was in between these two, held that the proposals were unsatisfactory, and argued for demanding substantial changes, instead of totally rejecting them.

Even among the leader of the Home Rule movement, there were people holding the latter two views. For instance, Tilak, one of the two most eminent leaders of the movement, was the powerful sponsor of the policy of "responsive cooperation", which became well known later in Indian politics. That is, the nationalists must extend their cooperation to the government commensurate with the cooperation extended by the government to the Indian nationalist leaders working with the objective of *Swaraj* or Home Rule.

Mrs. Annie Besant, Tilak's comrade-in-arms in the Home Rule movement, on the other hand, advocated a policy of unconditional cooperation. Thus, both Tilak and Mrs. Besant were against non-cooperation.

Yet the moderates started their moves against the leaders of the Home Rule movement alleging that Tilak, Mrs. Besant and other leaders and ranks of the Home Rule movement were on the side of non-cooperation. They further alleged that the extremists who occupied official positions in the Congress following the restoration of unity were striving to lead the organization along the path of non-cooperation.

In fact, it was on this ground that the moderate leaders formed the Liberal Federation.

The extremist section holding official positions in the Congress, in fact, adopted such an attitude as would avoid another split in the organization. They decided to convene a special session of the Congress in Bombay to resolve the differences that existed between the two groups and evolve a line generally acceptable to all sections in the Congress. They hoped that the conference with the participation of both the groups would help to arrive at a joint decision based on mutual accommodation. The moderates, however, did not participate in the conference. Instead, they held their own conference in Calcutta and formed the Liberal Federation, as mentioned above.

It must be specifically mentioned that, though separate conferences were held, one in Bombay and the other in Calcutta, the policy adopted in both of them on the reforms proposals was, by and large, the same. One pointed to the specific drawbacks in the proposals and suggested specific modifications with a preface that the reforms proposals were acceptable to them. The Congress led by the extremists also made the same critique and suggestions. But unlike the moderates, they prefaced their resolution with the statement that the proposals were totally disappointing. This was the difference between the two.

It would, however, be wrong to suggest that the difference was only in terminology. Behind the difference in terminology, there was a fundamental difference in regard to policy and approach. Neither the moderates like Surendranath Banerji nor the extremists like Tilak and Mrs. Besant had any doubt on the question of accepting whatever was offered as a means to demand more. The difference between the two was over the question of how to get more. The extremists proposed to enter the legislatures and such other forums in order to use them as a platform to oppose the rulers on every occasion. They believed this to be the only way to win *Swaraj* or Home Rule. The moderates, on the other hand,

characterized this approach as negative and suggested to function in a more "constructive and constitutional" manner.

As indicated earlier, despite the difference in the means, the goal of both the groups was the same. Both groups wanted the self-governing of the provinces stipulated in the reforms proposal to be widened with more departments transferred to the elected ministers. Both wanted no delay in establishing responsible government at the Centre about which the reforms proposal was silent. That is, they wanted at least some departments at the Centre to be transferred to the elected members as in the case of the provinces. They also wanted that at least half of the official members of the Executive Councils should be Indians both at the Centre and the provinces, in addition to the elected ministers.

In brief, both the moderates and the extremists were unanimous in the opinion that as a first step towards *Swaraj* or Home Rule, the elected representation of the people at the Centre and provinces must get more powers than what was envisaged in the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals.

The identity of views with regard to the basic objective as well as to the reforms proposals to be implemented immediately, on the one hand, and the differences of opinion with regard to the means to be adopted to achieve this aim, on the other, went to prove that the strength of the (bourgeois) class which both the moderates and extremists equally represented, was growing rapidly.

It may be recalled that when the bourgeoisie first emerged as a political force, they adopted the means of declaring absolute loyalty to the British rule and of making humble representations to secure petty demands. Now they were not satisfied with petty immediate demads as was the case in the earlier days. The Indian bourgeoisie had now transformed itself into a class confident of its own strength to get from the British self-government for India in the sense of full control of elected representatives over the internal administration, remaining an integral part of the British Empire though, and confident of getting the support of the peoples

and governments of the capitalist countries like the U. S. A. and France in acquiring this right.

The problem was how to use this strength. The bourgeoisie as a class knew that it was impracticable to obtain arms and arms training from foreign powers and create a revolutionary army to smash the British rule in the way the revolutionaries were trying to do before and during the war. For that reason, one section of the bourgeoisie represented by the moderates believed that the practical approach was to maintain, as before, friendly relations with the rulers and cooperate with them fully, although the purpose was to win the new objective as well as the immediate demands. The other section represented by the extremists, on the other hand, believed that to achieve these same aims, it was necessary to organize agitations to extert pressure on the rulers, while adopting at the same time an approach of friendship and cooperation towards them.

What led to the difference of opinion was Tilak's slogan of "conditional cooperation." This is importent. The very term "conditional cooperation" makes it clear that the allegation of the moderates that Tilak and his comrades were arguing for complete non-cooperotion was baseless. Let us note in passing that this was what led later to the confilict between the extremists under Tilak's leadership and the Congressmen led by Gandhi.

If it was the word "conditional" in the term "conditional cooperation" that was opposed by the moderates as well as the co-workers of Tilak like Mrs. Besent, with the beginning of the Gandhian period, the opposition came to the second word of the term, namely, "cooperation". That is, if in the earlier stages, the adversaries of Tilak blamed him for the approach of unconditional cooperation, the followers of Gandhi opposed his approach of cooperation with the government even if it was conditional.

A fact that can be called an 'irony of history' must be specifically mentioned here. Among those who were opposed to the "conditional" part of "conditional cooperation"

included Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. Later on, the same Gandhi became a powerful opponent of the second part of the term, namely, "cooperation". Since Tilak had died at the beginning of the second stage, there was no occasion for a direct confrontation between him and Gandhi. It is certainly an irony of history that Gandhi who adopted the approach of Annie Besant and the moderates in opposing "conditions" to cooperation, should become the leader of the Non-cooperation Movement within months and that the followers of Tilak should oppose, at least partially, the Non-cooperation Movement led by Gandhi, in consonance with their line of "conditional cooperation".

Tilak himself had realized during the last days of his life that things were moving in that direction. In April 1920—four months before his demise—Tilak formed a new organization, the Congress Democratic Party. The manifesto published in the name of the new party proposed to participate in the ensuing elections according to the new reforms and bring under the control of the Congress all provincial legislatures and to use these positions to "offer cooperation or resort to constitutional opposition, whichever may be expedient and best calculated to give effect to the popular will.

It is significant that Tilak now felt it necessary to form a party of his own to oppose the growing trend of non-cooperation in the Congress, just as he had in the earlier days, formed a party of the extremists to oppose the frigid policy then followed by the moderates.

Tilak's decision to form another organization to oppose from within the Congress the policy of non-cooperation and to fight for the policy of "conditional cooperation" at a time when the old moderates were forming their organization, the Liberal Federation, outside the Congress marked a new stage in the history of the freedom movement and the leading role of the bourgeoisie in it. While protecting its own class interest, the bourgeoisie has a political aim of rallying the entire people behind it. With regard to *Swaraj* or Home Rule,

there is no difference between the moderates and the extremists; the entire bourgeoisie is one for it. But it had not yet been able to create unanimity on the question of how to work towards achieving that national objective. Therefore, the bourgeoisie itself had now come to the scene to form different organizations with different means to achieve the common objective.

Like Naoroji and Gokhale in the earlier period, Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai and Mrs. Besant were those who came to the forefront and played their respective roles at the various stages of the development of the same class having the same objective, though differing on the question of achieving this objective. In addition to them, now a towering personality had come to the scene—Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. This is the meaning of the differences of opinion over the term "conditional cooperation" and the Congress Democratic Party formed by Tilak in its background.

8

GANDHIAN ERA
SURGE AND SETBACK

I. TILAK AND GANDHI

The last Congress session which Tilak attended was the one held at Amritsar. Hardly three months after this session, this stalwart who dominated the Indian political scene for nearly three decades breathed his last. Even before the Amritsar session, Tilak had become aware that he was being pushed to the back row. He also knew of the person who was forging ahead, pushing him back. Durga Das, then a young journalist, had an informal talk with Tilak at the Amritsar Congress, which he has recorded thus:

> I may not live to see it (Home Rule), but the next generation will if we work hard and apply our mind to the new task. I recognise, however, that the Punjab disturbances, the martial law regime and the Jallianwala massacre, which

have made men like Sir Sankaran Nair and poet Tagore throw up their jobs and houours, have charged the political atmosphere with a spirit of revolt, of which Gandhi is the new symbol. I will not stand in his way, even though I feel that responsive cooperation will yield the maximum benefit.[1]

The talks between Gandhi and Tilak at Amritsar were historic. As we have seen in the previous chapter, many have considered it an irony that Tilak who, entering the political arena as the spokesman of anti-British resistence and Boycott, gradually eclipsed the moderate leaders, should turn himself into a spokesman for cooperation, though "conditional", with the British.

An equally surprising irony was that Gandhi also underwent a similar transformation. Gandhi who was active in South Africa in the recruitment to the British Army in the Boer War and later in the First World War, in a meeting called by the authorities in 1918, disagreed with the offer made by Tilak to assist the British on conditions in their war. The same Gandhi who then suggested to Tilak that the assistance should be unconditional, had now transformed himself into the spokesman of unconditional non-cooperation.

Equally significant, as were the changes that came about in the political positions of Tilak and Gandhi, was the contrast in their character, capabilities and their general world outlook. It was due to pressure of circumstances that Tilak, a distinguished scholar in science, literature and other branches of knowledge, became an agitator and thereby a victim of intense wrath of the authorities. As for Gandhi, he had not only taken to English education, the carrier to the highest position that the young generation of Indians at that time could aspire for, but had gone to England to become a barrister. Only later, when he went to South Africa for employment, he, too, became an agitator because of pressure of circumstances. Gandhi, who was the leader of the struggle

1. Durga Das, *India: From Curzon to Nehru and After*, London, Collins. 1969, pp 69-70,

of Indians in South Africa, had neither the experience in Indian politics nor was he, comparatively speaking, well known. That was the position when he attended the Amritsar Congress. On the other had, Tilak had attained great fame through continuous political agitations under his leadership and the consequent sufferings which was evident from the epithets 'Lokmanya' and 'Tilak Maharaj' that the people conferred on him.

Politically, Gandhi was a moderate while in South Africa and even after his return to India; he was a faithful disciple of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Tilak's adversary in politics. Gandhi had mentioned several times, while Gokhale was alive and even after his demise, of the teacher-disciple relationship between Gokhale and himself. It was this Gandhi, who had been active in Indian politics only for about five years as the faithful disciple of this will-known moderate, who now faced Tilak. But during his last days, Tilak had the sagacity to realize that he himself was being eclipsed by the rise of the disciple of his political adversary, Gokhale, whom he had earlier overtaken. And that was what he pointed out in his informal talk with Durga Das.

It is indisputable that the months immediately before and after the Amritsar Congress were crucial for Indian politics. It marked the end of a historic period which we have termed the "Tilak Era", and the emergence of a new one named after Gandhi. Basic changes were taking place in the objectives of the freedom struggle as well as in the individuals and groups participating in it, in the method of the struggle and organizational forms. The entry of Tilak and his colleagues and the subsequent waves of mass upsurge that swept over the country had imparted a specific characteristic to the first two decades of the 20th century. Similarly, the entry of Gandhi and the subsequent events in the post-war years imparted their own specific characteristics to that period.

However different Gandhi and Tilak were in their individual character, abilities, and general world outlook, both had one particular characteristic in common. Both were

equally adept in assimilating the essence of the times they lived in and of the thoughts and emotions of the people they came in contact with, in declaring the aims and chalking out the path and in building up the organization on that basis coverting them into an art and science.

Millions recognized as their own the emotions expressed by Tilak while he was alive, and by Gandhi after he entered the arena. Both lived and worked in a manner which instilled such an awareness among the people. It was this popular sentiment that made Tilak 'Likmaya' and 'Tilak Maharaj' and Gandhi the 'Mahatma' and the 'Father of the Nation'.

Tilak and Gandhi had complete identity not only in their ability to rally the millions behind them but also in the class intrests that they protected. Both worked, succeeded and failed in protecting the same (bourgeois) class intrests. Tilak aroused the hopes and enthusiasm of the millions to accelerate the growth of the bourgeoisie by raising the slogans of "Swaraj", "Swadeshi", "Home Rule", etc., as the objectives and by adopting the agitational programmes of non-cooperation and conditional cooperation. Gandhi, on the other hand, gave a firmer basis to the achievements registerd under Tilak and created a mass upsurge neccessary for the further growth of the bourgeoisie in the conditions characteristic of his time.

Tilak entered Indian politics at a time when the general outlook of national independence and bourgeois democracy had diffused among the educated middle class. Giving a concrete form to the urge of this section of the people for independence and their democratic consciousness, Tilak evolved slogans and forms of struggle, such as "Swadeshi" "Swaraj", Boycott, resistence, use of mother tongue in place of English, and so an. This was Tilak's individual contribution to Indian politics. And he brought up a new generation which adopted these aims and forms of struggle.

Tilak's political activities resulted in strengthening the anti-British freedom struggle of the people and in the creation

of an army of fighters in this struggle, on the one side and, an the other side, in the creation of the capability of the bourgeoise to strengthen economically and politically and to bargain with the British rulers more effectively. It is true that the organizational consciousness among workers, peasants and other sections of the masses also grew along the devolopment of the struggle for independence. Their agitations and struggles were taking place here and there. In many of these, worker-capitalist contradictions were evident. In such instances, national leaders like Tilak did not hesitate to stand by the workers, peasants and other toiling masses, which made them mass leaders.

In those days, these mass agitations were not so strong as to be evidently dangerous to the class interests of the capitalists and landlords. On the contrary, Tilak and his colleagues had adopted slogans and forms of struggle which helped to rally workers and peasants along with the educated middle classes behind *Swadeshi* and *Swaraj* which were beneficial to these vested interests as well.

By Gandhi's time, conditions had begun to change. The experience that the Indian people had gained just before and during the war and the numerous revolutionary struggles that had taken place outside India in the post-war years had aroused a new political awareness and enthusiasm for action among India's millions. The experience of fighting in the battlefield abroad had basically changed the outlook of tens of thousands of Indians. Symtoms of a new revolutionary thrust were discernible all over India, as a continuation of the struggle for *Swaraj* and Home Rule led by Tilak and others and as an inseparable part of the simultaneous revolutionary upsurge that was going on all over the World.

An important development which deserves special mention here is the wave of strikes that spread among industrial workers during 1918-19. True, workers had gone on strike on many occasions in several parts of India. But such a strike-wave that equally affected all the important industrial centres was unprecedented. Moreover, unlike on previous

occasions when things were let off with the end of a strike, now attempts were made to form a permanent organization of the workers. In other words, work at the local level had already begun leading to the formation of an all-India trade union organization in another couple of years.

The strike in early 1918 in Ahmedabad against the cut in bonus lasted for a month. It ended with a partial victory for the workers in that it compelled the management at least to reduce the rate of the cut. Not long after the Ahmedabad strike came the strike in the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills in Madras. It was in protest against the racial discrimination practised by the officers of the Mills owned by the British and for other demands. The workers of Bombay cotton textile mills and of the jute mills of Bengal struck work towards the end of 1918 and early 1919. Both these strikes ended by securing a wage increase by 10 per cent.

Gandhi had played a role in the Ahmedabad strike. The fast he undertook to express sympathy with the demands and struggles of the workers, and the leadership he gave to the union formed subsequently became a model to what became famous later as the 'Gandhian labour organization'.

In about same period, a labour union was organized in Madras under the leadership of Wadia and Chakkarai Chettiar, which became a model for non-Gandhian trade union movement. Thus, it was during the period when an organized trade union movement was evolving, though with two different perspectives and adopting two different means of struggle, and participating in such a movement that Gandhi entered Indian politics.

He took up the issues not only of industrial workers, but also the important live issues of peasants and organized agitations and struggles for their solution. The peasants of Champaran district in Bihar who were cultivating indigo for British capitalists had a number of grievances. At the request of his colleagues who were working to get these grievances redressed, Gandhi went there and gave leadership to a *Satyagraha* organized for the purpose. This and the subsequent

struggle launched in the Kheda district of Gujarat against increased land tax were the first examples of putting into practice the method of struggle (*satyagraha*) which he experimented with in South Africa. It may be noted that it was in between these two peasant struggles that he gave leadership to the strike in Ahmedabad.

The success, though partial, of these struggles paved the way to the rise of Gandhi as a leader of all-India repute. The awareness that Gandhi was pushing him aside and emerging as the leader of the new militancy of the Indian people was instilled in Tilak by the receptions that people gave to the policies adopted by himself and by Gandhi on certain issues that came up in Indian politics during this period. We shall return to this later. However, an obvious difference between Tilak and Gandhi needs to be pointed out here. Tilak was both a political agitator and a political thinker. He began with providing definitions to *Swaraj*, Home Rule and other objectives. To achieve these aims, he adopted the forms of struggle which were suited to that purpose and which could be learned from the history of other bourgeois democratic countries.

Gandhi on the other hand, did not have such well thought-out objectives or from of struggle. He observed the people around him, the problems they faced and the means they themselves adopted to solve them, and suggested solutions and organizational forms based on common sense. Gandhi used the method of *Satyagraha* with which he had experimented in South Africa, in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad to solve the issuses faced by the entire Indian people.

While emerging as the new leader of the Indian people and adopting these methods, Gandhi had no objectives other than those set out by Tilak. But he evolved his programme of political work on the basis of the life issues the people faced and imbibing inspiration from them. And that prompted him to give up the moderate outlook of Gokhale whom, in the early period, he had adopted as his political *guru*.

It was this that enabled him to push back the radical movement of Tilak, and rise as the founder leader of a new all-India movement of mass struggle.

II. THE JALLIANWALA BAGH

Side by side with holding discussions on the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, the rulers had taken steps to sharpen the weapons of repression as another aspect of their policy.

A few months after the first announcement on the reforms in the Parliament, Viceroy Chelmsford appointed a committee in December 1917 with Justice Rowlatt as chairman "to investigate and report on the nature and extent of criminal conspiracies connected with the revolutionary movement in India and to advise as to the legislation neccessary to deal effectively with them".

The Revolutionary Compiracies Enquiry Committee, popularly known as the Rowlatt Committee had, in addition to the chairman, two Englishmen and two Indians as members. Its proceedings were held in complete secrecy. Apart form the facts and figures presented before it by the Government, the Committee did not care to examine witnesses, nor did it try to ascertain public opinion by any other means. It simply prepared a history of the Indian revolutionary movement on the basis of the information provided by the Government and examined the actions the Government had taken to meet the movent.

The Rowlatt Committee proposed legislations giving approval to the continuance, in other forms, of the existing extra-ordinary powers vested with the local officials. On the basis of the Committee's report, the Indian Government drafted two bills with the object of simplifying the procedures for the trial of persons accused of crime and sedition and drastically cutting the rights of the accused. The bills contained provisions to harass political workers. They conferred powers on the Governments to demand security from

any person, impose restrictions on residence, curb freedom of activities, to search house and arrest persons at any place. These provisions could be invoked against any person the government considered appropriate and detain any one without trial. Though there were provisions to constitute a committee to examine the complaints of those subject to actions on the basis of this law, they had no right to appear before the committee through a lawyer or even to seek legal advice in filing an appeal. The authorities claimed that such draconian measures were essential to give protection to life and property.

This legislation aroused sharp protests from all sections of the Indian people. Meetings and demonstrations were organized all over the country against this 'lawless law'. All the non-official Indian members of the Central legislature unanimously opposed this repressive bill and four of them tendered their resignation in protest. India had not seen such a widespread political agitation since the days of the partion of Bengal.

But the Government did not heed to these protest actions. The bill which was passed exclusively with official votes on 18th March 1919 came into operation on 21st March 1919.

It was by taking the initiative in starting a *satyagraha* movement against this that Gandhi entered the political scene on an all-India scale. First, he wrote a letter to the Viceroy, as he did in many later struggles, demanding withdrawal of the law. When the Government refused to concede this demand and brought the law into force, he drafted a pledge to be taken by those who were prepared to disobey the law: We pledge to refuse civily to obey this law and other laws that may be proposed by the committee to be appointed and participate faithfully in these struggles without causing violence to persons or properties.

Gandhi called a meeting of the first 24 signitories to the pledge (Gandhi was one of them). A *Satyagraha Sabha* was formed with Gandhi as chairman. To mark the beginning

of the struggle, Gandhi gave a call for a day's countrywide *hartal*.

The response to this call was amazing. The *hartal* originally fixed for 30th March was changed to 6th April. But on the 30th itself meetings and demonstrations were held in many places. Reckless firing was resorted to in Delhi causing death to some, and injuries to many. The British nurses in the police hospital even refused to treat those wounded in the firing. We won't nurse rioteers—said they. The beating and shooting by the police at Delhi and Amritsar enraged the people. Local leaders appealed to Gandhi to visit the trouble spots. And Gandhi, who started on his journey, was prohibited by the authorities from entering Delhi and Punjab and was forced to return to Bombay. The people of Bombay, hearing the news, took out a huge procession, braving the attacks of the mounted police and received Gandhi. Later, Gandhi and his colleagues were arrested while they were proceeding to Ahmedabad. Enraged by these actions, the people expressed their protest in many forms.

These incidents took place on 30th March the date initially proposed by Gandhi for *hartal*. By 6th April there were more widespread and more militant demonstrations by the people, and more ruthless actions by the authorities. In Lahore, Gujranwala, Kasur and many other places in Punjab and there were open clashes between the militant people and the angry authorities. This was an unprecedented expression of mass emotion not witnessed even during the peak days of the agitation against the partition of Bengal.

An incident that took place soon after 6th April in Punjab turned the very course of history, which became notorious as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the beastly repression in Amritsar on 13th April.

Punjab was the main centre of the new popular upsurge under Gandhi's leadership. The Governor Michael O'Dwyer unleashed a reign of repression to suppress the movement. Dr.Satpal and Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, two prominent

leaders, were deported. The people protested by observing *hartal* and staging huge demonstrations.

It was in the midst of these events that news of Gandhi's arrest reached Punjab. And the demonstration, peaceful but militant, naturally became one against the arrest as well. The police opened fire at the demonstrators. Alleging that the people infuriated at this indulged in violence, including the murder of certain Europeans, the Government handed over Amritsar to the military. Dyer took over the administration of Amritsar city.

With the assumption of power by Dyer, the repression became more intense. People were arrested indiscriminately. All meetings and demonstrations were banned. Despite all these, Dyer could not cow down the people, and he decided to "teach them a lesson". Dyer chose as his target of attack the public meeting scheduled to be held at the Jallianwala Bagh on 13th April at 4.30 p.m. According to Dyer, 6000 people (others put it at 10,000) attended the meeting. He cared neither to inform the participants that the meeting was illegal nor to disperse them. On the contrary, he gave all facilities to the people to reach the meeting ground and when it was full, fired at them, causing death and injury "beyond necessary" as it was later accepted officially. The first official estimate put the dead at 280 later rising to 500; unofficially, it was put at over 1,000.

The Jallianwala Bagh is a very small place. There is only one narrow way to get in and out of there. In case of lathi-charge or firing, there was no way out other than to bear it all. Later, during the course of an enquiry, Dyer was asked why the people were first allowed into such a place and fired at, and whether they could not have been dispersed without a firing. His reply was revealing. He said that the firing saved his prestige as an enforcer of law and order. He did not hesitate to blurt out that his intention was to terrorize not only the people of Amritsar but the whole of Punjab.

This was not the policy of General Dyer alone. He had the full support of both the Indian and the British governments

A section of non-official Englishmen in England and India praised Dyer as their "protector". But democrats and various other sections of people in England protested against this brutal massacre. To appease them the authorities appointed an enquiry committee to go into the massacre. At the same time, they saw to it that the report of the commission was favourable to Dyer.

Nonetheless, even the European majority of the committee could not fully accept General Dyer's actions. They agreed that the firing was ordered without warning the people and it continued too long. The Indians who were a minority in the committee pointed out that the opinion expressed by the majority was inadequate. They said Dyer's action was inhuman and "un-British".

Parallel to this official enquiry, an unofficial enquiry was conducted by a committee appointed by the Congress during the same time. Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, C.R. Das, Fazlul Haq, and Abbas Tyabji were the committee members (when Motilal was elected President of the Congress in 1919, M.R. Jayakar took his place). the Committee took evidence from about a thousand persons. Details of the brutal events which shocked human consciousness that took place under the O'Dwyer-Dyer administration were brought out in its report.

The conclusions of the Committee were as follows. The provocative actions of Michael O'Dwyer in Punjab infuriated the people. Had not Gandhi been arrested and Satpal and Kitchlew deported, the people would not have gone violent. When the infuriated people took to violence, martial law was introduced to suppress the people which could in no way be justified, killing about 1200 people and subjecting the people to revengeful actions. The massacre was unparalleled for its ferocity in the history of modern British administration.

Not only the firing in the Jallianwala Bagh, but every subsequent step taken by the authorities was clear evidence of the brutality of the regime. In fact, the martial law was imposed officially only after the event. People were ordered

to crawl while passing through a particular road. Flogging and whipping people whom the authorities thought guilty became a common practice. A number of places were marked for this purpose. All these were in addition to awarding sentence to 289 persons, including 51 to death and 46 to life imprisonment.

Despite these actions taken to stem mass upsurge, they brought contrary results. Feelings of protest and revenge spread wide and deep among the people. It was by giving expression to these feelings that Gandhi stepped into all-India politics for the first time, adopting means different from those of other renowned leaders. He made the Jallianwala Bagh massacre an issue for his struggle. It was an issue which had aroused protest from all people, including the moderates, members of the Central legislature who were more loyal to the British than the Moderates and the Indian members of the Jallianwala Bagh Enquiry (official) Committee. Gandhi took position in the forefront of a movement under which the masses were organized on an unprecedented scale on that issue.

In the beginning itself, Gandhi revealed one characteristic of his form of struggle. The day after the Jallianwala Bagh incident—on 14th April—in a speech at Ahmedabad, he strongly condemned the "violence on the part of the people". He confessed that it was a mistake "of a Himalayan magnitude" on his part that he called for a struggle trusting the people who behaved such an irresponsible manner. On 18th April, he issued a statement suspending the civil disobedience action under his leadership. He decided to organize *Satyagraha* volunteers to ensure that the people never resorted to such violent actions again.

Thus, it became clear that Gandhi was a leader who could mobilize people for struggle on such a scale that not a single political leader, including Tilak, could so far do and, at the same time, suspend the struggle in the name of "violence on the part of the people" which no other leader dared to do. These two aspects of the Gandhian form of struggle

were evident at every subsequent stage of the freedom struggle. It is needless to state whom or which class these two aspects of the Gandhian form of struggle served.

III. THE KHILAFAT MOVEMENT

Along with the protest movement against the repression before and after the Jallianwala Bagh incident there arose an equally important political issue, the Khilafat.

The Sultan of Turkey, known as the Caliph, was in the camp of Germany in the war. Earlier in the Balkan war also Britain and Turkey were arrayed in opposite camps. We have indicated earlier that this had helped anti-British feelings to grow among the Muslims in India. With the end of the war the issue became more serious, because Turkey was among the vanquished powers. The war ended imposing limitations on the Caliph's powers and on the borders of his territory. 'Khilafat' was the movement formed to express the protest of Indian Muslims against this and in sympathy of the non-Muslims with their Muslim brethren.

During the war the British Prime Minister and the President of USA had issued a number of statements with due regard to the feelings of Indian Muslims. The British Prime Minister Lloyd George made a categorical statement that they had no intention whatsoever to snatch away from Turkey the immensely rich areas of Asia Minor and Thrace. President Wilson of U.S.A. concurred with this stand. The rulers of Britain and the U.S.A. gave these assurances at a time when they were not sure of the success of their side in the war. However, their attitude changed after the war. Whatever assurances given during the war were freely violated. Thrace was handed over to Greece. Asia Minor was shared between Britain and France. Even in the remaining parts of Turkey, the Sultan (Caliph) was reduced to a nominal ruler. The real ruler was a commission appointed by the imperialist powers including Britain.

The Indian Muslims raised their protest against this, for the Caliph was deprived of a part of his country, and powers, and also for the serious breach of trust on the part of Britain and the allied powers. The All-India Khilafat Committee was the organizational form of the anger of India at the British policy of denying Indian national demand and of the protest against the violation of assurance given with regard to the future of the Caliph.

Two individuals who played a leading role in this movement deserve special mention. They were Maulana Mohammed Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali, known as the Ali Brothers. During the war, they had been acclaimed for their anti-British politics. The speeches they made and the journals they published under the editorship of Mohammed Ali served as sharp weapons against the British rule for which they were imprisoned in 1915 and released only towards the end of 1919. The Khilafat Committee demanding justice to the Caliph was formed while they were in prison. Upon their release, the Ali Brothers became the unquestioned leaders of the Committee.

Even before this,Gandhi had included the demand of justice to the Caliph in his charter of demands. Following the War Conference in Delhi, Gandhi in a letter to the Viceroy told him that granting home rule to India and assuaging the feelings of the Muslim community on the question of the Caliph constituted the principal condition for the security of the British Empire.

As for the leaders of the Khilafat Committee, they had to demonstrate that theirs was not merely a Muslim movement, but one that had the full support of the Indian people. Therefore, Gandhi was chosen as the president of the Khilafat Committee with a new leadership that included the Ali Brothers.

These developments took place at the end of 1919, when the wave of mass upsurge against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre was sweeping the country and the opinion that there was no question of cooperating with the Montagu-Chemsford

Reforms was gaining strength. The annual conference of the Congress was scheduled to be held at Amiritsar to discuss these issues and take suitable decisions. Consequently, the Khilafat also came under discussion. Situations were becoming ripe for launching country-wide agitations on these three issues.

Soon after the Congress session, an all-India Khilafat conference also was held in Amritsar. The conference constituted a delegation that included many outstanding leaders belonging to both the Muslim and Hindu communities to take up the issue with the Viceroy. A memorandum submitted to the Viceroy which was signed by Gandhi, Swami Shradhanand, Pandit Motilal Nehru and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya among others. Simultaneously, in England, another delegation led by Maulana Mohammed Ali met Prime Minister Lloyd George.

The official response to both the delegations were disappointing. There were clear indications in the replies given by the Prime Minister and the Viceroy that the powers of the Caliph and the frontiers of his territory would be reduced by a treaty marking the end of the war. (The treaty conditions incorporating these were published later.)

Following this, Gandhi issued a "manifesto" in which he categorically stated that there was no way out but to resist this injustice through non-violent non-cooperation. It became clear that he was going to practise the very means which he had used in South Africa and in the Champaran and Kheda districts in India to solve an all-India political issue. And it was the same means which Gandhi used within another few months in the agitation against the Reforms Act framed on the basis of the Montagu-Chelmsford report. Thus a country wide mass upsurge on an unprecedented scale was developing in India.

That Khilafat too became an issue for mass upsurge was of particular significance. For, it was an event which demonstrated the failure of the scheme evolved by the rulers to split the people's unity developed in the struggle against

the partition of Bengal. Congress leaders belonging the Hindu community, including Gandhi, and the Muslim leaders, including the Ali Brothers, jointly condemned the breach of trust committed by the British rulers. All of them appealed to the people that Hindu-Muslim differences should not hinder the united fight against the rulers to win Home Rule for India and to restore the Caliph's powers.

True, the Hindu-Muslim unity evident in the Khilafat movement did not last long. Within a few years it got shattered and communal riots broke out in many parts of the country. Some of the leaders who stood united on the Khilafat issue passed themselves as Muslim leaders and some others as Hindu leaders and began to play politics with a communal bias. Many issues like cow-slaughter, playing of instrumental music before mosques, etc., were raked up. Tens of thousands of people belonging to both the communities rallied in opposite camps. The efforts for unity made by Gandhi and his close associates who tried to stop this tendency failed. The tragic culmination of this tendency was the assassination of Gandhi a quarter of a century later.

There are some who point to these incidents to severely criticize Gandhi's politics based on Khilafat. They derided him as a "mere idealist" who was after the mirage of Hindu-Muslim unity, forgetting the "reality" of the "communal fanaticism" of the Muslim leaders. There were even those who argued that the attempt to restore the powers of the Caliph was reactionary and unacceptable to a movement based on modern democracy and secularism. (Jinnah who later became the leader of the Muslim divisive movement was one of them.) Gandhi and others had built up the Khilafat movement to save the Caliph, who was removed from power declaring Turky a republic by Kamal Pasha. The revolutionary changes contained in this were a total negation of the Khilafat movement, these critics contended.

All these are correct. But that cannot obliterate the historic importance of the Khilafat movement. However short the period, however opposed to modern democratic

(republican) principles the slogan be, the fact remains that millions with no communal bar, were organized and rallied together with a single political objective. They challenged the mightiest imperialist power of the time. The important thing was that Khilafat and Hindu-Muslim unity based on it helped for the spread of the Indian independence movement, which was slowly developing following the suppression of the 1857 struggle.

For historical reasons, the Muslim masses were culturally backward as compared to the Hindus. Besides, the thought that they were the successors of those who ruled Delhi for some centuries, distorted their political outlook. Utilizing these two facts, the British tried to rally the Muslim community against India's freedom struggle. These divisive tactics of the British had a temporary success in that they were able to estrange the League from the Congress in the years following the partition of Bengal.

It was in this background that the Muslim community rallied against the British, without fully imbibing the outlook of modern democracy though, for a whole decade beginning from the Balkan War to the end of the First World War. Following the removal of the Caliph, their anti-British feelings spread wider than ever before. Thus they, together with the non-Muslims who for different reasons had thrown themselves into the anti-British struggle, gave rise to an unprecedented mass upsurge. Though for a comparatively short period, the Muslims rallied along with their non-Muslim brethren in the anti-British movement.

These developments took place at a time when discontent had spread among the people on an unprecedented scale. During and after the war, the misery of the people worsened day by day. As a consequence of the crop failure in 1918-19, the production of foodgrains fell sharply. As against 9.9 million tons of wheat and 35.9 million tons of rice in 1917-18, the production in 1918-19 was only 7.5 million tons of wheat and 24.3 million tons of rice. This decline in production, together with the plunder by traders in foodgrains created

appalling famine conditions in various parts of the country. The famine together with the epidemics that followed took a heavy toll of human lives, particularly among the rural poor. The estimated toll in this catastrophe was put between 12 and 13 million.

At the same time, the Indian economy as a whole was heading towards a deep crisis. For instance, the ratio of the prices of goods exported from India to the prices of goods imported in to India was turning unfavourable to the country. Taking the prices of imported goods in 1913-14 as 100, it increased to 101 in 1914-15, 126 in 1915-16, 170 in 1916-17, 211 in 1917-18 and 268 in 1918-19. At the same time, the price indices of exports for the same period were 102, 103, 117, 125 and 150 respectively, It was in 1918-19 when the gap between the two was the widest that famine spread throughout the country.

Similarly, the relations between the peasants who produced the agricultural commodities and the wholesale traders in these articles were adverse to the producers. The price that the peasants got for essential articles like wheat and rice was only a small percentage of the price at which the daily consumer bought them. It was still lower for the bulk of the peasantry who were compelled to dispose of their produce immediately after the harvest. Thus, debt of the peasants increased continuously compelling them to sell their land. Therefore there was a rapid increase in the number of landless labourers who had to eke out a living by daily toil and of tenant-farmers who had to pay exorbitant rent. The number of landlords who rented out their land and their assets also increased simultaneously. This was the condition in the countryside.

In the urban areas, the exploitation of the workers was becoming intense. For instance, taking the wages of workers in 1913 as 100, their wages for the eight years from 1915 to 1922 were 100, 100, 100, 110, 120, 140, 150, and 150. During the same period the price index (1914=100) was 112, 128, 145, 178, 196, 201, 178, and 176. This meant that the cost of

living was much higher than the cash wages they got. Two labour leaders from England who came to study the living conditions of jute workers here were shocked at this state of affairs.

Along with the exploitation of the workers, the exploitation of the peasants who produced industrial raw materials too increased. For example, while the price of raw cotton increased by only 78 per cent, that of cotton textiles shot up by 108 per cent. In short, the British and Indian capitalists were making exorbitant profits by giving low prices to raw materials and low wages to the workers and charging high prices for the manufactured goods.

As a result of all these, discontent had spread deep and wide both in the country-side and in the urban areas. It was in these conditions that the Hindu-Muslim leaders of the Congress and the Khilafat Committee took joint initiative to organize a new mass upsurge on the issues of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Khilafat, and so on. Hence, it was natural that a high-tide of struggles swept across the country based on Hindu-Muslim unity, defeating the divisive policy of the British. Though the element of Hindu-Muslim unity lasted for only a short period, the common phenomenon of anti-imperialist struggle persisted. Thus the Hindu-Muslim unity that emerged around the Khilafat helped to sow the seeds of a country-wide mass movement which advanced in a step-by-step process, often weakening temporarily before rising again like the ebb and flood of an ocean tide.

IV. NON-COOPERATION

By the middle of 1920, the three principal issues that had till then created favourable conditions in Indian politics, namely, constitutional reforms, repression in Punjab and Khilafat, had assumed a more intense form. Both Houses of the British Parliament had approved the Indian reforms proposals on 5th and 19th December, 1919. On 23rd December,

they received the royal assent. As part of the same process, the work of the committee to determine economic relations between the Centre and provinces was completed on 31st March 1920. And the elections (to the provincial legislatures to be constituted under the new constitution) was due.

The attitude towards the forthcoming elections was discussed at the Amritsar Congress held in December 1919 which as noted earlier, gave rise to serious differences of opinion. Three trends had emerged at Amritsar. One section wanted to cooperate with the Government in the implementation of the new reforms, while another section stood for a complete boycott of the reforms. A third opinion was in favour of utilizing the new opportunities that would be opend up to intensify agitations against the Government. Finally, a compromise resolution was adopted expressing the trust of the Congress that "so far as may be possible the will to so work the Reforms as to secure an early establishment of full Responsible Government." [2]

Since this compromise was temporary, it had become clear that the issue would have to be discussed afresh very soon. However, problems relating to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the Khilafat became more accute, which helped the resolution of the differences of opinion on the reforms.

Following the publication of the decisions on Turky on 15th May 1920, Gandhi suggested to his Muslim friends to adopt the path of non-violent non-cooperation for the solution of the Khilafat issue. The Khilafat Committee, at its meeting on 28th May accepted Gandhi's suggestion. On the same day, the report of the official Jallianwala Bagh Enquiry Committee was published. The attempt on the part of the official majority to justify the actions of O'Dwyer and Dyer aroused protests all over the country. This together with the Khilafat Committee's decision to take to the path of non-cooperation created an explosive situation in the country. In this background, the issue of reforms turned

2. A.M. Zaidi, *Ibid* P. 531.

out to be one of immediate importance. Gandhi who had pleaded earlier at the Amritsar Congress against taking a negative attitude towards the reforms changed his stand in the new situation.

It had been pointed out earlier that Gandhi had given leadership to implement a programme of non-cooperation on the Khilafat issue even before the Congress took a final decision on the elections on the basis of the new constitution. In a letter addressed to the Viceroy in his capacity as the President of the Khilafat Committee, Gandhi made it clear that unless the government was willing to find a satisfactory solution to the Khilafat issue, they would be forced to resort to non-cooperation towards the Government. This letter was signed, among others, by 90 prominent Muslim leaders. The Khilafat sub-committee for non-cooperation had issued a call to observe 1st August as a protest day with country-wide *hartals* and demonstrations.

It was in this background that a special session of the Congress was held in Calcutta to decide on the policy on the Reforms. This was the first session of the Congress held after Tilak's demise. Lala Lajpat Rai, another renowned extremist leader, presided over the session. But what exerted influence in the Calcutta Congress was not the radical politics which had grown under the leadership of Tilak, Lajpat Rai and others, but the Gandhian politics which forged ahead pushing the former back. In place of the policy of conditional cooperation enunciated by the unquestioned leader of the extremists, Tilak, unconditional non-cooperation was adopted. And the person who led the Congress to adopt the new line was none other than Gandhi who had earlier pleaded for unconditional cooperation against Tilak's conditional cooperation.

Such a basic change in Indian politics, as in the case of individual national leaders, did not come about all of a sudden. Indisputably, Gandhi and others had to brush aside a number obstacles in their path before they had adopted new approaches which every one and themselves knew were

contrary to what they had been taking for a long time. Many of them had to change the stand they had adopted in 1920, on the basis of new developments. The new situation which had brought about the change in each one of them was reflected in the discussions in the Congress.

For example, at the Amritsar Congress which met at the end of December 1919, there was only a minority in favour of non-cooperation. Had there been a voting on that issue, the policy of non-cooperation would have been defeated. All the top leaders, including Tilak and Gandhi, were then against non-cooperation. By the time the special session of the Congress was held at Calcutta in September 1920 to decide the issue, the situation had completely changed. By then Gandhi had turned himself into an advocate of non-cooperation. C. R. Das, B. C. Pal, Annie Besant, Malaviya, Jinnah and other top leaders were in the opposite camp. In the subjects committee, the resolution on non-cooperation was adopted by a majority of seven votes. But in the plenary session, it was passed with a large majority, 1886 votes agaist 884.

According to the constitution of the Congress in force, a resolution adopted by a special session would come into force only if it was confirmed by the first plenary session held after it. Hence, it came up again for discussion at the regular session in December at Nagpur. By then, opposition to the resolution had dropped further. Thus the advocates of non-cooperation who were a minority just a year earlier at the Amritsar session became a big majority at the Nagpur session.

Many historians and political leaders attribute the "extra-ordinary abilities" of Gandhi to this change. But they forget the fact that Gandhi had often remained isolated amongst his colleagues in the Congress. For instance, Motilal Nehru who was an ardent supporter of Gandhi from the early days of non-cooperation strongly opposed later the policy of non-cooperation. Similarly, C. R. Das and some others who later switched on to the side of non-cooperation

subsequently rejected that policy and formed the Swaraj Party. None of Gandhi's "extra-ordinary abilities" worked on such occasions.

How did then even those political leaders who did not subscribe to his ideologies and outlook accept his leadership during the non-cooperation movement as well as in the days of Salt Satyagraha and quit India struggle? The resolution on non-cooperation adopted at the special session of the Congress held at Calcutta as well as the approach Gandhi adopted in the various struggles in different periods to which he gave leadership provide an answer to this quetion. The programme of these struggles contained two important elements: a programme of action capable of drawing the masses into the struggle based on certain practical problems that were agitating them; a guarantee to the elite in general and to the bourgeosie in particular that they would not lose anything but would gain much in the event these programmes were implemented. Consider, for example, the following items that contained in the programme of non-cooperation adopted at the special session at Calcutta.

(a) Surrender the titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies;

(b) Refusal to attend Government *levee*, *durbars*, and other official and semi-official functions held by Government officials or in their honour;

(c) Gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by Government, and in place of such schools and colleges, establishment of national schools and colleges in the various provinces;

(d) Gradual boycott of British courts by lawyers and litigants, and establishment of private arbitration courts by their aid, for the settlement of private disputes;

(e) Refusal on the part of the military, clerical and labouring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia;

(f) Withdrawal by condidates for their candidature for election to the reformed councils, and refusal on the part

of the voters to vote for any candidate who may, despite the Congress advice, offer himself for elections;

(g) Boycott of foreign goods.

Needless to say, this was a programme, as distinct from the moderate-radical politics of the old generation as well as from the bomb politics, in which the entire Indian people could easily participate. There could not be a single individual in India who could not implement at least one item in this programme.

Even if the entire programme were implemented, no section of the Indian vested interests would have lost anything. On the contrary, the boycott of foreign goods, the last item of the programme, was in the interest of the developing Indian capitalists. (In the resolution formulating this seven-point programme the Congress had advised "adoption of Swadeshi in piece goods on a vast scale, and inasmuch as the existing mills of India with indigenous capital and control do not manufacture sufficient yarn and are not likely to do so for a long time to come...")

Whenever it had become necessary to fight the British rule rallying the masses on a big scale as in the 1930-32 and in 1942 periods, the entire bourgeois political leadership had accepted Gandhi as their unquestioned leader as they did in 1920-21. And whenever it had became impossible to continue such a struggle, they had allowed him to withdraw it and switch over to forms other than that of mass struggle. That is, the bourgeois political leaders accepted Gandhi as their "commander-in-chief" during periods of struggle, while at other times they ignored him as an "impractical idealist". We shall examine this in the later chapters. Presently we are concerned only about the non-cooperation programme of 1920-21. Gandhi adopted in the prevailing curcumstances a form struggle which was more effective than what any other leader including Tilak, could have thought of. The programme of non-cooperation made millions feel that it wouldbe useful to solve the three burning issues which agitated them then. The greatness of Tilak lay in the fact that he was able to perceive

this truth. It is worth remembering here Tilak's words that though he felt that the path chosen by Gandhi was wrong, he would not stand in his way.

The political significance of the Nagpur Congress was not only that it adopted a programme of country-wide non-cooperation on the three issues of immediate importance, viz, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, the Khilafat and the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms. Organizationally too, it took certain important decisions to bring it into closer contact with the messes. The following are some such decisions which deserve special mention.

1) The Congress sadopted a resolution directing the provincial committees and other bodies to organize workers into trade unions "with a view to improve and promote their well-being and secure to them their just rights and also to prevent the exploitation". (At the same time, it took all precaution to keep trade union activities on moderate lines, away form the revolutionary path.)
2) It invited "the attention of the public to the policy pursued by the Government in the different Provinces of India of forcibly acquiring lands...in the interest of capitatlists...thus destroying the hearths and home and the settled occupations of the poor classes and land-holders." (It is noteworthy that no anti-landlord slogans were raised.)
3) It took certain decisions on the organizational structure of the Congress which enabled it to transform itself into an organization with activities on a day-to-day basis under the leadership of permanent committees at the provincial, district and local levels.
4) For the first time, the Congress demanded reorganization of provinces on linguistic basis and incorporated that principle in its constitution. In place of the multilingual states formed by the British for administrative convenience, the Congress constituted provincial committees on linguistic basis.
5) As part of this, it adopted the mother tongue of each

province and Hindi-Hindustani at the Centre as official languages of the Congress. Non-Hindi-speaking people were permitted to use their respective languages or English for dealing with the Centre.

Briefly, the Congress which was a resort of a handful of educated elite, inaccessible to the common man, was remoulded by changing its style of work and mode of organization permitting to maintain a more intimate contact with the masses.

V. "SWARAJ IN ONE YEAR"

Gandhi was known to be the architect of the programme of non-cooperation adopted at the special session of the Congress at Calcutta in September 1920 and later at its regular session at Nagpur in December. Hence, the task of working out the details of the programme also fell on him. Gandhi became the unquestioned, in its very literal sense, leader of a mass movement with an unprecedented sweep in the history of the Congress.

The programme which he worked out and declared with the central slogan of "Swaraj in one year" created an unprecedented animation in the country. The programme had two aspects. One aspect may be called "constructive programme" consisting propagation of *Swadeshi* (especially the propagation of hand-spinning and hand-weaving), eradication of untouchability among Hindus, prohibition of liquor, collection of Rs. 10 million "Tilak Swaraj Fund" instituted in memory of Lokmanya Tilak, and enrolment of 10 million members in the Congress. The second aspect may be termed "negative" which included boycott of legislature, courts and educational institutions.

The constructive programme was intended to mobilize people's strength. The content of the second was the form of struggle to win independence by utilizing the strength thus mobilized. A combination of the two would give rise to a

great movement with the direct participation of the masses on an unprecedented scale. Subsequent events demonstrated the correctness of this calculation.

Three distinct political tendencies were discernible in the Congress right from its inception up to the "Gandhian era".

1) Moderate politics in the early days when a handful of the intellectual elite met during holidays (mostly during the Christmas) and passed resolutions and occasionally between two meetings, presented petitions to the authorities, thereby trying to bring about minor administrative changes.

2) The second period that followed witnessed the tendency of attempts to win national independence or *Swaraj* (Home Rule) under the "extremist" leadership by inculcating political consciousness in the people and drawing them in agitational programmes.

3) During the same period, attempts were made by a handful of individuals to smash the administation by organizing a revolution through adventurist activities.

Of these three trends, the extremist politics was closest to the people. It was a movement with the active participation of the people of the lowest, low and middle layers of the society, such as workers, peasants, the artisans, the unemployed and students. This feature distinguished extremist politics from moderate politics, on the one hand, and from the individual revolutionary politics, on the other.

However, there was an element of similarity between the extremists and the revolutionaries in the matter of organization based on dedicated activists and in this both were distinct from the moderates. But unlike those who believed in the "politics of the bomb", the extremists considered it the task of the dedicated members of their movement to inspire and enthuse the masses of the people and bring them into a mass movement.

In fact, Tilak earned the fame as the tallest among the radical leaders by drawing the millions into active politics and by raising a group of dedicated workers to stand in the

forefront of the people. But there was an important difference between the politics of Tilak and the emerging Gandhian politics. The role of the millions participating in the politics led by Tilak was relatively passive. Their role was limited to listening to the speeches of the leaders, reading newspapers and leaflets and participating in demonstrations, whereas each individual rallied under Gandhi's leadership had his own part to play in the struggle.

Every individual participating in the Gandhian movement was duty-bound to enroll himself a member of the Congress, contribute to the Tilak Swaraj Fund, do spinning on *takli* or *charkha*, renounce the liquor and the practice of untouchability and endeavour to build up Hindu-Muslim unity. Those who were in government service were to quit the job; those who held honours or titles conferred by the government were to renounce them; the lawyers to give up legal practice and parents to withdraw their children from educational institutions connected with the government. All these made an inseparable part of the non-cooperation programme. There could hardly be an individual who could not implement on his own at least one item in this all-embracing programme. It was thus a programme which attracted the Indian people as a whole to active politics.

Gandhi told the people that if they were prepared to do all these, the British Government would be compelled to concede the national demand of "Swaraj in one year". Gandhi's contribution to the national movement consisted in the fact that he drew the entire Indian people into action by linking up one's daily tasks and duties to the demand of national independence.

The country-wide tour Gandhi conducted to propagate his programme inspired millions. The collections to Tilak Swaraj Fund surpassed all expectations (Rs. 1.5 million more than the target of Rs. 10 million). Thousands of students and hundreds of lawyers implemented the boycott programme. Although a number of them later stopped the boycott and returned to the class rooms and courts, many continued

to be active in Congress politics or in such constructive work as popularization of *Khadi* and Hindi, eradication of untouchability and so on. Many became whole-time activists in the national movement.

Boycotting foreign textiles was an important item in the boycott programme. Unlike the boycott of educational instiutions or courts, the entire people could take part in it. It became a common practice to make a bonfire of foreign cloth worth several thousand rupees in public places. Although many prominent Congress leaders, including Vithalbhai Patel, publicly opposed this programme, the All-India Congress Committee, under Gandhi's leadership, approved it.

The boycott of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India was the most successful programme with the widest popular response. The rulers were expecting the Prince's visit as an opportunity to wean away at least a section of the people from the Congress which was going ahead with the programme of non-cooperation. For this very reason, the Congress was determined to make the boycott of the visit a great success. In the major cities like Bombay and Calcutta, people participated massively in the protest demonstrations. Gandhi himself addressed a massive rally in Bombay. In Bombay and other cities, the workers came out of factories to participate in the demonstrations. The burning of foreign textiles also was widespread. All these were peaceful everywhere except in Bombay.

In Bombay where the Prince disembarked, the royalists had arranged a procession to welcome him. The people were furious at the Indians and Europeans participating in the royal procession. There were stone-throwing and other acts of violence like the destruction of trams and motor vehicles. Foreign hats of the Indian and British dignitaries were snatched away. Even the supporters of the royal procession were attacked.

Following this, there was firing by the police and armed counter-attacks by the royalists. Those wearing *Khadi* were attacked and a number of Congress volunteers were injured.

The riots that ensued lasted for five days. All communities and sections of the people, the Parsees, Muslims, Christians and the Anglo Indians in their respective areas and the mill workers in the industrial area came out on the streets. The Parsees, in particular, took to revengeful actions. Europeans, Jews and other royalists took law in their own hands and attacked Hindus and Muslims and all those clad in *Khadi*. Many shops were burned down and a Parsee temple was set on fire. Many prominent Indians who tried to pacify the people were roughly treated by the Parsees and Anglo-Indians. According to the official estimate, 53 persons were killed and 400 injured.

Gandhi said that 45 out of 53 killed and 350 out of 400 injured were either members of the non-cooperation movement or its sympathizers. Its meaning was obvious: the main culprits were the Government and its henchmen. That the boycott at other places was peaceful strengthened this conclusion.

However, Gandhi blamed the people, and not the rulers, for the violence in Bombay. Reacting to these violent incidents he said: "The *Swaraj* I have witnessed during the last two days has stunk in my nostrils."

This event had another repercussion. The civil disobedience movement scheduled to be launched in the Bardoli district of Gujarat on 23rd November was put off. This constitutes one of the peculiarities of Gandhi's non-co-operation-civil disobedience programmes. Whenever small incidents take place somewhere as people, responding to his call, start organized struggles against imperialism and its henchmen, Gandhi would immediately put off the struggle in the name of such incidents. This we would see repeatedly in the following chapters. Whenever he stopped struggles in this manner, he always left opportunities to launch it again when favourable conditions arose. That is, whenever he starts a struggle, Gandhi makes provisions to withdraw it when necessary and to restart it under favourable conditions.

Gandhi's slogan of "Swaraj in one year" was part of

this tactic. Gandhi, the pragmatist, understood that political conditions never remained the same over time. He knew that political conditions would change within a year, which would necessitate changes in the programmes and that what was essential was to make people realize about things to be done in the next one year. It was on this perspective that Gandhi formulated the programme incorporating certain practical items like raising the Tilak Swaraj Fund.

During that one year, many events took place which none, including Gandhi, had anticipated. Certain developments which Gandhi anticipated also did take place. As a result, both the British rulers and the Congress had to change their earlier positions. The political situation also changed as a sequal to the moves made by both the sides.

However, the Gandhian style of functioning of drawing millions of people into active politics around short term practical slogans and rearing up a group of whole-time political workers to lead them continued without any basic change till the attainment of freedom. So also Gandhi's insistence that the masses who came into active politics should not cross the "bounds" of non-violence continued unaltered. The class which was to stand benefited by these tactics needs no specific mention.

VI. THE "HIMALAYAN BLUNDER"

The visit of the Prince of Wales to India and the protest demonstrations organized by the Congress led by Gandhi marked a turning point in Indian politics. Till then, the British rulers did not have a firm opinion as to how to meet the non-cooperation movement. They desired to seek the cooperation of Gandhi and other leaders of the movement to the extent possible. Viceroy Lord Reading had talks with Gandhi to persuade him to drop the protest demonstasions aganist the Prince. Since Gandhi was convinced during the talks that the Government was not willing to come anywhere

near the main demands of the non-cooperation movement, he decided to go ahead with the non-cooperation programme as planned.

Even at this stage, the authorities tried to rally whomsoever possible against the Congress and make them participate in the royal reception. But contrary to their hopes, they witnessed country-wide expressions of people's anger. As we have already noted, the protest demonstrations were peaceful everywhere except in Bombay.

This infuriated the ruling authorities who adopted a policy of naked hostility towards the non-cooperction movement and the Congress. In a cable to the Secretary of State for India, the Viceroy pointed to the "dangerous situation" developed in the country following the 19th November incidents and to the futility of the ordinary criminal procedures to meet the new sitution arising out of the mill workers, the unemployed and other sections of the people joining the non-cooperation movement. The Viceroy also informed him of the actions being taken by his Government, viz., giving permission to local authorities to freely make use of the military, banning organizations, subjecting people to large-scale arrests and punishing them in other ways, prosecuting newspapers and speakers promoting violence, and so on.

The governmental measures described in the message undoubtedly constituted an open declaration of war against the people and the non-cooperation movement. And the Congress leaders in different provinces came forward to meet it in the same spirit. Many prominent Congress leaders like C. R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai, and Maulana Azad disobeyed law and courted arrest. This was synchronized with civil disobedience by hundreds of Congress volunteers and members of the public at different places all over the country. Even members of the family and other relatives of prominent leaders participated in such actions. Prisons in many provinces were filled with volunteers and the common people. In some places, the authorities ordered the release of political prisoners to make rooms for the newly arrested and when

they refused to leave, they were forcibly ejected. In certain other places, as there was no room in jails, prisoners were taken to distant places and let off. It became clear to the rulers that a people unbending before repression was rising in India.

It was in this background that the Allahabad session of the Congress was held in December 1921. Since C. R. Das who was to preside over the session had been arrested a few days earlier, Hakim Ajmal Khan took over as president. But, a situation had developed by then wherein it would be Gandhi who would in effect be controlling the proceedings of the session, irrespective of who presided over it. Gandhi's was the final verdict on all issues which came up for discussion.

Two trends of thought contrary to that of Gandhi were expressed, very feebly though, in the Ahmedabad session of the Congress. Pandit Malaviya was of the opinion that the Congress should take the initiative to call a Round Table Conference in order to normalize the relation between the Congress and the Government. Maulana Hazrat Mohani, on the other hand, set the objective of winning complete independence severing all connections with British imperialism and argued for a revolutionary method in accordance with that objective. (Along with the latter, another trend of opinion with working class outlook was circulated before the delegates in the form of a leaflet entitled "Communist Manifesto to Ahmedabad Congress".

Many Congress leaders supported the first trend. Even some of those who were in jails subscribed to this view. Later, they left the Gandhian path and formed the Swaraj Party. The second trend had considerable influence among ordinary Congressmen. A section of them later on turned themselves into leftist Congressmen, socialists, and communists. But at Ahmedabad, both these sections were so weak that Gandhi was able to get the Congress adopt his own views and approve his programme challenging the British rule by organizing non-violent non-cooperation struggles.

Consequently, Gandhi was raised to the position of a leader with the powers of a commander-in-chief.

This turn of events was most disturbing to the moderates, both inside and outside the Congress. Jinnah who had left the Congress with the adoption of the non-cooperation programme, former Congress President Sankaran Nair, Malaviya, well-known as a moderate inside the Congress, and others continued their efforts to bring about an understanding between the Government and the Congress. In this connection, Malaviya visited C.R. Das in jail and held a talk with him. Subhas Bose who was a co-prisoner in the jail wrote:

> The offer that he (Malaviya) brought was that if the Congress agreed to call off the civil disobedience movement immediately, so that the prince's visit would not be boycotted by the public, the Government would simultaneously withdraw the notifications declaring the Congress volunteers illegal and release all those who had been incarcerated thereunder. They would further summon a Round Table conference of the representatives of the Government and the Congress to settle the future consitution of India.
>
> The leader (C.R. Das) had a long discussion with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the outstanding Muslim leader of Calcutta and with Pandit Malaviya. ...Under the joint signatures of Deshabandhu Das and Maulana A.C. Azad, a telegram was sent to Mahatma Gandhi recommending for acceptance of the proposed terms of settlement. A reply came to the effect that he insisted on the release of the Ali Brothers and their associates as a part of the terms of settlement and also on an announcement regarding the date and composition of the Round Table Conference. Unfortunately, the Viceroy was not in a mood for any further parleying and wanted an immediate decision....Ultimately Mahatma Gandhi did come round, but by then it was too late. The Government of India, tired waiting, had changed their mind. The Deshabandhu was beside himself with

anger and disgust. The chance of a life time, he said, had been lost.[3]

When Sapru, Jinnah, and Malaviya started negotiating with the Government, the Congress Committee postponed the lauching of the Bardoli civil disobedience. As the negotiations failed, the struggle was launched as an indication of the coming country-wide disobedience movement. People not only in Bardoli but all over India were highly agitated.

Bardoli was only the centre of the country-wide disobedience movement which took different forms in different places. The boycott of foreign cloths, picketing the shops selling foreign cloths, and propaganda for *hartals* and closing shops and for the boycott of educational institutions were carried out extensively. There were thousands of active workers and tens of thousands of people who participated in these activicties in almost all districts.

However , the most important of all these was the civil disobedience conducted by the peasants. In Rae Bareily and Faizabad in U.P., Malegaon in Maharashtra, Giridih in Bihar, Dharwar in Kernataka, Chiralaperala in Andhra, in Malabar in Kerala and in many other areas, the peasents responded to Gandh's call for the non-cooperation form of political struggle making it part of their struggle raising their own demands. It was the most militant struggle fought by the peasants since the suppression of the 1857-59 revolt. Agrarian issues like taxes, rent, and eviction by landlords were raised linking them with the political struggle for independence. This provided for the first time, a mass base for the independence movement.

This was exactly what, in Gandhi's views, "defeated" the non-cooperation movement. This was because, for the first time in the history of the freedom movement, the peasants who had stepped into the political field as an organized force were not prepared to remain within the bounds of non-violence set by Gandhi. They had their own aims and forms

3. Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle*, Bombay, Asia, 1964, pp67-68.

of struggle which did not always go hand in hand with those set by Gandhi.

The most conspicuous demonstration of this was the incident that took place in Chauri Chaura in the Gorakhpur district. Following a picketing of shops conducted as part of the non-cooperation programe, there was none there to buy foreign cloth or liquor. Some of the volunteers who had created an atmosphere of national fervour were beaten up by a police officer. Hearing the news, volunteers from the adjoining villages rushed to the spot and a 500 strong crowd marched towards the police station. Some mediators pacified them and they returned. Some of the volunteers who were thus returning were again attacked by the police, resulting in a fight between the volunteers and police who opend fire killing a number of volunteers. But the clash still continued. Soon the police ran out of ammunition and ceased firing. The volunteers realizing this, rushed towards the police station. The policemen took refuge in the station bolting the doors. The people set fire to the station burning the policemen to death.

This type of events are not uncommon in the history of revolutionary movements. It is natural that such incidents take place when the state that strives to suppress people's movements and the militant people come to a confrontation with each other. But Gandhi was not leading a revolution. Gandhi was a leader who, like the rulres, was afraid of "violence on the part of the people".

We have already seen how Gandhi viewed the "violence on the part of the people" in Bombay when they were protesting against the visit of the Prince of Wales. This was exactly what happend in Chauri Chaura also. On the Chauri Chaura incident he said: The events in Malabar was a warning to me. I ignored it. Now through the Chauri Chaura incident, God has repeated that warning.

As the leader of the movement, he accepted the truth that the police had provoked the people at Chauri Chaura. But he was insistent that the people should maintain

non-violenct in the face of any provocation. According to him, so far as the people did not have the necessary training for it, civil disobedience was dangerous. Hence, following the Chauri Chaura incident, Gandhi stopped the civil disobedience movement. He was of the view that to continue the move- in the existing circumstances would be a "Himalayan blunder".

9

WHITHER THE MOVEMENT ?

I. THE DEFAT OF WHAT ?

Not long after Gandhi issued the statement calling off the civil disobedience movement, he was arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for six years. With that ended the struggle which he had been leading for about one year. This naturally caused disappointment and protest in the Congress ranks and among the people. Even before Gandhi's arrest, his statement calling off the struggle had generated opposition form many of the top Congress leaders. Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai, Vithalbhai Patel and other leaders who were in jail wrote to Gandhi strongly protesting against the calling off the movement. Motilal Nehru wrote that withdrawing the movement in the name of violence in Chauri Chaura was like punishing a tawn on the foothills of the Himalayas for a breach of non-violence committed by the people in a a village near Kanyakumari. He asked Gandhi to isolate

Chauri Chaura and Gorakhpur and "go on with the disobedience movement, individual as well as mass."

The moderates outside the Congress and other anti-non-cooperationists utilized this opportunity to publicly blame Gandhi and the Congress. They said that withdrawing students from their schools, the boycott of courts by lawyers, and boycott of elections were proved foolish. They accused Gandhi of hoodwinking people by his promise of "Swaraj in one year". Naturally all this had its impact on the Congress sympathizers.

But this was of no comfort to the moderates. The activity they claimed to be more "practical" than Gandhi's non-cooperation programme was being proved, as days passed, to be an utter failure. The moderate leaders themselves had to admit this publicly.

In 1921, when the non-cooperation struggle was launched, the constitutional reforms were being implemented. The Congress boycotted the elections to the legislatures held as part of the reforms. The moderates contested the election, entered the legislatures and became ministers. They tried to utilize the benefits of these new opportunities to the extent possible. As this activity progressed, the true nature of the reforms became more and more clear.

All important departments continued to be directly under the control of the Governor. Education, health, development activities, etc., were transferred to the elected members of the legistature (ministers). Some of the ministers have later recounted their experience as ministers. According to K.V. Reddy, a former Ministers of Agriculture in Madras Presidency, for example: I was the minister of the Department of Development. But forest was not under my control. I was the Minister of Agriculture but the Department of Irrigation was not under me. Although I was the Minister of Agriculture, the scheme of taccavi and land improvement loans to the farmers was not within the puriew of my department. One can imagine how efficiently and effectively a minister of agriculture who has no control over taccavi loans

and over famine relief, can function. Simultaneously, I was also the Minister of the Department of Labour. But I had no control over factories, boilers, electricity, hydropower, mines and labour relations which were under the direct control of the Governor.

The condition of the minister of health was more pitiable; he had no control over the higher officials in the department. It was the Secretary for State for India in London who took decisions on their appointment, service conditions and other matters.

In short, the representatives of the people were entrusted with the outer shell of the administration. And even in the administration of the departments assigned to the ministers, the Governor and the I.C.S. officers wielded wide powers. Formally, the ministers were responsible to the legislature and they were answerable to the legislature with regard to the activities of the departments assigned to them. Ministers were obliged to resign in case the legislature lacked confidence in them. But in practice, nothing of the kind happend.

Although the function of each department was subject to the principle of collectve responsibility of the ministry, the Governor, violating the principle, regarded each minister as his advisor. Accordingly, the Governor claimed the right to accept or reject the advice of the ministers. Thus, the Governor became the *de facto* ruler taking decissions even on matters relating to the departtments assinged to the ministers.

Besides, the officers who worked under the ministers belonged to the I.C.S. who were directly responsible to the Governor. Even when they defied the ministers, they got the protection of the Governor. Thus, though the ministers were answarable to the legislature and the people, it turned out that they were just a band of persons with no functional powers.

According to C.Y. Chintamani, the first education minister of U.P., even in such a trivial matter as nominating members of a library committee, the Governor took

decision autocratically rejecting the decision of the minister. Similar was the experience of several ministers in other provinces also.

The minister's decision was rejected by the Governor in this manner whenever there was a difference of opinion between the minister and an I. C. S. officer working under him. That is, any decision taken by a minister against the wishes of the I. C. S. officer would be rejected by the Governor. It was based on such experience that ministers like Surendranath Banerjee and P. C. Mitter of Bengal, M. P. Joshi of Madhya Pradesh and the ministers of Orissa, Madras, Bihar and other provinces expressed their opinion that the constitutional reforms of 1919 were a fiasco.

There were also several instances of no-confidence resolutions moved in the legislatures against individual ministers or against ministries. On many an occasion, such resolutions were "defeated" with the combined strength of the nominated members and a minority of the elected members, although a majority of the elected members voted in favour of the resolutions.

The Raja of Panagal, who was the Chief Minister of Madras, during a discussion on a no-confidence motion tabled against him in November 1923, categorically said that he was responsible only to the Governor.

Hilliers, a European member in the Bengal legislature for two terms, said that he did not expect this administrative reforms to succeed until the scheme was completely changed assigning the full responsibility of the departments—however small and insignificant they might be—to the ministers, stopping the intervention of the Governor and avoiding the votes of the official members in the legislature.

What has been cited above was the experience of many of the moderate leaders after they had been legislators or ministers for some years since 1921. Even before such direct experience—from the time the reforms were brought into force—the moderate leaders had started realizing the inadequacy of the system and the unacceptability of the general

policy pursued by the authorities. The resolutions adopted at the conference of the moderates held towards the end of 1921, couched in a moderate language though, underlined the same demands put forward by the Congress. The conference demanded full popular control, within two years, on all Central Government departments, except those of defence foreign relations, relation with native states and religious affairs.

The conference declared that the Indian people would not be satisfied unless the officials responsible for cruelty, insult and repression during the martial law regime in Punjab were suitably punished. It adopted a resolution expressing regret at the non-implementation of the undertaking given by the British Prime Minister to the Muslims in January 1918 and appealing to amend the treaty between Britain and Turkey.

The conference protested against the repression let loose by the Government and warned the Government that unless a conciliatory policy was adopted, the reforms would fail.

These resolutions showed that the modarates shared the same feelings expressed by those who participated in the non-cooperation movement. The British policy, on the other hand, was not only not conciliatory towards the people in general and the Congress in particular, but it was not agreeable even to the moderates.

The speech made by Lloyd George in the House of Commons on 2nd August defending the Civil Service in India was provocative even to the moderates. He said that whether the elected members in the legislatures succeeded or failed as members of the legislatures or as ministers, he could see no period when they could dispense with the guidance and assistance of a small nucleus of British Civil Servants and British officials in India. He added that the British Civil Servants were the "steel frame of the whole structure" and no matter what one built on or of it, if that steel frame was taken out, the fabric would collapse. "We will not interfere with the functioning of a particular establishment;

we will not weaken it; we will not deprive it of its powers and responsibilities. That establishment is the Civil Service in India", he said.

It was a heavy blow struck by the rulers against the expectations of the moderates who thought that by getting elected to the legislatures and by becoming ministers, they could, step by step, solve national issues and ultimately realize the national demand of Home Rule. It was a clear warning that the Indian people's representatives would never get an opportunity to turn the wheel of the administration free from the control of British civilian officers.

It was in this background that the ministers had to function, sandwiched between the Governor and the British I.C.S. officers and in continuous conflict with them. Protesting against this, some ministers like C.Y. Chintamani of U.P. resigned. At a session of the Central legislative Council in September 1926, a resolution was passed by a majority vote (48 against 34) deprecating the speech of the Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, another important development took place. On 9th March 1922 the Secretary of State for India, Montagu, resigned. The circumstances which led to his resignation deserve special mention.

The Government of India in a telegram sent to the British government suggested taking a conciliatory attitude to the Indian Muslims and reviewing the pact with Turkey in view of their feelings. They also asked for permission to publish the content of that message, which was granted by the Secretary of State for India. Prime Minister Lloyd George reacted to this stating that the Secretary of State had acted beyond his powers, which led to the latter's resignation.

It became clear that the government in England was one which was not willing to accept matters of which the British authorities in India, including the Viceroy, as also the Secretary of State for India were convinced. The moderates came to the conclusion that the vested interests and I.C.S. officers who had opposed the Reforms formulated with the initiative

of Montagu and which had raised great expectations among the moderates, had tightened their grip on the British government.

In this background, it was obvious that whatever propaganda the moderates indulged in against non-cooperation could not cut any ice. The moderates might have been able to point an accusing finger at Gandhi saying that "Swaraj in one year" had not come, that the education and lives of thousands of youngsters were disrupted and that the programme of non-cooperation had failed as a whole. But the question as to where their own policy of cooperation had taken the country and themselves was staring at them. Honest moderates had to accept the fact that their policy of cooperation flopped no less miserably than the non-cooperation of Gandhi and the Congress.

It was in this context that the question came up before the Congressmen as to what policy and approch they should adopt in the situation created following the suspension of the civil disobedience movement by Gandhi.

II. THE SPLIT AND THE AGREEMENT

Though non-cooperation was withdrawn, there was no letup in the repression on the part of the Government. Congress leaders, including Gandhi, were behind the bars. The A.I.C.C. met in Lucknow in June 1922 to discuss the future course of action in the circumstances and decided to appoint a committee to tour round the country and report on the situation prevailing in the country.

The committee thus appointed toured the provinces, met important Congress workers, held discussions with them and reached the following conclusions: (1) The conditions in the country were not favourable to launch a disobedience movement; (2) the constructive programme, considered an inseparable part of the movement, could not inspire the people.

The natural conclusion flowing out of this is that the boycott of elections and work in the legislature should be given up and that elections and the legislature should be utilized as the main platform of political struggle against the rulers. Boycott of the legislature was linked with the inspiring slogan of "Swaraj in one year". As this slogan had lost its relevance, it was pointed out, the boycott of legislatures too had became irrelevant. A powerful group emerged from among the Congress leadership strongly advocating such a change in the party's policy. At the same time, a considerable section of the Congress ranks feared that adopting the programme of legislature work would be a return to the old moderate politics. A section of the leadership too shared this view.

The Gaya session of the Congress held in December, 1922 became an occasion for a clash between these view-points. C.R. Das who had by then come out of jail was the chairman of the session. He and other prominent leaders like Motilal Nehru favoured a change in policy. On the opposite side were leaders like C. Rajagopalachari and Rajendra Prasad. After a heated debate, "policy changers" were defeated in the voting. The majority was on the side of a continuation of boycott. Das resigned stating that he could not continue as president in these circumstances.

Many felt that the Congress was heading towards a split as at the Surat Congress some 16 years ago. But, since Gandhi and certain other top leaders were in prison, the stalemate continued. The "policy changers" went their own way. Though the debate continued between the two groups, they worked on parallel lines without interfering with each other.

C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru went ahead with the programme of legislature activities, and formed the Swaraj Party. Their candidates contested the elections in November 1923, defeated many moderate leaders like Surendranath Banerjee and Chintamani reducing that party to a pitiable plight. At the Centre and in a number of provinces, the Swaraj Party bagged a sizeable number of seats.

The principal factor that enabled the Swaraj Party to carry on its activities in parallel with that of the Congress was the policy pursued by that party. They claimed that they adhered to the programme of non-cooperation in all matters except in the case of boycott and parliamentary work. Thus the leaders of the Swaraj Party were able to convince the Congressmen that their parliamentary activities were complementary to the boycott programme.

Consequently, a compromise resolution was adopted at the special session of the Congress held in Delhi in September 1923. The resolution stated:

> While reaffirming its adherence to the principle of non-violent non-cooperation, this Congress declares that such Congressmen as have no religious or other conscientious objections against entering the legislatures are at liberty to stand as candidates and to exercise their right of voting at the forthcoming elections; and this Congress therefore suspends all propaganda against entering the councils.[1]

After having thus secured the formal blessings of the Congress, the Swaraj Party leaders issued a manifesto making their position clear as to what they would do if they won the elections. The essential point of this manifesto was that the Swarajists, if elected to the Central Legislative Assembly, would assert in the Assembly India's right to frame her constitution in the Indian legislature. If the Government refused to concede this demand, they would uncompromisingly and continuously adopt a policy of obstruction so as to make the govermental functioning through the legislature impossible.

People could clearly see the contrast between this policy of the Swaraj Party and the lukewarm policy of the moderates which paved the way for the miserable defeat of the moderates and the prestigious victory of the Swaraj Party. In the Central legislature it became such a force that it could, with the support of independents led by Jinnah, defeat

1 A. M. Zaidi and S. G. Zaidi, *Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress* Vol. 8, New Delhi. Chand and Company, 1980, p. 607.

the Government. In the Central Provinces it commanded the majority. It emerged as a powerful group in the provinces of Bengal, Bombay and U.P. Thus, the Swaraj Party which contested as an independent force without the full organized support of the Congress, emerged as a political force to be reckoned with all over India.

In the absence of Gandhi, a section of the leaders who claimed themselves and considered by others to be the firm adherents of the Gandhi's policy left the Swaraj Party and carried out the Gandhian constructive activities and the organizational work of the Congress. So long as Gandhi was in jail, there was no difficulty in following this course. But the situation was bound to change once Gandhi came out and took over the leadership. What then? Would the Congress split again as it did following the Surat Congress of 1906? The people were anxiously observing the developments.

In the meantime, a shocking news was published on 13th January 1924. Gandhi had been removed from the Yerwada prison to the Sassoon Hospital in Poona for a surgical operation. Based on this news given out officially, the Swaraj Party gave notice of a resolution in the Central Legislative Assembly demanding Gandhi's release. A discussion on the resolution was fixed for 5th February. But on the 4th February night, the Government issued a press note stating that Gandhi was being released from the prison condoning the rest of the period of his sentance as the doctors attending him recommended him rest for six months in a seaside resort.

Though he was soon released from jail, it took many weeks for Gandhi to be able to participate in political discussions. And when the AICC session was held at Ahmedabad in June 1924, Gandhi and Motilal came to a clash with each other. Gandhi moved a resolution rendering those failing to fulfil the obligation of hand spinning "regarded as a necessary preliminary to civil disobedience" ineligible to election to Congress committees. Motilal Nehru forcefully opposed the resolution stating that "the *Charka* programme will not take us an inch closer to *Swaraj*". He requested

Gandhi to ask his followers how far they had implemented the constructive programme while he was in jail.

However, the resolution was adopted with 82 votes against 68. Protesting against this, Motilal and Das walked out of the session along with their followers. But soon they and Gandhi came to an agreement. According to this agreement, all sections in the congress were obliged to implement the programmes of *Khadi*, handspinning, removal of untouchability and Hindu-Muslim unity; it was the responsibility of the Swaraj Party to carry out the work in the central and provincial legislatures on behalf and as part of the congress; the Swaraj Party had to frame the necessary rules, collect and manage funds for carrying out the legislature activities.

Thus, the understanding which was earlier arrived at informally to carry out the activities in a parellel way with the parliamentary work for the Swaraj Party and other activities for Congress organization became a formal decision of the Congress.

In the following few months, the Swaraj Party and its president, C.R. Das, tried to bring about an understanding with the British government. The response of the British government was favourable.

The Under-Secretary, on behalf of the Secretary of State for India, made a statement in Parliament that if C.R. Das put forward constructive proposals on a new constitution for India acceptable to the Government of India, the British government would seriously consider them. Thereupon, Das in a statement put forward certain proposals which included the immediate release of all political prisoners, noninterference in the functioning of Central and provincial legislatures, and unequivocal aceptance by the British government of the right of Indians to establish *Swaraj* within the British Commonwealth, etc. A general impression gained ground that behind this open exchange of opinion between Das and the British government, certain private discussions too were being held.

To strength this impression, the Viceroy Lord Reading went to London and held discussions with the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead. Following this, it was declared that the Secretary of State for India would shortly make a statement. Meanwhile, Das suddenly passed away, bringing the curtain down on the negotiations. The expected statement from the Secretary of State did not come, either.

With this, significant change came about in the policy and approach of Gandhi and the Congress leadership. Within a month of the death of Das, Gandhi felt the need to review the relationship between the Swaraj Party and the Congress. In a letter to Motilal Nehru Gandhi wrote: I have come to the conclusion that the Congress need not continue mainly to be a spinners' association. I consider it necessary to enhance the position and influence of the Swaraj Party in the new political situation created as a result of Lord Birkenhead's speech in the Parliament. This will be possible only if the Congress is transformed into an organization engaged mainly in political work. In accordance with the earlier understanding, the activities of the Congress were confined to constructive programmes. I understand that in the changed situation the country has to face, this restriction need not be continued. ...I am of the opinion that the next A.I.C.C. must take decisions in such a way that the entire organization would be used for your activities.

Accordingly, at the AICC meeting at Patna in September 1925 the Congress decided to re-start political activities, instead of confining itself to constructive activities assigning the political work to the Swaraj Party and to form a separate body to organize constructive activities including spinning and weaving *Khadi*. According to this decision, the Congress would thereafter set up candidates for elections and conduct political agitations inside and outside the legislatures. A new organization, the All-India Spinners'Association, was brought into being to look after constructive activities.

Thus ended the fear that a new split might take place in the Congress once again. Both sides came forward to build a

popular movement by co-ordinating and interlinking the legislature activities, the constructive programmes and the organizational activities of the Congress. The political developments that motivated them to take this stand were evident from the development we have shown above. They may be summerized as follows.

1) In the circumstances arising out of the calling off of the civil disobedience and non-cooperation, it became necessary for the bourgeois leadership as a whole, including Gandhi, Motilal and Das, to evolve a new strategy and tactics of struggle.

2) It also became necessary for the bourgeois leadership to simultaneously negotiate with the British authorities, if possible, and to keep the people ready for starting non-cooperation and civil disobedience in a favourable atmosphere, in case the attempts to negotiate with the British failed. Both these had to be done simultaneously and harmoniously. It was on the question of how this could be done that the Gandhian group and the 'pro-changers' led by Das and Motilal differed.

3) The agreement arrived at among Gandhi, C. R Das and Motilal Nehru helped consciously or otherwise to effect a division of work acceptable to both sides. The Das-Nehru group to keep in contact, though informally, with the British authorities up to the highest level while Gandhi and his colleagues to prepare for a struggle—this the meaning of the understanding between the Swaraj Party which functioned independently of the Congress and the Congress which was confined itself mainly to constuctive activities.

4) When this tactic failed—when it became clear that the negotiations initiated by Das had failed—it became necessary to bring under the direct control of the Congress all political activities including that of the legislatures. Consequently, the Spinners' Association now replaced the Swaraj Party.

Briefly, the parliamentary activity under the leadership of Das, Nehru and others and the constructive activities

under Gandhi were useful as two faces of a unified political movement advancing under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. That was why instead of a break between the two sections, an understanding between them was finally arrived at.

III. THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

In the last few sections, we have examined the attempts made by Indian bourgeioise to rally the entire Indian people under its banner making use of the post-war mass upsurge. In the process, we saw the tremendous success Gandhi made in this regard, although in many places the people had gone beyond the bound set by him.

Another feature of the post-war mass upsurge needs special mention here. For the first time in the history of the freedom struggle, the working class began to take part in the political struggles as a class with its own forms of struggle. Unlike in the earlier days when the workers went on strikes off and on, now they were transforming themselves into a class giving shape to a stable organization (trade union) to protect their class interest.

When the extremist politics began to emerge under Tilak, Lajpat Rai and others, the poor, including workers and peasants, began to imbibe political consciousness and to participate in the freedom struggle. The extremists formulated their programme of propaganda and agitation keeping the poor sections of the people in mind. (This was the basic difference between the earlier moderate and the new extremist leaderships.) The urban and rural poor used to attend in large numbers in meetings addressed by the extremist leaders. When these leaders were arrested and prosecuted, they used to crowd in the court to pay them their respect and to follow the trend of the case. We have already referred to the strike of workers of the textile mills in Bombay in protest against the arrest of Tilak.

The workers who had begun to participate in the freedom struggle made a significant gaim of their own. They could take the first steps in the direction of organizing themselves as a class though such actions. We have referred earlier to the workers' strike in the different parts of the Country, which received the blessings and guidance of national leaders like Tilak, Lajpat Rai and Gandhi. We have also referred to the strike of the workers of textile mills in Ahmedabad and also to the strikes that took place in many other parts of the country as port of the non-cooperation movement. Thus, the growth of the freedom movement gave rise to an atmosphere in the industrial centres enabling the workers to go into actions to get their grievances redressed and win their demands.

But, at all these stages, the working class was just an appendage to the bourgeois-led national movement, participating, like all other classes, in the national struggle under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois national leadership rendered assistance to the working class as it did to all other sections of the people. The workers had not yet acquired either the ability or the strength, as an independent class, to act beyond the limit set by the bourgeois leadership. An important feature of the post-war mass upsurge was that it marked the beginning of the emergence of the working class as an independent force.

The years 1920-1921, when the non-cooperation movement surged ahead, were crucial for the working class. These years witnessed working class strikes on an unprecedented scale all over the country. Though connected with the non-cooperation movement and raising its political slogans, the working class raised the slogans of their own economic demands in these strikes. Besides, sympathetic strikes also had begun to take place, in support of a strike in an industry or a town. Above all, in the then existing conditions of a steep increase in the profits of the capitalists, the majority of the strikes ended in complete or partial victory. These were the circumstances which helped the workers to come on the

scene as an organized social force with confidence in their own organization.

In 1920, Bombay witnessed the largest number of strikes with the maximum number of workers participating in them. Over 200,000 workers participated in the textile strike from 2nd February to 6th March demanding increased wages and reduced working hours. Neglecting the heavy losses due to the strike, the workers defeated the efforts of the management to break the strike forcibly with the help of the police and the military. But none of these affected the unity or the militancy of the workers. Ultimately, the mill owners were compelled to come to terms with the striking workers by increasing the bonus rate (from 20 per cent to 40 per cent), granting compensation for accidents to workers and reducing the working hours.

In the Tata Iron and Steel mills at Jamshedpur, too, a prolonged strike took place in 1920. Since the cost of living there was the highest in India, the workers demanded a 50 per cent increase in wages. They also demanded compensation for accidents and cash payment to near relatives in cases of death. Nearly 30,000 workers took part in the strike. The management tried to break the strike by prolonging it. But, finally, they were forced to come to a settlement partially conceding the demands.

The Jalalpur railway workers' strike of 1920 too deserves special mention. The workers who picketed the blacklegs were fired upon, leaving 15 killed and 23 injured. But the will of the workers remained unshaken. Here too, the management was forced to come to a settlement with the workers.

The strike by 30,000 mill workers of Ahmedadad, the strike by white collar workers in Bombay and by the gas workers of Bombay and Calcutta were also significant. The British newspapers said that although the workers went on strikes raising their demands, these strikes were part of the non-cooperation movement sponsored by the Congress, hence political.

As these strike struggles went ahead, their trade unions began to emerage. According to the estimate of the Labour Department of the Government of Bombay published in september 1920, there were 93 unions in the presidency with a total membership of 120,000. In most of the unions, those elected to the leadership were educated middle-class people connected with the national movement or skilled British workers employed in India.

It was also in the 1920 that the All-India Trade Union Congress was formed uniting the trade union organizations in the different provinces. The activists of the Indian National Congress and the British Labour Party played an active role in its formation. The extremist leader, Lala Lajpat Rai was elected its president. Its conference, in which delegates from trade unions all over the country participated, declared that the task of the Indian working class was to organize struggles for the betterment of their economic life.

In 1921, the strike struggles surged further forward. Workers in the tea plantations of Assam also came to the scene of struggle. Protesting against low wages and abject poverty, about 12,000 workers left the plantations in search of work elsewhere. The Gurkha Army was sent to bring them back. The beastly cruelty inflicted upon the workers by the Gurkha forces aroused the wrath of the entire country. The railway, wharf and steamer workers of Bengal struck work in sympathy with the Assam plantation labourers. Consequently the economic life of the entire province remained paralysed for about two months.

In 1921, the total number of strikes in India was 396 in which a total number of 600,000 workers participated. Nearly half of these strikes ended in complete or partial success. Thus,during the period two years in which the non-cooperation movement was launched and withdrawn, the working class appeared as one of the main social forces in the freedom struggle. In ensuring the success of the protest actions, including the one against the visit of the Prince of Wales, the working class played a vital role.

At the same time, it became clear that the working class was not willing to remain within the bounds set by the non-cooperation programme evolved by the Congress under Gandhi. As we have seen earlier, Gandhi had suspended the Bardoli civil dis-obedience having become upset by the "violence" on the part of workers and the common people in Bombay in the protest actions against the Prince's visit even before calling off the entire movement following the Chauri Chaura incident.

Peasants constitute a section of people who ought to have got themselves organized as the working class movements make advance. The non-cooperation movement helped to develop in them a new political awareness and militancy. In many areas like Punjab, Malabar, and Avadh and Agra in U.P., the advance of the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements brought the peasants into the arena of struggle. But unlike the working class, the peasants were incapable of forming their own organizations or of rallying under their own banner to fight in defence of their own demands. The movement that developed among the peasants was a blend of deep hatred against foreign domination and a protest against rent, taxes, etc., combined with the religious and casteist thinking.

It was one of such movements that developed into the Malabar (Moplah) Rebellion. It, in fact, started as a mass movement which arose out of a strong desire for independence combined with the *Janmi* (landlord)-tenant problem which agitated the entire population, irrespective of caste or religious differences. But, since there was the element of the Khilafat issue that became an integral part of the political movement and also since the tenancy problem agitated the Muslim tentants more than anyone else, the Muslim masses participated in the movement relatively more actively than others. And they were also subject to the ideological influence of their religious leaders.

In the circumstances, as the movement began to make advance, it began to acquire a Muslim communal colour.

Among the Muslim masses participating in the movement, the thought of fighting for religion and God gained supermacy over the thought of solutions to the political and economic problems. Their religious feelings reached a state of fermentation when the Muslim masses who were continuously being subjected to the propaganda of their religious heads whom they considered their leaders, saw that the mojority of those who were oppressing them in collusion with the British were the Hindus. They became enslaved by this thought. The struggle which they started against the British authorities and the *Jenmis* gradually turned anti-Hindu. The organized propaganda campaign carried out by the Hindu bigwigs and the British authorities aided them to strengthen their anti-Hindu feelings. Thus, the popolular rebellion turned into the 'Moplah rebellion'.

The Akali movement which brought the Sikh peasantry of Punjab into the arena of struggle, too, had a religious image, though it did not deteriorate to the level of communal clashes as in Malabar. The Sikh *Gurudwaras* and their enormous properties were under the control of the Mahants who were leading a luxurious life misusing the common property of the Sikh community. They were also utilizing these properties against all progressive movements of the community. The Akali movement was started as a social reformation movement against the misrule of the Mahants. Thousands of Sikh peasants came forward to take part in this movement and face repression, in which they had the full support of the national movement. Leaders of the Ghadar Party which had an important place among the Indian revolutionary movements abroad, the Indian National Congress led by Gandhi, the Punjabi intellectuals—all fought together against the Mahant domination, which in effect turned against the British rulers who were giving protection to the Mahants.

The peasant struggle in U.P., on the other hand, had grown completely on political and economic basis. The movement, known as the Eka Movement, which emerged in a number of districts against the expolitation of the *zamindars*

and the government may be said to be the first organized peasant movement in India. As in many other places, here too the authorities came out to dub the peasant movement as an organization of the "thugs" and to unleash repression against them. "Revolution spreads to North India", "Revolt spreads to the East" were some of the headlines under which the British newspapers published the news about this peasant movement.

Though not on such a wide scale, peasant discontent found expression in certain regions of Bengal, in some princely states like Travancore and other regions in the country. But none of them was as organized as that of the workers. Nowhere did a permanent organization (like trade unions) emerge. Hence, when the anti-imperialist advance of 1920-21 was halted, the peasant revolts too died down.

Besides, in certain places as in Malabar, movements which had begun as peasant revolts ended up in communal revolts. In other words, conditions were not yet mature for the formation of an organized peasant movement which would be a comrade-in-arms to the organized working class movement, a movement which would organize and rally the peasants as a whole, irrespective of religious-caste considerations, in the struggle against their class enemies.

However, political conditions for the simultaneous advance of the organized workers' and peasants' movements and both strengthening the national movement on an unprecedented scale had begun to emerge. Tens of thousands of young men and women who had come forward inspired by the slogan of "Swaraj in one year" and now shocked at the withdrawal of the disobedience movement, were engaged in a process of serious political rethinking. These young men and women, convinced of the need to find a new path in place of the tried and rejected paths of moderatism, extremism, individual revolutionary acts and Gandhian non-cooperation had begun to take steps which were destined to change the entire course of events in the country, the background and growth of which we will examine in the following pages.

IV. THE NEW VOICE

The political atmosphere became dark after the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement. The anti-imperialist national unity that existed during the non-cooperation-Khilafat movement shattered. The fond hope that the Indian people entering the country-wide civil disobedience movement after passing through the multi-faceted non-cooperation and boycott needed only one year to uproot the imperialist domination and win independence proved misplaced. The leaders who were in the forefront of the non-cooperation-Khilafat movement turned into the spokesmen of entry into legislatures on the one side and Government propagandists on the other. The youth who were disappointed at this sight returned to the old 'bomb-politics'. A section of the leaders who had rallied under the banner of the Khilafat movement went ahead with the formation of Muslim communal organizations and another with the formation of Hindu communal organizations to preserve the special interests of these respective communities. Meanwhile, the Sikhs, Christians, the non-Brahmins and depressed castes formed their own organizations and fought to preserve their special interests.

In this complex and confusing political atmosphere a new voice, quite distinct from and even opposed to the above trends, began to be heard. This was a call to transform the Congress into a mass revolutionary movement based on the increasing strength and unity of the organized working class, the peasants and other labouring people who were just entering into struggles.

This call given jointly by two communists, M.N. Roy and Abani Mukherji, was addressed to and distributed among the delegates to the Ahmedabad session of the Indian National Congress held in December 1921. This document published in the name of two known communists and proposing that the Congress should advance relying on the growing organized movements of workers, peasants and other masses,

marked an important milestone in the growth of the Indian Communist movement.

However, this was not a call formally representing the Communist movement. The main reason for publishing the document in the name of these two individuals was that the Communist movement and its organization were not known among Congressmen, whereas Roy and Mukherjee were known to them.

Roy and Mukherjee had participated earlier in the Indian revolutionary movement. Roy had been involved and sentenced in a number of cases. But, later on, he went abroad and established relation and worked with the Indian revolutionary organizations there. Mukherjee too went abroad to work with overseas Indian revolutionaries. Therefore both of them had personal relations with many who had played leading roles in the non-cooperation-Khilafat movements.

Roy and Mukherjee knew that many among the Congress leaders and ordinary workers in India were dissatisfied with both the non-cooperation-Khilafat programme and its failure. They considered it timely to attempt to instil among Congressmen, caught in the whirlpool of bourgeois-petty-bourgeois thinking, the consciousness of organized mass revolution. This was what they attempted to do in the call given to the Ahmedabad Congress.

However, even before this, conditions in India had become mature for starting a communist movement and an organization in the name of a "Communist Party of India". A brief history of this background is as follows.

1) The ideas of Karl Marx had begun to spread in a limited way among a narrow circle of intellectuals in India even before the First World War. Lala Hardayal, one of those Indian revolutionaries who went abroad, wrote a biography of Marx, which was published in the March 1912 issue of the *Modern Review*. A few months later, Swadeshabhimani Ramakrishna Pillai published a biography of Marx in Malayalam, incorporating most of the facts included in

the biography written by Hardayal. Both were attempts to present "Marx the great" before the general public. (In his article, Hardayal had made it clear that he did not subscribe to the theories of Marx.) However, Hardayal and Ramakrishna Pillai were two pointers to future developments.

2) After the Russian revolution of 1917 the ideas of Marx began to spread among the freedom fighters in India. Even before this revolution, the activities of the Russian revolutionaries as that of the revolutionaries elsewhere had attracted the attention of Indian revolutionaries. For example, the Russian revolution of 1905 had inspired the extremists like Tilak. But all these had only helped the growth of 'bomb-politics' among Indian revolutionaries. It was only with the 1917 revolution that its class basis and ideology began to exert influence, at least to a limited extent, on Indian revolutionaries.

3) The Indians most influenced by the Russian revolution were the revolutionaries working in Germany, U.S.A., Turkey, Afghanistan and other countries immediately before and during the First World War. They included Virendranath Chattopadhyaya (brother of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Sarojini Naidu), Barkhatulla, M.P.B.T. Acharya and others besides M.N. Roy and Abani Mukherji.

4) Another group also came into being in the same period. It consisted of the Muslims who has expressed their anti-imperialist feelings during the war and those who had participated later in the Khilafat movement. They had come to know of the Russian revolution through Afghan and other sources at the time of the non-cooperation and Khilafat movements. Out of the curiosity to know more about the revolution and to escape the repression unleashed by the British government in India, they went to Russia via Afghanistan. (Their journey to Russia was like the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca.) This developed into a great movement. In Russia, they learned the theory and practice of the revolution. On their way back to India, they were arrested by the British authorities at the Afghan-Indian

border and made accused in the notorious Peshawar Conspiracy Case. They included Shaukat Usmani who participated in the activities of the Communist Party of India in its early years and became the target of repressive actions on that count, and Ferozuddin Mansur who worked in the Communist Party of India and later in the Communist Party of Pakistan after the partition.

5) These two sections and other Indian revolutionary organizations like the Ghaddar Party made attempts to establish relation with the Communist International. The International, on its part, had tried to impart the knowledge of Marxism-Leninism to these Indian revolutionaries and to organize them into a revolutionary party. As part of this effort, Indian revolutionaries began to take part in the conferences and the deliberations of the committees of the International. One of them (M.N. Roy) represented India in the leadership of the International.

6) As part of this activity, an organization named the Communist Party of India was formed at Tashkent, the capital of Soviet Uzbekistan, on 17th October 1920. Its members were M.N. Roy, Evelyn Roy (Roy's wife), Abani Mukherjee, Rosa Fitingova, Muhammad Ali, Mohammad Shafiq Siddiqi, and M.P.B.T. Acharya. Siddiqi was elected Secretary. The Turkestan Bureau of the Communist International accorded recognition to this party on 20th December.

7) The formation of the Communist Party of India, though not on the Indian soil, was an important event in the history of the Indian Communist movement. (It was as part of its activity that Roy and Mukherjee issued a call addressed to the delegates to the Ahmedabad session of the Congress.)

8) Meanwhile, the influence of Marxism had begun to spread among the young political workers in India. Of these, the names of Muzaffar Ahmad in Bengal, S.A. Dange in Bombay and Shingaravelu Chettiar in Madras stand out. They played a leading role in the publication of journals and leaflets in Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu and other languages.

There were political workers all over the country who were opposed to the religious and outmoded thinking behind Gandhi's non-cooperation-Khilafat movement and to the withdrawal of the powerful mass movement led by him whenever it overstepped the limits set by him. They had tested every means adopted, from that of the old moderates to the latest programme, and were disillusioned with them; they needed a new light. It was to meet this need that the call addressed to Ahmedabad Congress was given by Roy and Mukherjee.

The call entitled "Manifesto to the 36th Indian National Congress, Ahmedabad, 1921" begins as follows:

> We have met in a very critical moment of the history of our country to decide various questions affecting gravely the future of the national life and progress. The Indian nation today stands on the eve of a great revolution, not only political, but economic and social as well. The vast mass of humanity, which inhabits the great peninsula, has begun to move towards a certain goal; it is awakening after centuries of social stagnation resulting from economic and political oppression. The National Congress has placed itself at the head of this movement. Yours is a difficult task, and the way before you is beset with obstacles almost insuperable and pitfalls treacherous and troublesome. The mission of leading the people of India onward to the goal of national liberation is great, and you have made this great mission your own. The National Congress is no longer a holiday gathering engaged in idle debates and futile resolution-making, it has become a political body—the leader of the movement for national liberation.[2]

After exposing the bankruptcy of the political lines adopted by the Congress led by the moderates, which had to shoulder a great responsibility, the Manifesto also critically examined the surge made by the Gandhian leadership

2. G. Adhikari, *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1971, p. 341.

with the slogan of "Swaraj in one year". Characterizing this slogan as "a great declaration", the Manifesto continued:

> ...the function of the Congress, as leader of the nation, is not only to point out the goal but to lead the people step by step towards the goal...The people must be infused with enthusiasm to fight for swaraj, they must be united in this struggle, because without union the goal will not be attained.
>
> The greatest problem before the 36th Congress is how to enlist the full-hearted support of the people in the national cause, how to make the ignorant masses follow the banner of swaraj. In order to solve this problem, the first thing necessary is to know what is it that ails the masses. What do they want? What is needed for improving the immediate environment of their material existence? Because *only by including the redress of their immediate grievances in its programme will the Congress be able to assume the practical leadership of the masses of the people* [3]

After subjecting to serious criticism the non-cooperation programme under Gandhi's leadership and the Khilafat issue which was raised as part of it, the manifesto concluded:

> Words cannot make people fight, they have to be impelled by irresistible objective forces. The oppressed, pauperised, miserable workers and peasants are bound to fight because there is no hope left for them. *The Congress must have the workers and peasants behind it, and it can win their lasting confidence only when it ceases to sacrifice them ostensibly for a higher cause, namely the so-called national interest but really for the material prosperity of the merchants and manufacturers. If the Congress would lead the revolution which is shaking India to the very foundation, let it not put its faith in mere demonstrations and temporary wild enthusiasm. Let it make the immediate demands of the trade unions, as summarised by the Cawnpore workers, its own demands, let it make the programme of the kisan sabhas its own programme, and the time will soon come when the Congress will not stop before any obstacle,* it will not have to lament that swaraj cannot be declared on afixed

3. Adhikari, *Ibid*, pp 342-343.

date because the people have not made enough sacrifice. It will be backed by irresistible strength of the entire people consciously fighting for their material interest. Failing to do so, *with all its zeal for non-cooperation, for all its determination to have the Sevres treaty revised, despite its doctrine of "soul force", the Congress will have to give in to another organization which will grow out of the ranks of the common people with the object of fighting for their interests.* If the Congress wants to have the nation behind it, let it not be blinded by the interest of a small class, let it not be guided by the unseen hand of the "merchants and manufacturers" who have replaced the "talented lawyers" in the Congress and whom the present tactics seek to install in the place of the "satanic" British.[4]

Thus, for the first time in the history of the Congress, a new voice was heard in Ahmedabad. This was, as pointed out in the previous section, under the political conditions in which an organized working class movement and a militant peasant movement, though not so well organized, were rising.

V. TOWARDS A WORKERS' AND PEASANTS' PARTY

The formation of the Communist Party of India in Tashkent led to the beginning of a process of separating the wheat from the chaff in the freedom struggle. Because it was not formed on the "Indian soil", the Communist Party of India had to face the opposition from a considerable section of socialists and communist sympathizers in India. But the contribution of this organization to the growth of the Communist movement in India was more valuable than that made by many who were working from the "Indian soil" itself.

M. N. Roy was pre-eminent in the Tashkent organization. Later, he went out of the Communist movement. By the

4. Adhikari, *Ibid*, pp 352-353.

time it was ripe for the emergence of an organized Communist Party in India, Roy had, in effect, become an anti-Communist. But, it would not be prudent to disregard the role he had played in the growth of the Communist Party of India on that score. Even to realize the seriousness of the class betrayal that he commited later on, it is necessary to examine objectively his early contributions in India.

The central task of a real communist party in India was to link the people's aspirations for freedom to the world revolutionary working class movement. Roy was a person capable of contributing to the fulfilment of this task.

As pointed out earlier, Roy started his political activity as a member of a group of "bomb-politics" in Bengal. An accused in a decoity case, Roy left India after his release from the prison and took active part in the revolutionary activities in a number of countries. Finally, he declared himself and accepted by others to be a communist and reached Moscow where he began his activities connected with the Communist International.

Thus Roy became a link between the petty-bourgeois revolutionaries of India and the moscow-based world Communist movement.

Roy did have certain weaknesses characteristic of petty-bourgeois revolutionaries. Most important among these were self-conceit and bureaucratic behaviour, which constituted a hindrance in unifying the different groups which had begun to emerge in different parts of India into an organized party. He had shown, from the beginning, the tendeney to ruin those who did not abide by his orders.

But this weakness was not confined to Roy alone. Most of those who claimed that they were fighting the self-deceit and bureaueracy of Roy themselves were victims of these same weaknesses. But Roy possessed a quality which none of them had. By using the Marxist-Leninist outlook which was the common property of the world Communist movement, he could analyze and assess the Indian situation in general and the day-to-day changes that came about in it

in particular. He possessed the experience of the early Indian revolutionary movement, the ability, based on this experience, to arrive at a clear understanding of the contemporary political developments in India and of the personalities in volved in these developments and the revolutionary experience gained in other places, particularly in Moscow. Above all he had contact with the top leadership of the world Communist movement. All these distinguished him from other revolutionaries.

The works written by S.A. Dange in the years 1921 and 1922 were important considering the period in which they appeared. His *Gandhi vs Lenin* (with all the weakness which he himself admits) and the journal *Socialist* published under his editorship were pathfinders for the Indian Communist movement in the early years. Similary, M. Shingaravelu (Madras), Muzaffar Ahmad (Calcutta), Ghulam Hussain (Lahore) were prominent among those who had helped to disseminate the socialist and communist ideologies in India. However, anybody who compares the early Marxist works born on "Indian soil" with those of the same period written by Roy himself or under his guidance would undoubtedly admit the superiority of the latter. Unfortunately, we have little access to works written on "Indian soil" with the exception of those of Dange. (The volumes compiled by Dr. Adhikari do not contain any of the works by Shingaravelu or Ahmad; only a few of Dange's works are found in them.)

However, the fact remains that no work published in India in the early 1920s stand in comparison with Roy's *India in Transition*, published in 1922. One need not hesitate to say that this work (with all its shortcomings and mistakes) was the forerunner of Rajani Palme Dutt's *India Today*, published a few years later.

The relation between British imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie and the theory that following the development of the Indian bourgeoisie, British imperialism had been forced to beat a retreat (Decolonization Theory) constituted

the main conclusion of Roy's book. This was diametrically opposed to the Leninist tactics of keeping the bourgeoisie to a limited extent in the anti-imperialist struggle. It was on this issue that Lenin's views clashed with that of Roy at the Congress of the Communist International. It was on the same issue that Roy was later expelled from the Communist International and turned him into an arch enemy of the Communist party of India.

Even to reach such a wrong conclusion, Roy had made a detailed study of the Indian situation. And he set a new tradition of using the methodology of Marxism-Leninism to analyze and assess the Indian situation.

Roy's contribution, however, did not end here. He together with his colleagues analyzed the day-to-day changes in Indian politics in the light of the general perspective of the Communist International and on that basis coined slogans for day-to-day political actions.

The editorials, notes, reports, etc., appearing in the *Inprecor*, the organ of the Communist International, and in the *Vanguard* published under Roy's editorship, were designed to help the day-to-day political agitations. Besides, like the call given to the delegates to the Ahmedabad Congress, many other documents were prepared under Roy's guidance. These documents were consciously prepared to follow and assess closely the developments that were taking place in the Indian National Congress and other organizations and to exert the influence of the revolutionary working class on them.

For instance, in the days following the withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incident, Evelyn Roy (pseudonym, Santi Devi) published an article in the *Vanguard* analyzing Gandhi and the Gandhian politics, which stated:

> Here is in this half-naked, slender, brown body so completely dominated by the mind within, a strength that dreadnoughts cannot conquer nor machineguns subdue though they shatter it to bits, and out of the respect bred

of this certain knowledge, the British empire leaves him unharmed. Six years' simple imprisonment, "with everything possible to make him comfortable, is the utmost they dare attempt, and this merely to remove him from the arena of active politics. When the storm dies down a little, they will let him free. For they will soon learn, if they do not already know, that Gandhi the saint in prison becomes to india's adoring millions Gandhi the martyr.... It is well and truly said that, "Mahatma in jail is more powerful than Mahatma free"....[4]

After eulogizing Gandhi's greatness as an individual, Santi Devi examined in the article the different aspects of Gandhi—"Gandhi the philosopher", "Gandhi the politician" and "Gandhi the pariot". Exposing mercilessly the contradictions in Gandhi's philosophical outlook and policies, she underlined the constructive role played by him in adopting the means of mass struggle to win political demands and also in building up the Congress party. She concluded her article, thus:

In closing what has been a dispassionate analysis of Mr Gandhi's influence upon the Indian movement, a heartfelt tribute must be paid to Gandhi the politician. We believe that Mr Gandhi's political career is inspired by a deep love for his suffering countrymen, a love nonetheless noble for having made great tactical mistakes. His very utterance breaths a deep desire to free the motherland from thraldom, and to help her children find a happier life. Few scenes are destined to greater immortality in history than the courtroom is which Mr Gandhi read out his scathing indictment of India, and pleading guilty to the charge of promoting disaffection to the government, and asked the judge to give him the maximum sentence.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi will live in the annals of his country as one of its saints and patriots, long after his political failures are forgotten. [5]

4 *The vanguard*, No. 1, 15 May 1922. Reproduced in G. Adhikari, *Ibid* P. 438

5 *The Vanguard*, No. 3, 15 June 1922, *Ibid*, pp. 458-459.

While exposing the Gandhian philosophy and politics by examining the political background that gave rise to Gandhism from the stand-point of the working class, the article objectively evaluated the role played by Gandhi and Gandhism in the awakening of the Indian people. Viewed from the background of this article, the shortcomings of Dange's work mentioned above become obvious.

This, however, was not confined to asessing a single phenomenon of Mahatma Gandhi. After the Congress adopted Gandhi's non-cooperation programe, Roy and his colleagues were keen on bringing about changes in the day-to-day conditions in favour of the revolutionary forces. When difference of opinion arose between Gandhi and C. R. Das, Roy wrote an article assessing it, and offering support to Das subject to certain conditions. Later, when Jawaharlal Nehru showed leftist leanings, he offered critical welcome to it. Intervening directly in various developments in this manner, Roy tried to form a revolutionary group inside the Congress.

While imbibing the spirit of readiness of the Congress to launch the non-cooperation struggle, he appealed to the leftist nationalists to adopt the outlook of Marxism-Leninism instead of the Gandhian philosophical outlook. He placed before them the form of struggle based on the organized strength of workers and peasants in place of the moderatist agitation, non-violent mass struggle and 'bomb-politics.'

Though Roy's name is mentioned here with added importance, it must be emphasized that it was the world Communist leadership which handled Indian politics through Roy. The documents compiled by Dr. Adhikari contains appeals addressed to Indian revolutionaries by the Communist International and the revolutionary trade union organization, the Red Trade Union International (RILU). It was the Communist International which carried out the task of removing confusion and bringing clarity of ideas and of building up an organized revolutionary movement out of a

splintered mass movement. Roy was functioning only as a representative of that body.

As a result of all these activities, a left democratic party was gradually coming into being. Attempts were made to form the Hindustan Labour Kisan Party under the leadership of Shingaravelu Chettiar in Madras, and to form the Indian Socialist Labour Party of the Indian National Congress in Bombay under the leadership of Dange. It took some more years for the formation the All-India Workers' and Peasants' Party.

Contradictory views were expressed on the "Indian soil" as to what should be the programme of these new parties. The programmes of Shingaravelu and Dange devoted more attention to determine the character of the future socialist society. They were weak in organizing agitations on current issues. Pointing out the fundamental weakness of this approach, the Executive Committee of the Communist International appealed to them to confine themselves to the following fundamental points:

1. Complete separation from imperial connection.
2. Establishment of a democratic republic.
3. Adolition of landlordism and radical readjustment of landownership.
4. Nationalisation of the means of transportation and other public utilities.
5. 8-hour-day
6. Minimum wages.
7. Workers' councils in factories and peasants' union in the villages to protect the interests of the toiling masses.

This was the first attempt made under the initiative of the world Communist movement to organize a party as an integral party of the world revolutionary movement on the "Indian soil".

VI. PESHAWAR AND KANPUR CONSPIRACY CASES

The activities carried out with the initiative of M. N. Roy under the auspices of the Communist International had favourable reactions in India. The Communist groups in Madras, Bombay, Lahore and Calcutta in one way or the other established contacts with Roy's organization. Attempts to form a well-organized Indian Communist Party unifying the activities of the different groups in India went on vigorously.

Before this reached fruition, however, the rulers launched their attack. The Indian revolutionaries who were returning to India from Soviet Russia were arrested *en route* as they crossed the Himalayan passes. As cases were launched in Peshawar now part of Pakistan, they were known as "Peshawar Conspiracy Cases."

In the first case, three persons were involved. The first accused, Akbar Qureshi, was sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment and the third accused Bahadur to one year's rigorous imprisonment. The second accused, Hafizullah Khan, was set free as he was found not guilty. The judgement of this case was pronounced on 31st May 1922.

In the second case, too, there were three accused. The first accused, Muhammad Akbar (son of the second accused in the first case), was sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment and the second accused, Muhammad Hassan, and the third accused Ghulam Mehbood, were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for five years. (All the three had to undergo solitary confinement for three months. This sentence was pronounced on 27th April 1923.

There were eight accused in the third case. In the judgement pronunced on 18th May 1923, the first accused, Akbar shah, and the eighth accused, Gaur Rahman, were sentenced to two years imprisonment while the second accused, Ferozuddin Mansur, the third accused, Abdul majid, and the sixth accused, Sultan Muhammad were all sentenced to one year's

imprisonment, while the seventh accused Abdul Quader was set free as he was found not guilty. Two of the accused, Ghulam Ahmed and Fida Ali turned approvers.

Besides these three cases, a case against Muhammad Shafiq and another against Fazl Ilahi Qurban were also launched in Peshawar in 1924 and 1927, respectively. All these five cases together have come to be known as the Peshawar Conspiracy Cases.

Of these, the first three cases had one feature in common. Because of the hatred towards the British rule, all of them had left India as *mujahirs* (pilgrims) to the Soviet Union. Inspired by the revolutionary changes there, they were returning to India. On their way they were arrested and tried. Although they were pictured by the Government as "Bolshevik agents" they had no firm commitment to Bolshevism. The significance of these cases was that they were the first conpiracy cases instituted in India against the Communist movement.

A word about the session judge who heard these cases. The same judge who heard the Chauri Chaura case earlier was appointed to hear the these cases. In the Chauri Chaura case he had sentenced to death 172 of the 228 accused. In the Peshawar judgements also, throwing to the winds the conception of impartiality generally attributed to a judge, he went to the extent of blindly believing the prosecution case and convicted the accused.

In an article written on the Chauri Chaura judgement, M. N. Roy characterized it as "legal murder". The judgements in Peshawar conspiracy cases too deserved the same epithet.

As the first Communist conspiracy cases, they had their significance. But the political and cultural level of those involved in the cases were comparatively low. Except being accused in these cases, most of them could not contribute anything substantial to the growth of the Indian Communist movement. As far as we know, it was only Fazl Ilahi Qurban, the accused in the fifth Peshawar conspiracy case

(1927) who had played a role to the history of the Communist Party of India.

However, the Government's anti-Communist repressive actions did not end with the Peshawar Conspiracy Cases. While the second and third cases in this series were in progress, the Government launched another conspiracy case in Kanpur, known as the Kanpur Conspiracy Case. Since S.A. Dange (Bombay) and Muzaffar Ahmed (Calcatta) who later become prominent Communist leaders as well as M.N. Roy were among the accused in this case, the Kanpur Conspiracy Case gained significance in the history of the Indian Communist movement.

The prosecution case, in brief, was as follows. The Communist International was a Moscow-based organization which was trying to end the British rule in India. M.N. Roy was essentially the principal agent of that organization engaged in espionage work for Russia in India and other countries. There were Bolshevik agents in many places in India working in accordance with the instruction form that principal agent. That activity was dangerous to the rule of the British Crown in India.

The Government first prepared a list of 13 individuals thus working as "Bolshevik agents". They were M.N. Roy, Muzaffar Ahmad, Shaukat Usmani, Ghulam Hussain, S.A. Dange, M. Shingaravelu Chettiar, R.C.L. Sharma, Nalini Gupta, Shamsuddin Hasan, M.P.S. Velayudhan, Dr. Manilal, Dr. Sampurnanand and Sathyabhakta.

They were included in the list as important persons among those who were in one way or another connected with Roy and with propagating the literature published under his leadership. But after scrutiny, five names were struck off the list. Thus when the hearings commenced, only the first eight of the above list remained. Others escaped prosecution.

There was an important difference between the Peshawar cases and the present one. In the Peshawar cases, the outlook of the accused was how to extricate themselves form the

accusation. The Kanpur accused, on the other hand, considered the court as a platform to counter the political attack of the Government. (The Meerut accused too adopted the same approach). The examples of the trials in the history of the world Communist movement from that of Marx in the Cologne case to that of Dimitorv in the Reichstag Arson case was first emulated in a India by the accused in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case of 1923-24.

Both the Government which decided to conduct the Kanpur Conspiracy Case and its accused Muzaffar Ahmad and others (the first accused Roy was not in India) had the same approach towards the conduct of the case. More than getting the accused convicted, the Government was interested in exposing the "danger of Bolshevism". The prosecution utilized all its ingenuity to show that the theory and practice of communism was shocking to any one who had "loyalty to Indian culture and appreciation for its moral values". On the contrary, the accused, through their affidavits and arguments, tried to expose the true colour of the British rule in India and to make clear the inevitability of adopting a revolutionary path against it. In other words, the Government tried to show that the theory and practice of the Communists were in no way acceptable to the Indian people, while the accused tried to establish that the revolutionary path open to the people of India as in the case of other countries was that of Communism.

Internationally too, it became a great sensation, because for the first time in Britain, the Labour Party with Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister was in power. The accused in the Kanpur Conspiracy Case which was being conducted in accordance with the direction of that Government were those who were trying to form a working class party in India. Though with an outlook and programme different from that of the British Labour Party, Roy, Muzaffar Ahmad, Dange and other accused were striving to form a political party on the organized strength of the working class. The opinion that it was a paradox which should not be allowed to continue

was gaining strength among the workers and their leaders of Britain and other European countries. In many countries attempts were made to exert pressure on the British government to withdraw the prosecution.

In India, arrangements were made to form defence committees to render assistance to the accused. Even non-communist nationalists and democrats, congressmen and other anti-imperialist minded people realized the political significance of the case in that the government was attacking to destroy revolutionary political activities as a whole by raising the bogey of "communist conspiracy". We shall see later on that this was true of the Meerut conspiracy case also. The case helped to generate a sense of willingness among the people to support the communists, a reaction which was quite the reverse of what the government had hoped for at the time of filing the case.

Two of the eight accused, M. N. Roy and R. C. L. Shastry, did not appear before the court, since the former was in Germany and the latter in Pondicherry, then a French possession in India. Shingaravelu Chettiar was granted bail on account of old age and ill-health. The Kanpur court did not try him. (After the pronouncement of the judgement, the Government of India advised the Government of Madras to proceed against Shingaravelu if it deemed it necessary.) Of the remaining five, Gulam Hussain turned approver and consequently, the government withdrew the prosecution against him. The remaining four, Muzaffar Ahmed, Shaukat Usmani, Dange and Nalini Gupta were sentenced to four years' rigorous imprisonment.

Though the Kanpur Conspiracy Case ended with this, its repercussions continued. The accused had used the courtroom as a platform to propagate the theory of communism and the political programme based on it. And it became quite effective. Though connected with the national freedom movement under the leadership of the Congress, the idea to form a working class party independent of it, with an outlook and programme of its own, received wider

recognition than ever before. The type of party proposed by Roy in his letters to Singaravelu Chettiar, Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed and others had not yet been formed. It may appear to be a pardox that the initiative to form such a party came from an unexpected quarters. But that was what happened.

The accused had maintained before the court their legal right to organize a party in the very name of a communist party. They had also pointed out the fact that communist parties were functioning in many countries, including Britain. Even the position of the prosecution was not that communist ideas were illegal. The ruling circles had declared in and outside the Parliament that it was not communism they had put in the dock, but the conspiracies to destroy the British rule in India by use of force on the instructions received from Moscow.

Witnessing all these developments, a Congressman by name Satyabhakta (an accused in the first list of Kanpur Conspiracy Case) began an attempt to form in quite a legal way a communist party, without connection with Moscow. In 1925, the Congress session was meeting at Kanpur. Satyabhakta proposed the holding of an all-India conference of communists who supported his ideas, at Kanpur at the time of the Congress session there. He had already formed an organization, named the Indian Communist Party (confined to Kanpur). He put forward the suggestion to hold the conference as the secretary of that party.

At that time, though Dange, Muzaffar Ahmed and others were in jail as the accused in the Kanpur case, their close colleagues were outside. Muzaffar Ahmad was later released on the grounds of ill-health. Hence, many including Muzaffar Ahmad accepted the invitation of Satyabhakta and attended the All-India Communist Conference at Kanpur. Among those who attended the conference were S.V. Ghate, K. N. Joglekar, Ayodhya Prasad and others who were later implicated in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. The welcome speech of Hazrat Mohani, the presidential address by

Singaravelu Chettiar and other proceedings of the conference got wide publicity in the newspapers in India and abroad.

But, as the proceedings of the conference progressed, two distinct trends of thought emerged. Satyabhakta pleaded that the party should have no links with the Communist International. The large majority of the delegates under the leadership of Muzaffar Ahmad, Ghate and others opposed this. Serious differences arose regarding the name of the party itself—whether it should be 'Communist Party of India' or 'Indian Communist Party'. Here too the issue involved was the same: whether it should function in India as part of the world Communist movement or as a communist party particularly for India. On this issue, Satyabhakta was defeated. Other Communists had the majority.

The conference adopted a constitution for the party and formed a central committee with two General Secretaries, S.V. Ghate and J. P. Bagerhatta. Thus, for the first time a communist party was born on the "Indian soil" in a conference with delegates from the different provinces in India.

However, it cannot be said that with this the obstructions before the party for its growth had been removed. The fact was that the Central Committee thus formed could not function in a continuous manner. Whatever organization formed was broken up with the institution of the Meerut Conspiracy Case implicating many prominent communists including Ghate, one of the secretaries of the party. Only the central committee which was reorganized after the comrades accused in the Meerut case were released from jail could provide a continuous all-India leadership.

The Kanpur conference played an important role in paving the way for the formation of an organization permanently functioning under the leadership of the Central Committee reorganized in 1933. The conference held earlier at Tashkent and the committee formed there under the leadership of Roy did play their respective roles in creating conditions for holding the Kanpur conference. That is, if Tashkent was the first step in the growth of the

Communist movement in India, the second was Kanpur. The Communist movement which the authorities tried to crush through the Kanpur Conspiracy Case, in effect, became an organized force.

10

RIVALRIES AND NEGOTIATIONS

I. THE BEGINNING OF COMMUNAL RIOTS

We have noted earlier that as the Khilafat and non-cooperation movement developed into a mass movement, the rivalry between the Hindus and Muslims was pushed to the background and the unity between the two communities strengthened. However, in the last phase of this movement itself, the unity broke up and communal riots began to break out at least in some places like Malabar and Multan.

As the Swaraj Party and the Gandhian organizations like the Spinner's Association began to function following the withdrawal of the non-cooperation and civil disobedience programmes, the Hindu-Muslim problem became acute as never before. The Hindu and Muslim leaders drifted apart and began to raise the demand of their respective communities. They were, however, not content now with creating public opinion by issuing press statements and making

public speeches and with submitting petitions to the authorities and using the Central and provincial legislatures as platforms to raise the demands of their respective communities. Communal riots broke out with the participation of hundreds of thousands among both the communities leaving dozens of people killed and several more injured in each such riot. After the end of each riot, leaders of both the communities accused each other for the holocaust. It may be recalled that the more prominent among them were those who had held high the banner of Hindu-Muslim unity during the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement.

It was in 1923 that Hindu-Muslim riots shot up as an important political issue. In December 1923, the Congress session was held at Cocanada (now, Kakinada). It was presided over by one of the stalwarts of the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement, Maulana Mohammed Ali, who emphasized the need for preserving the Hindu-Muslim unity. He utilized the opportunity to eloquently point out how his Muslim brethren stood to gain if they cooperated with the Hindu brethren, and the great loss they would suffer if they cooperated with the British government. Highlighting the fact that a firm believer in Hinduism (Mahatma Gandhi) had gone to jail in defence of Islam, he asked: "What is it that has happened since that staunch Hindu, Mahatma Gandhi, went to the goal for advocating the cause of Islam that we must cease to cooperative with his co-religionists?"

Notwithstanding Mohammed Ali's impassioned speech from the Congress rostrum, a vast change had already started taking place in both the Hindu and Muslim political leaders. Among the stalwarts who had stood shoulder-to-shoulder in the non-cooperation movement, Pandit Malaviya, Lala Lajpat Rai and many others had already joined the Hindu Mahasabha, while many of the Muslim leaders joined the Muslim League. This tendency had reached its zenith in 1924, the year in which the office of Caliph was abolished as a result of the political changes brought about in Turkey

under Kamal Pasha. With this disappeared the basic cause of the Khilafat movement.

With the launching of the Khilafat movement, the Muslim League remained inactive. After the movement failed, a meeting of the League was held in Many 1924 at Lahore which emphasized certain demands to be included in the future constitution of the country. One of the main demands was that the general nature of the constitution should be federal with complete autonomy to the provinces except in certain common subjects which were to be given to the Centre. The second proposal concerned the representation in the provincial legislatures. It emphasized that in all elected institutions the minority should have adequate and effective representation, through constitutencies in which the members of that particular community alone could exercise franchise. It was also demanded that no bill or resolution should be deemed passed if it was opposed by three-fourths of the members belonging to any particular community. The League asked the Government to take immediate steps to establish a fully responsible government, incorporating these demands of the minority community.

On the other side, the Hindu Mahasabha started vigorous activities under the leadership of Malaviya. Defending the organization in which the membership was restricted exclusively to the Hindus, Malaviya said that since the Congress was a political organization,it could not deal with the social and other non-political problems of the different communities, hence the need to organize the Hindu Mahasabha. The Muslims valued their culture and the Hindus too should value their culture, should preserve it and porpagate it, he said.

The attempts of each to value its own 'cultural ethos' and to preserve and propagate them ended up in *Sanghatan* (organization) and *Shuddhi* (reclaiming the Muslim converts) on the part of the Hindus and in *Tabligh* (conversion to Islam and *Tanzim* (providing models) on the part of the Muslims. Attempts were made to convert the Hindus to Islam and the

Muslims to Hinduism. Volunteer organisations were formed for this purpose. In the words of Malaviya, "Muslims have been converting Hindus to Islam for centuries. The majarity of the present-day Muslims in India are Hindu converts. Innumerable Christian organizations are engaged in religious conversion. Therefore, the question of forming a Hindu organization for conversion has become urgent".

A number of practical issues cropped up in this background. The Muslims objected to the Hindus taking out processions in front of mosques, playing instruments. They complained that the growth of the Banyan trees worshiped by the Hindus were obstructing their *Tazia* processions. The Hindus, on the other hand, protested against slaughtering cows by the Muslims in public places in connection with the celebration of *Id* and other religiours festivals.

Each such issue led to quarrels and clashes in many localities. On both the sides several people were killed and wounded. Serious clashes took place in Calcutta, Delhi and Gulberga (then in Hyderabad State). The worst kind of riot took place in Kohat in the North West Frontier Province. The communal passion and the resultant riots that erupted towards the end of the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement in Malabar and Multan spread all over the country.

It is worth mentioning here that the Hindu and Muslim members of the committees appointed to enquire into each of these riots prepared reports which contradicted with each other. For instance, Gandhi and Shaukat Ali were deputed to enquire into the Kohat riots. Since the government did not allow them to visit the spot, many went to them to give evidence. The report prepared by Gandhi contained indications that the Muslims were responsible for the riots, whereas Shaukat Ali's report suggested provocation on the part of the Hindus.

If this was the stand of the two most respected leaders of the Khilafat-non-cooperation days, the position of the not so well respected can well be imagined. And these were reflected in the approaches of the Congress, the Muslim

League and the Hindu Mahasabha. Beyond expressing regret over the riots, the Congress was never willing to fix the blame on anybody. Like the Congress, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha expressed regret; each put the blame on the other community. In other words, debates were carried out on communal lines.

Attempts were made to find a solution to this situation at various levels. In Bengal, on the initiative of C.R. Das, leaders of both the communities signed a pact. The All-India Congress Committee appointed a committee consisting of Dr. Ansari and Lala Lajpat Rai to prepare a draft political agreement at all-India level. Motilal Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad took the initiative to form "an organization above communal thinking". They visualized their new organization as one in which the membership would be open only to those who declared that they were not and would not become members of any party or organization which the central leadership of the new organization considered communal.

However, more important was the 21-days fast which Gandhi undertook on 17th September 1924 to express his mental agony over the countrywide riots and the consequent loss of life and property. As expected, the fast helped to turn people's attention towards the issue of communal unity. The fast and the discussions that were held during the period helped to bring about formally some temporary understanding.

The issues like procession in front of mosques, cow slanghter and religious conversion, however, eluded a permanent solution. For this and for the reason that there remained disputes over the details of the constitutional reforms, communal riots still continued. During the year 1925 after Gandhi terminated his fast, 16 riots took place at different places in the country. According to the official estimates, 112 communal riots broke out in the years between 1922 and 1927 leaving 450 killed and more than 5000 injured. Of these 112 riots, 21 took place in 1926 alone.

The Hindu and Muslim leaders pointed their accusing finger at each other for their instinct for violence to which they attributed the unprecedented danger that loomed large over Indian politics. "Pure nationalists" who were not aligned to either of the camps came to the conclusion that the communal strife was the result of the British stategy of "divide and rule". M.N. Roy who was closely observing the situation as the spokesman of the Communist International as well as the then existing Communist groups in India had pointed out that along with the British tactics, the selfish interest of a small minority among the bourgeois-landlord classes in India was also responsible for the strife. They also blamed the reactionary outlook of the political leaders belonging to both the communities.

For instance, an article in the name of the Communist Party of India that appeared in M. N. Roy's journal, *Vanguard* dated 18th October 1923, stated:

> How to unite Hindus and Moslems? So far all the attempts for such a union have failed. So long as the political movement in India carried partially or wholly on religious ground the unity will not be realised. The liquidation of the khilafat conference will not solve the problem. National Congress as a political force is practically dead, and a sort of amalgamation with a dead body will not make much difference. Some radical changes are required to create Hindu-Moslem unity and to revive the struggle for the independence.[1]

Suggesting a solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem the article continues:

> Have the Hindus and Muslim masses nothing in common in India? Are both of them not suffering equally under the ruthless exploitation of British imperialism? Are they not economically ruined by the British and Indian capitalists and landloards? The union can only be realised when they are told of their common grievances, so that they should be conscious of their common miserable plight. It may be

1. *Vanguard*, vol: 3 No.4, reprinted in Adhikari, *op cit*, vol 2, p 212.

difficult for bourgeois political philosophy to find a common ground to stand upon. The masses—the common workers and peasants—are however as a matter of fact already united by vitue of their common economic interests, only the consciousness of this union is interfered with by large doses of conflicting religious dogmas administered by interested parties. Religious propaganda is an ingenious method of exploitation of the ignorant masses by the able doctors of divinity. This they have to do in order to preserve feudal rights of the upper classes, without whose support they cannot live and prosper.[2]

The same idea were found expressed in different forms in the journals run by Indain Communits, like the *Socialist* of S. A. Dange. The documents collected by Dr. G. Adhikari included some such views. All these showed clearly that right from the inception of the Communist Party as a movement, a new approach towards the Hindu-Muslim strife, as in the case of many other problems, appeared on the Indian political scene. As distinct from the bourgois-petty-bourgeois approach, this new, communist approach linked the socio-cultural problem of Hindu-Muslim rift to the political problem of anti-imperialist struggle and to the economic and political problem of the fight between the exploited and the exploiter.

In the then existing Indian political situation, the voice of communism was a very feeble one. It did not bring any considerable change in Indian politics. But, as distinct from the bourgeois-petty-bourgeois politics, and challenging the very-fundamental outlook of the religious leaderships of both the communities, a new approach was manifest for the first time on the Hindu-Muslim problem,concentrating on the unity of the millions above religious, caste and other similar considerations.

2. *Ibid*, pp 212-213.

II. COMMUNAL AND CASTE POLITICS

As we have noted earlier, Muslim politics arose out of the differences over the provisions contained in the 1909 and 1919 constitutional reforms proposals of the British government. Basic to the Muslim communalism and the demands raised by the Muslim leaders was the fear that they would have to submit themselves to the domination of the majority (Hindu) community, once elected legislatures and governments responsible to them came into existence. There was no dispute over the issue of transfer of power to the Indians. The dispute was over the rightful share they should get out of the power going to be thus transferred. And the Muslim masses enthusiastically rallied behind their leaders.

The demands put forward by the Muslim leaders pertained to, among others, the representation they should get in the legislatures, ministries and in government service with the guarantee that those in such positions would be their real representatives. It was because a satisfactory agreement was made in 1916 at Lucknow in accordance with then prevailing conditions, that Tilak, Motilal Nehru, Gandhi and others could bring about a unity between the Hindus and the Muslims in such a way as to enable them to conduct a joint agitation based on the issues of Khilafat and the 1919 constitutional reforms.

Like the Muslims, the low-caste Hindus, too, had developed their own mass political agitations in the post-1909 years fearing "Brahmin domination in the event of establishing a responsible government". The Justice Party of Madras and the non-Brahmin organizations of Bombay, were next to the Muslim League in terms of importance in the growth of communal-caste politics. The Justice Party had won the election in the 1920s and formed their ministry in Madras. Following the course of the agitations organized by the Muslim League and other Muslim organizations against Hindus, the Justice Party and the non-Brahmin

organizations of Bombay organized widespread agitations against Brahmin domination. It was from such agitations that leaders of anti-caste atheist movements like E. V. Ramaswami Naicker emerged. In Maharashtra too, many groups emerged as part of the non-Brahmin movement, which later became leftist parties.

The organizations of the depressed castes were formed much later. Many of them developed into left oriented anti-caste movements like that of Ramaswami Naicker. Like the Muslim League, they also demanded representation in the provincial-Central legislatures through electoral constituencies reserved for them on the basis of separate electorate. This demand for separate electorate led Gandhi to undertake another fast to which we shall return later on. Here we will only indicate that such a demand came to be raised by non-caste Hindus as well as the Muslims.

Like the Muslims, non-Brahmins and the depressed castes, the minority communities like the Christians and Sikhs too put forward their claims. They were in agreement with the Muslims on one point, namely, that they were non-Hindus, hence minority communities, and that they also feared the domination by the majority (Hindu) community. But, unlike Muslims, the Christians, devoid of a military tradition, were leading a peaceful life. Besides, they were a minority community in every part of the country, whereas the Muslims constituted a majority at least in some regions or even provinces. The Sikhs who possessed no less a military tradition than the Muslims, were confined to one province (Punjab). Hence, neither their claims nor their political moves created any impact at the national level.

However, during the period in which Hindu-Muslim riots broke out on a wide scale, the non-Brahmins of Madras and Bombay, the Sikhs in Punjab and the Christians all over India came up with their own political demands, which added a new dimension to Indian politics. The new dimension was that while the leaders of the different communities were unanimous in the matter of power being transferred to

Indians, they were at loggerheads with each other on the nature of the new administrative set up.

An interesting fact was that both these were going on in a parallel way. The Swaraj Party continuously raised the "national demand" in the Central legislature. They demanded replacement of the administration by officials who were not responsible to the people by a government of people's representatives. In the provincial legislatures they opposed the Government by every legitimate means and tried to vote out the budgets. In Bengal and in the Central Provinces they were even able to defeat the governments.

It was in these circumstances that Gandhi began his fast in September 1924. Leaders of different parties and communities met at Delhi to discuss the possibility of bringing about peace and amity among communities, particularly between the Hindus and Muslims. But the conference could not come to any conclusion on the points of dispute. The discussions revealed that the main issue of dispute was the proposed constitutional reforms and the position the different communities would have in the new set up. Following this, a conference was held on 23rd January 1925 under Gandhi's chairmanship and appointed two sub-committees. The task of one was to draw up a clear picture of the national demand of Swaraj. This committee had to decide the form of the future administrative set up. The task of the second sub-committee was to examine the issues of dispute between the Hindus and Muslims and suggest solutions to them. Thus a political situation came into being in which the controversial issues such as processions in front of mosques and cow slaughter were intervowen with the difference of opinon over the share each community should have in Swaraj.

The Lucknow Pact of 1916 solved the issues of dispute which had cropped up in the first decade after the formation of the Muslim League. The understanding arrived at on the question of sharing power between the Hindus and Muslims formed the basis of the Pact. But the disputes that existed in the years 1924-1925 were not confined to the Hindus and

Muslims. The agitations conducted by the Muslims in an organized manner which compelled the government to concede their demands led the Sikh and Christian religious communities as well as the lower caste groups among the Hindus, including the depressed castes, to organize similar agitations to win their own demands. Besides, the agitation of 1924-25 for national demands was many times more powerful than that of 1916. The relentless and uncompromising battle put up by Motilal Nehru, Vithalbhai Patel and others in the Central legislature and C. R. Das and others in provincial legislatrues brought pressures on the British government. It became evident that without offering something substantial, it was impossible for the British to continue the rule as before. In other words, it was in a situation in which most people were convinced that a democratic set up was going to be a reality very soon that the leaders of the different communities raised the demands of their respeetive communities.

The British government resorted to a tactic cleverly utilizing the situation in which the bourgeois nationalists in India have always got themselves enmeshed. The clearest manifestation of this was the statement made by the Secretary of State for India, Lord Birkenhead, in the British Parliament, which the political leaders and newspapers of those days called "Birkenhead's Challenge". Birkenhead stated: "To talk of India as an entity is as absurd as to talk of Europe as an entity. Yet the very nationalist spirit which has created most of our difficulties in the last few years is based on the aspirations and claims of a nationalist India. There has never been such a nation."

Describing at length the different religious communities inhabiting India and denying her nationhood, he declared: "If we withdraw from India tomorrow, the immediate consequences would be a struggle *a outrance*... between the Muslim and Hindu population." He challenged the Indian leaders who criticized the British government to "produce a constitution which carries behind it a fair measure of general agreement among the great people of India". Confident of the

ibility of such an exercise, Birkenhead boasted that they would fulfil the obligation to the Indian people "of whom we are the responsible guardians".

As the statement makes it clear, the actions of the British government were governed by the knowledge of the complexities of the problems faced by the Indian national leaders and the confidence that the national leaders would not be able to formulate a plan acceptable to the people and leaders of the various religious communities, on the one hand, and the difficulty in rejecting India's national demand for a responsible government, on the other.

This naturally created a stir among the national leaders who were to give a fitting reply to 'Birkenhead's challenge'. The Swaraj sub-committee and the Hindu-Muslim unity committee formed at the conference convened in the wake of Gandhi's fast began to function with increased vigour and vigilance leading to an all-parties conference, the appointment of a committee headed by Motilal Nehru to draw a blueprint for India's constitution, the Motilal Nehru Report and other developments. We shall deal with these developments later on. But here it is relevant to cite the observation made by Gandhi on Birkenhead's challenge. Gandhi stated:

> Lord Birkenhead thinks the British Government are trustees of our welfare. We think they hold us in bondage for their benefit.
>
> His lordship says we cannot be a nation with our 9 religions and 130 languages. We content that for all practical purposes and for protection from outside, we are one nation. He thinks that non-cooperation was a dreadful mistake. The vast majority of us think it alone awakened this sleeping nation from its torpor, it alone gave the nation a force whose strength is beyond measure. Birkenhead thinks that in Hindu-Muslim dissensions, the British Government kept its hand unsullied. It is the earnest belief of almost every Indian that the British Government are principally responsible for these quarrels.

Birkenhead thinks we must cooperate with them. Deshbandhu has shown the way out. His offer stands.

Making it explicitly clear that such a cooperation can only be on the basis of equality, Gandhi concluded:

Let us gather that force, the non-violent force of civil resistance, and we shall be equal. This is no threat, no menace. It is a hard fact.

That is, Gandhi perceived the caste-communal politics including the Hindu-Muslim dissensions as part of the political struggle against theBritish rule. Gandhi, like all other nationalists including the Swarajists, thought in terms of solving the Hindu-Muslim problem taking it an integral part of the struggle to win independence.

Insofar as the anti-British struggle, Gandhi's outlook suffered from serious weaknesses and contradictions as was the case with the outlook of other nationalists. That affected the Hindu-Muslim issue as well. In later chapters, we shall see that these weaknesses and contradictions were manifested throughtout the period beginning with the 1925-26 all-parties discussions and ending with the partition of India in 1947.Here, we will only point to the fact that M.N. Roy who was handling the Indian problems on behalf of the Communist International, was able to point to them right in 1925 through the articles written by him. In the April 1925 issue of the *Masses*, Roy published an article sharply criticizing the constitution of the all-parties committee formed under Gandhi's leadership and its attitudes. He categorically asserted in the article that the millions consisting of Hindus and Muslims belonged to the same class and that it was the bourgeois political leaders who were making them fight against each other. "The developing consciousness of the masses of India will give the lie to the disunion that is sown among them in the name of religion by the band of maulanas and swamis (of the Hindu-Muslim unity committee), acting as the agents of the existing social system of oppression and expolitation." Let it be noted here that it was because of the continuation of the situation that prevailed in 1925-26 to which Roy

pointed, that India was partioned in 1947 and many leaders like Swami Sradhanand (1926) and Mahatma Gandhi (1948) were assasinated.

III. DISSENSIONS AND UNITY IN BOURGEOIS POLITICS

The Swaraj Party which emerged as a result of the split in the Congress in the wake of the withdrawal of non-cooperation was functioning with the perspective of transforming the legislature into a platform of struggles. Accordingly, the Swarajists were striving to use the legislature in such a way as to give expression to the anti-imperialist feelings of the people by staging walkouts frequently in the legislature, voting out budgets and other official motions and boycotting official members and the functions sponsored by them.

However, a change began to appear in this approach. The opinion that it was futile to pursue such a policy began to emerge among the leaders of the Swaraj Party leading to dissensions in the party, itself the offspring of dissensions in the Congress.

We have already referred to the efforts made by C.R. Das in his last days to move along the path of negotiations with the tacit approval of Gandhi. Even at that time, Das used the floor of the legislature as though the Swarajists had not given up the anti-government posture. After the demise of Das, Motilal Nehru and other leaders continued to pursue the same approach. In other words. the style of the parliamentary work of the Swaraj Party contained the vestiges of Gandhian non-cooperation.

A section discontented with this policy emerged within the Swaraj Party. The growth of this section and the subsequent dissension in the Party became accute with the death of C.R. Das. Therefore, some historians wrongly ascribe the division in the Party to his death.

Earlier, we had referred to the time marked by the end of the 'Tilak era' and the beginning of the 'Gandhian era' in the Indian politics. It was the time when differences arose between Tilak and Gandhi on the approach to be adopted in relation to the 1919 reforms. Tilak soon died and Gandhi emerged as the unquestioned leader of the national movement. Tilak advocated the policy of conditional (responsive) cooperation to the British, whereas Gandhi stood for non-cooperation with the authorities as part of the struggle to achieve the objective. When these approaches came to a class with each other in the background of the 1920-21 mass upheaval, the Gandhian approach and method of struggle gained upper hand, attracting even the followers of Tilak to the camp of Gandhi. Tilak had the foresight to perceive that things were taking shape in that direction.

However, the spirit of non-cooperation continued to persist in the new form of using the legislature forum for the anti-government struggle. Besides, making it clear that work in the legislature was only a partial, temporary function of the Congress, it maintained itself as an organization preparing for a confrontation with the Government in the form of direct action. The Spinners' Association and other organizations based on the Gandhian "constructive programmes" functioned to serve as tools for this purpose.

This was, however, not acceptable to the former 'Tilakites'. They continued to assert that the non-cooperation programme was a failure of Gandhism and that the only course of wisdom was 'responsive cooperation' as advocated by Tilak. But this was not acceptable not only to the followers of Gandhi but also to the majority in the Swaraj Party. These differences brought the Party to an open split within a few months after the death of C. R. Das in June 1925. Generally speaking, the disillusionment that grew among the leaders of the Swaraj Party and the consequent thought of the need to have a reconsideration of the policies being pursued brought the Party to the split.

It may be recalled that the disillusionment among those who had participated in the non-cooperation started with the perspective of "Swaraj in one year" led to the formation of the Swaraj Party. A feeling began to spread rapidly that the Swaraj Party too failed to achieve anything substential in the course of two or three years of its existence.

The iron fist of the British authorities started moving against the Swarajists who had given up the boycott of the legislature. The authorities alleged that they had links with the revolutionaries including those who were engaged in 'bomb-politics' and rendered assistance to them in their revolutionary activities. It was a fact that the Swarajists and the revolutionaries were equally opposed to the Gandhian form of struggle. Thus the measures being taken by the Government purportedly to "curb voilent activities" fell on the Swarajists and the followers of the Gandhian form of struggle as well. The struggle the Swarajists waged in the legislature against these repressive messures apparently failed.

Besides, the arguments put forward by the Swaraj Party leadership on the floor of the legislature for the national demand of a responsible governments at the centre and in the provinces turned out to be a cry in the wilderness. Two trends of thought emerged in the Swaraj Party as to how the new situation should be met. Representing one of these trends, Motilal Nehru introduced a resolution at the Kanpur session of the Congress held in December 1925. The resolution stated: In case no decision is announced on the terms of the settlement offered to the Government by the Independent and Swarajya Parties of the assembly by the resolution passed on the 18th February 1924, before the end of February1926, the Party shall...intimate to the Government on the floor of the House that the Party will no longer continue to remain and work in the present legislatures as heretofore.

Needless to say, the resolution smacked of the vestige of the Gandhian form of struggle. Malaviya introduced an

alternative resolution suggesting that the work in the legislatures should be such that it should be most useful to achieve expeditiously a fully resporsible government. Cooperate when it was necessary to win the national demand;adopt a policy of obstruction when it was necessary.

Speaking in support of this resolution, M. R. Jayakar announced that since he had serious differences with the policies of the Swaraj Party, he along with N. C. Kelkar and B. S. Moonje, had already resigned the membership in the legislature. Jayakar advocated a definite policy of either completely boycotting the legislatures or "occupying every place of power, initiative and responsibility and giving no quarters to the bureaucracy".

Clearly, this was the logical extension of the path proposed by Tilak. The path of Tilak was now a thing of the past. The resolution introduced by Malaviya with the support of Jayakar and others was rejected by the Congress and Nehru's resolution was adopted with a majority of votes.

The result was a split both in the Congress and in the Swaraj Party. Those who advocated the line of responsive cooperation formed a party of their own. Besides Jayakar, Kelkar and Moonje, who had announced their resignation from the Swaraj Party at Kanpur itself, Lajpat Rai, Malaviya and some others also joined the new party. The communal-caste politicians who had earlier left the Congress or were working against the Congress joined hands with the new party and opposed and defeated the "obstructionist policy" of the Swaraj Party. These assorted groups formed ministries in a number of provinces. In the background of these developments, the Congress session held in Gauhati towards the end of 1926 gave up the "obstructionist policy" which had been pursued by the Swaraj Party.

It became clear, however, that the path advocated by Tilak was as futile as the Gandhian path of struggle as well as the "obstructionist policy" of the Swarajists. The different sections of the bourgeois national leadership became one in holding the view that as long as differences existed

among themselves and as long as caste-religious politics continued to exist, both the Tilak path and the Gandhian path would remain equally futile. All of them understood that they would have to remain united, if they were to face the British policy manifested through the arrogance contained in the 'Birkenhead challenge' and through the repressive policy to which they were subjected in one way or the other. That was why they came forward, as a response to the Birkenhead challenge, to convene an all-parties conference and appoint an all-parties committee with a view to find a solution to the problems created by the religious-caste politics.

It may be recalled that when a similar situation arose in 1916, the bourgeois leadership tried to face the British rulers unitedly by arriving at an understanding among themselves and between the Congress and the Muslim League. The same effort was repeated in a way towards the end of the 1920s.

But, in a decade, the country had witnessed considerable changes. The bourgeoisie as a class had become much stronger. It had displayed the ability to conduct big struggles by rallying the millions around it and to use the floor of the legislature to strengthen the struggle outside. At the same time, the working class politics too, though in its infancy, had entered the scene and there were indications of the coming clash between the bourgeois politics and the working class politics. Though with low level of political consciousness, organizations of the working class, the peasantry and other exploited classes were emerging and agitations and struggles had begun to break out under the leadership of these organizations. It was in this background that the bourgeois leadership was dealing with the national issues, including the question of communal-caste politics.

This circumstance led to the manifestation of dissensions among the different sections of the bourgeois national leadership in simultaneous with unity among them, surpassing the dissensions. We have already described the concrete forms of

these dissensions. The split in the Congress and the further split in the break away Swaraj Party; one section of the Congress leadership joining the Hindu Mahasabha and another section joining the Muslim communal organizations; the emergence of the various parties and organizations representing other religious minorities and non-caste Hindus—these were the manifest forms of dissensions and splits in bourgeois politics.

However, there was one demand raised unitedly by the bourgeois national leaders above the different forms of these dissensions, the demand that the next step in the constitutional reform must be granting responsible government equivalent to the Dominions within the British Empire, like Canada and Australia, in status.

None of the religious-communal parties and groups raising dispute with the Congress over the share of their respective communities after winning this demand had any dispute with the Congress over the question of getting at least the Dominion Status. Nor was there a dispute between the moderates inside and outside the Congress over this issue. The Gandhians within the Congress and the Swarajists were unanimous on this issue.

For the first time the bourgeoise was entering into politics with a clear declaration of objective. It did not dare to make such a clear declaration of objective in 1905-1906 or in 1916-1917. The change that came about in Indian politics as a result of the Gandhian method of struggle and the obstructionist policy pursued later by the Swaraj Party provided the bougeoisie this courage.

IV. TOWARDS 'FULL INDEPENDENCE'

A considerable section was emerging in the Congress disatisfied with the demand of self-rule in the sense of Dominion Status raised by the bourgeois political leadership of the Congress and the Swaraj Party. According to them,

Dominion Status was inadequate. They wanted India to become a free country independent of the British empire and began to raise the slogan of *Poorna Swaraj*, "Full Independence". It also became clear that the Congress would split on this issue and that the revolutionaries outside the Congress would unite with the advocates of Full Independence against Dominion Status demanded by the right-wing Congress leaders and leaders of other bourgeois parties. This contradiction in objective and the resultant inner-party comflicts will be dealt with later. However, it is necessary here to examine briefly the circumstances that gave rise to these developments.

One of the results of the Gandhian struggle adopted by the Congress was that it inspired the middle and poor sections of the people to enter into the anti-imperialist struggle. The disappointment that grew generally among the Congressmen over the usefulness of this form of struggle and the political developments that followed did not affect this popular struggle. A new generation emerged within and outside the Congress convinced of the need to adopt forms of struggle, Gandhian or otherwise, under the leadership of the Congress and Gandhi or by forming new parties and organizations for the purpose. Besides, an organized trade union movement, widespread peasant agitations and struggles, though not as organized as the working class movement, and the organized activities of communists and socialists who were trying to give a left-wing revolutionary orientation to these movements and struggles became the characteristic features of Indian politics.

Looking from a class point of view, it can be seen that the foundations for all this were laid by the discontent of the worker and peasant masses and their organizational consciousness. It other words, these were germinated by the intensity of the exploitation by the British imperialism and the capitalists and landlords under its aegis together with the mass indignation against it.

The leftists who were fighting for full independence had the support of even a section of the bourgeoisie. Its leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Sreenivasa Iyengar and others were given wide publicity in the bourgeois press. Even Motilal Nehru and other advocates of Dominion Status tried to placate the leftist Congressmen advocating full independence.

As a natural consequence of this, the Congress session held in Madras in 1927 declared 'full independence' as it final objective. Two years later, Jawaharlal Nehru was elected president of the Congress at its Lahore session. The relevant question here is: why was it that the right-wing Congress leaders like Motilal Nehru, with Gandhi's blessings, joined hands with the moderates outside the Congress to win at least the Dominion Status on the one side, and attempted to placate the left-wing Congressmen demanding full independence, on the other? In order to find an answer to this question, it is necessary to examine the changes Indian economy had undergone in the 1920s.

The position of British monopoly capitalists in India had started showing weakness as a result of the problems Britain had been facing during the war and in the years immediately following the war. However, they were able to regain the old position during the years 1923-1927. In the year 1926-27, the British capital investment in India was 574.9 million pounds, which increased to 1000 million pounds in 1928-29.

They could also control vast econmic sectors of industries and commerce worth many times their capital investment by means of managing agencies and other systems. They exercised wide control over banking and foreign trade. Above all, because of their influence in the Central-provincial governments in India, they could establish domination over irrigation and plantations run on capitalist lines.

On the other side, the Indian capitalists also were growing. In 1923, the number of factories in India was 5,144 which increased to 7,515 by 1927. Some of them were Indian owned and others were British. It was only natural that the

Indian capitalists tried to change the proportion in their favour while the British tried to maintain it in their favour. In this competition, the government tried to take an attitude helpful to the British capitalists, while the bourgeois parties, including the Congress, tried to tilt the balance in favour of the Indian capitalists.

In this struggle between two sections of bourgeoise—foreign and national—several issues of national importance came up. The issues like the protection to Indian industrialists from imports were hotly debated inside the Central legislature and outside. In all these, the non-official members, including the Congressmen, were anxious to protect the interests of Indian capitalists, while the official members stood for British interests.

Here an important issue deserves special mention. The question concerns the parity of exchange between Indian rupee and the British pound. The government decided to fix the parity at Rs. $13\frac{1}{3}$ per pound instead of the prevailing rate of Rs 15. The Indian capitalists pointed out that this was a step detrimental to them. Hence, the Congressmen and the moderates outside the Congress opposed this move both inside and outside the Central legislature.

Similarly, many issues pertaining to the interests of Indian industrialists including that of protection to the steel industry, came up. In all these, all the bourgeois parties, including the Congress, relentlessly fought for the interests of the Indian capitalists. All these concrete issues together led the bourgeois political leadership to demand at least the Dominion Status for India.

However, it became clear that even if the entire bourgeois leadership worked together for a minimum programme to win Dominion Status, the British government was not willing to concede it. The Swaraj Party and the Congress deplored the government for spruning the offer of cooperation extended by C. R. Das during his last days. Hopes were once again aroused when the Viceroy Lord Reading was replaced by the "largehearted" Lord Irwin. The hopes reached

their zenith when Irwin called many political leaders, including Gandhi, for a discussion. But they were soon belied. According to Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the hisiorian of the Indian National Congress, the first week of November 1927 was turbulent.The Viceroy on tour cancelled his programme and returned to Delhi. Letters were sent to all the prominent leaders inviting them to meet him according to their convenience after 5th November. It was clear that the Viceroy had something important to convey. Gandhi received the invitation while he was in Mangalore. He cancelled his programme and immediately proceeded to Delhi. But the talk between them was held in a lukewarm atmosphere. Lord Irwin only gave him a copy of the statement made by the Secretary of State for India announcing the appointment of Simon Commission to enquire and report on the constitional reforms. Gandhi wondered if it was for this that he was called to Delhi to which the Viceroy's answer was a plain "yes". Gandhi said that if that was the case, he would have got it had it been sent in a one anna postal envelope.

The Congress, the Swarajists and all other bourgeois parties demanded a decisive share for the Indians in drafting a new constitution with self-rule no less than that of Dominion Status. The appointment of the Simon Commission represented a rejection of this national demand. For the Commission was packed exclusively with Englishmen. On the basis of the Commission's report it was for the British government and parliament to decide the future form of the government in India. The Indian bourgeoisie was disturbed in that it would have no role in the process of deciding the future administrative set up which was to handle monetary, tariff and taxation issues in which their interests always clashed with that of the British. It was convinced of the fact that the contradiction between them on the one hand and the British capitalists and the government on the other was not easy to resolve and that it would have to rally the entire masses behind it if they had to resolve the contradiction.

Even at this stage, Motilal Nehru and other right-wing Congress leaders were striving to resolve the problem by

putting forward the moderate demand of Dominion Status and holding skilful negotiations with the authorities. In this, they had the blessings of Gandhi. At the same time they were doubtful if they would be able to win this moderate demand by "skilful negotiations" alone. Consequently, they realized that it would be necessary to give shape to another mass movement like the Khilafat-non-cooperation movements.

The Gandhian "constructive programmes" and the organization based on these programmes constituted one of the weapons for this purpose in the armoury of the bourgeoisie. But there was a large section of people inside and outside the Congress who were not likely to get attracted by such programmes and organizations. They were the young revolutionary activists with an outlook different from that of the moderates and the followers of Tilak and Gandhi. This section included the small but energetic Communist Party, the numerous revolutionary groups connected with it or independent of it, and tens of thousands of militant Congress workers who had entered politics in response to the call given by the Congress during the non-cooperation period but, while remaining still in the Congress, were working hand in hand with the revolutionaries outside. The main link unifying all these sections was the preparation that was being made to organize a countrywide struggle to win the declared objective of full independence.

As the announcement with regard to the appointment of the Simon Commission was made towards the end of 1927, even the most moderate of the bourgeois leaders became discontent. The right-wing Congress leaders were convinced that the Government in Britain could not satisfy even the moderates. Accordingly, the Madras session of the Congress in December 1927 took two important decisions, one of which was the declaration of full independence as its ultimate aim. The Congress thus adopted the spirit of the resolution moved by Maulana Hazrat Mohani which it had rejected at the Ahmedabad session six years ago.

However, to the right-wing Congressmen this was a short time tactic designed to win the support of the leftist Congressmen and the revolutionary masses in their attempt to win the immedicate demand of Dominion Status. This was evident from their later moves. As for Gandhi, he stated in public that the discussion on the resolution held in the Madras session had "no more value than that of the debating society of school children".

But, more important was another resolution passed at the Madras session which stated: "Whereas the British Government have appointed the Statutory (Simon) Commission in utter disregard of India's right of self-determination, this Congress resolves that the only self-respecting course for India to adopt is to boycott the Commission at every stage and in every form."

Accordingly, the Congress decided to organize protest demonstrations all over India on the day of the arrival to the Simon Commission and to persuade other parties, organizations and members of the Central-provincial legislatures not to cooperate with the Commission in its work. It directed the Congress members of the Central-provincial legislatures to maintain their membership but, at the same time, make the boycott effective and attend the legislature only when necessary.

Thus, the boycott programme which was withdrawn following the Chauri Chaura incident was revived in a new form. Even the right-wing Congress leaders realized that they would be able to bargain with the authorities only in the background of mass enthusiasm created by such a movement and that if the bargaining failed, they would have to launch once again a mass movemet as they did in the 1920s. The Madras session was the reflection of this realization.

11

THE NEW UPSURGE

I. ON THE PATH OF STRUGGLE AGAIN

The decision taken at the Madras session of the Congress to boycott the Simon Commission led to the emergence of a new country-wide anti-imperialist movement. As it happend during the visit of the Prince of Wales, massive protest demonstrations were held throughout the country, ending the stagnation that had set in the Indian politics for about five years. The freedom fighting organizations including the Congress, once again took the path of struggle.

There was a basic difference between the visit of the Prince of Wales and that of the Simon Commission. The moderates had kept themselves away from the boycott of the visit of the Prince. They had even participated in many of the functions arranged in connection with it. Now a big change had come about in moderate politicians. Like the Congressmen, they too now became indignant at the announcement in relation to the terms of reference, powers,

structure and appointment of the Simon Commission. Presiding over the Annual Conference of the Liberal Federation, Tej Bahadur Sapru said:

> I do not think a worse challenge had been thrown out even before to Indian nationalism, and notwithstanding the profuse assurance in Mr. Baldwin's speech and the yet more profuse assurances in Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's speech, Indian nationalism of the Moderate school have been compelled to ask if the only way of recognizing the spirit of cooperation is by telling Indians that their lot is to be none other than of petitioners, that they can not be trusted to participate in the responsibility of making recommendations to Parliament for the future of their country, and that all that they may aspire to is to put their proposals before the Commission which may accept them or reject them, and again to repeat the same process of persuasion, argument and discussion before the Joint Committee of Parliament. And now if this is what is meant by co-operation, if this is the new idea of equality of status on which we are to be fed, if our patriotism is a prejudice and if the partiotism of the seven Members of Parliament is to be treated as impartial justice, then we Liberals feel justified in telling the Government here and in England, "you may do anything you like in the assertion of your right as supreme power, but we are not going to acquiesce in this method of dealing with us. Neither our self-respect not our sense of duty to our country can permit us to go near the Commission.[1]

Besides the Liberal Federation of Sapru, there were many political groups outside the Congress which took the same stand. In the Central legislature the resolution moved by Lajpat Rai opposing the proposal to constitute a committee to cooperate with the Simon Commission, received the support of a majority of the elected members. When the resolution was declared passed, the House resounded with

1. Quoted in R. C. Majumdar (ed), *The History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol XI. Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969, p 456.

shouts of "Vande Mataram". This was a clear evidence to the clash that was going on between the nationalist opposition and the official side.

Not only in the boycott of the Simon Commission, but also in the efforts to formulate a reforms proposal of the Indians as opposed to the proposal being prepared by the Commission, the different moderate groups cooperated with the Congress. Following the discussions held in February and March 1928, an all-parties conferance was convened, which was participated by the representative of the different parties. After protracted discussions the conference decided to appoint an all-parties committee with the task of deciding the form and content of the future administrative set up and also a generally acceptable formula with regard to the representation of the different communities in the administration and legislature. Since the Congress was the predominent party both in the conference and the committee, the Congress President Dr. Ansari was the chairman of the conference and the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party and the eminent lawyer, Motilal Nehru, the chairman of the committee. Thus, all the bourgeois political parties came together under the leadership of the Congress to draft a reform proposal as opposed to that of the Simon Commission.

But, none of the organizations of the moderates cared to participate in organizing the mass protest action as decided by the Madras session of the Congress. The main political organization that stood in the forefront was the Congress. The leftist organizations working inside and outside the Congress, youth and trade union organizations which had slowly begun to enter the political field, played a vital role in making the boycott a success. The leftist section in the Congress which stood for complete independence, made invaluable contributions to the success of the protest programme. Similarly, the right-wing Congressmen who were striving to lead the Congress along the path of negotiation to win Dominion Status also played their role for the success of the boycott programme.

On the arrival of the Simon Commission in Bombay on 3rd February 1928, the people all over India observed *hartal*. Renewing the memory of the Khilafat-non-cooperation days, shops were closed, students boycotted classes and workers went on strike. There were firings and lathicharges in a number of places like Madras, Calcutta, Lahore, Allahabad and Lucknow. Lala Lajpat Rai, Jawaharlal Nehru, Govind Ballabh Pant and other leaders and volunteers were subjected to severe repression. Lajpat Rai died soon after and his death was attributed to the injuries he received in the police beating on that day. The repression aroused great indignation throughout the country.

Although the organization of the moderates to whom mass agitation and struggle were an anathema, in general kept themselves away form the movement, they participated in the poycott programme at least in the form of not taking part in the committees formed to cooperate with the Simon Commission. The Justice Party of Madras, the factions of the Muslim League cooperating with the government, the landlord's organization and the Depressed Castes organization led by B R Ambedkar were however exceptions.

Unlike in the 1921-22 period, the Congress was able to organize the boycott with the participation of the moderate sections, at least in a limited way. This was the result of the changes in the attitude of both the Congress and moderates. This change represented the transformation the bourgeoisie as a class had undergone.

The Khilafat-non-cooperation movement was launched at a time when the question arose before the bourgeoisie whether the path of negotiations or the path of confrontation was more effective. Gandhi and the leaders of the Khilafat were the advocates of one path while the different moderates groups represented the other. The clash between the two groups found reflected on a number of issues like the visit of the Prince of Wales. With the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience following the Chauri Chaura incident, this chapter in the Indian politics came to a close. The moderate

sections became convinced that the Gandhian path of struggle was not as "dangerous" as they had thought of it at the time of the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement. The performance of leaders like C R Das and Motilal Nehru in the legislature as Swarajists and later on as Congressmen created good impressions among the moderates about the Congress.

The way in which the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement ended led to a serious rethinking in the Congress leadership. They were convinced that the activities both inside and outside the legislature would help them to keep the people prepared to use the ultimate weapon of non-cooperation and civil disobdience. Since the moderates could make valuable contributions to this, they realized the need to maintain close link between the two. This led Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and other Congress leaders to take the attitude of cooperation with the moderates in the boycott of the Simon Commission and in the appointment of the All-Parties Committee to examine the constitutional questions.

While engaged in the discussson on constitution through the medium of the All-Parties Committe in cooperation with the moderates, the Congress leadership had also saught the cooperation of Communists, Socialists and other leftists. A step in this direction was the resolution passed at the Madras session of the Congress adopting the goal of Full Independence.

At the same time, the Congress leadership also maintained relations with anti-imperialist organizations (it formally became a member of the Anti-imperialist League) and condemned the attacks of the imperialist forces against the revolutionary forces in China at the international level, while at the national level encouraged the efforts of the workers and peasants organizations to play active roles in Indian politics. They were convinced of the fact it was impossible to face the challenge of imperialism without the active cooperation of all the forces within and outside the Congress determined to fight imperialist domination.

The moderates outside the Congress were however not convinced of this. They were satisfied that the Congress leadership had adopted a programme of action—discussion on the constitution in the All-Parties Committee—which was immediately acceptable to them. This was basic to the understanding reached between the moderates and the Congress with regard to the boycott of the Simon Commission and the attempt to draft a constitution through the All-Parties Committee.

But the Congress leadership and Gandhi in particular did not stop with this. They were aware of the inevitability of a confrontation with the imperialism. As a preparation for such a confrontation, they wanted to continue to cooperate with the moderate sections, placate the left and revolutionary sections and consolidate the organization for the national struggle through Gandhian constuctive programmes. Along with these, there was also a need to gain strength and capability at least in some places to organize this inevitable confrontation in the Gandhian method. The beginning of such an effort was also going on along with the boycott of the Simon Commission and the activities of the All-Parties Committee.

Here we are referring to the *Satyagraha* under the Gandhian leadership launched against the enhancement of land revenue in the Bardoli taluk of Gujarat in the early months of 1928. This gained all-India fame just as the boycott of the Simon Commission. It may be recalled that the mass struggle of 1921-22 was called off in the Bardoli taluk. Conducting a mass struggle at the same place, based on the single issue of tax increase though, was considered a pointer to the future. In that sense, the Bardoli struggle was as important as the boycott of the Simon Commission and the work of the All-Parties Committee.

As in other Ryotwari areas, the government had decided to revise the land tax. The result of the revision was a 20 to 25 per cent increase in taxes, which quite naturally led to powerful protests. Although the peasants expressed their

feelings through petitions and in other forms, the government did not budge. The peasants became convinced that some serious step was necessary to make the government revoke the increase and approached Vallabhbhai Patel, a desciple of Gandhi in Gujarat. With the blessings of a large number of Congress leaders, including Gandhi and Vithalbhai Patel (his brother), Vallabhbhai took up the leadership of the struggle.

It must be noted that the Bardoli struggle was not launched for the solution of the general problems of the peasant masses as a whole, as was made out by the bourgeois media. Payment of rent to the landlord, interest and the repayment of debt to the money-lender, and tax to the government constituted the three burdens of the peasantry. The common objective of the peasantry was the liberation from all the three.

The Bardoli struggle was directed against only one of these, viz., the increased land tax. In the forefront of the Bardoli struggle were those who would turn against the struggle the moment it turned against the landlords and money-lenders. Likewise, the top Congress leaders including Vallabhbhai Patel (who earned the title of "Sardar" as the leader of the struggle) led the struggle in such a way as to protect the interests of the rich peasants.

However, the Bardoli struggle helped to unite and rally the entire peasantry of the Bardoli taluk under the Gandhian leadership. The peasants carried out the call by Gandhi and Patel not to pay the increased tax. When the government took action to attach and auction the land and other properties of the peasants who did not pay the tax, the people boycotted the auction. Arrests and other repressive actions did not deter them. Finally the goverment had to come to a settlement concelling in effect the increase in the tax.

The political gain made by the national independence movement as a whole through the struggle was more significant than the economic gain made by the peasantry. For it demonstrated the fact that the Bardoli peasants were able to defeat the government through the resistence for a few

weeks. The people became confident that if a struggle confined to a taluk could be so successful, a struggle based on other issues including full independence could be won by the same means. The lack of confidence that had grown in the Gandhian leadership following 1922 was to a great measure removed. And the belief spread that another national struggle could now be organized with Gandhi as its "comman der-in-chief".

II THE BREAK-OFF AND THE SETTLEMENT

The Congress decided to convene the All-Parties Conference and to form the All-Parties Committee as a reply to the British challenge thrown at the nationalists to draft a constitution acceptable to all sections of Indians. And for the same reasan, representatives of the different parties and organizations such as the liberals led by Tej Bahadur Sapru, the followers of Tilak having leanings towards the Hindu Mahasabha, Muslim political leaders led by Jinnah, the Depressed Castes led by B.R Ambedkar, the Justice Party of South India, and so on participated in the Conferene and the Committee.

An inevitable consequence of drawing together these disparate elements would have been a deviation of the Congress from its declared objective of full independence, because most of them were standing for Dominion Status and not for full independence. The Congress, on the other hand, not only adopted full independence as its objective at its Madras session, but also had adopted certain anti-imperialist resolutions and appointed Jawaharlal Nehru as one of the General Secretaries who were supposed to implement these resolutions.

This was a paradox. Later Nehru himself had written in his autobiography that the suspecision that the same leadership which had adopted the resolutions moved by him on behalf of the leftist Congressmen and nominated him

as one of the General Secretaries was preventing the implementation of these resolutions had been disturbing him.

In the circumstances, Jawaharlal Nehru and his colleagues decided to form a new leftist Congress organization called the Independence for India League. The League relentlessly tried to warn the people against the toning down of the Full Independence resolution adopted at Madras and to rally behind it the ordinary Congressmen, particularly the youth. The left wing Congressmen, including Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose, engaged themselves actively in organizing provincial and district conferences and youth meets at which the issue of Dominion Status vs.Full Independence was debated. (One such provincial conference held at Payyannur, Kerala, which was presided over by Nehru was the first experience of the present author in political debate.) The Congress split into two camps: one section championed the cause of full indepeneence and the other reduced it to an idol for worship.

There were advocates of full independence in the All-Parties Conference and Committee. Their leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, himself actively participated in the All-Parties Committee. But they knew that they were only a minority in the Conference and the Committee. Besides, a galaxy of *Talukdars* and other recipients of decorations and titles from the British for loyalty and friendship had filled the dais of the Conference. Jawaharlal Nehru, angered at this strange sight blurted out: "Many on the dais are socially unwanted". This created quite a stir in the conference which later passed a resolution suited to pacify the feelings of the title-holders.

This was only a beginning. It was in fact a prelude to the continuous clash that was going to take place between the advocates of full independence and those who stood for Dominion Status in the All-Parties Conference on the working of the All-Parties Committee and over the steps to be taken following the submission of the Committee's report.

This was, however, only one side of the picture. The

communal organizations and parties, including the Muslim League, were ranged in one camp, while the Congress and the Liberal Federation in another, with their characteristic differences and disputes. Nehru has recorded that it was with the hope of at least solving these questions that the advocates of full independence took part in the deliberations. But, it was mainly on this question that the All-Parties discussions failed.

There were three aspects of the question relating to the future administrative set-up: (1) the relations between India and Britain, (2) the share of the different religious and caste communities in the new set-up and (3) relations between the Centre and the provinces.

The All-Parties Committee and the Congress leadership were able to arrive at a temporary settlement on the first issue. On the second and third issues, no settlement could be arrived at and the representatives of the various caste-communal organizations walked out of the meeting, ending the year-long All-Parties discussions in failure.

The constitution drafted by the Committee, known as the Nehru Report did not envisage even Dominion Status, leave alone full independence.

The Report proposed that in matters relating to defence, the defence minister of future India should function in accordance with the recommendations of a committee in which the army commanders would have a majority. The advocates of full independence naturally felt disturbed at the scheme giving predominance to the officials in a department of vital importance. They feard that it constituted a departure from the Madras resolution.

The opposition of the different religious-caste parties and organizations, including the Muslim League, to the Nehru Report was much more intense. Here it will be useful to compare the Nehru Report with the proposals put forward by Jinnah on behalf of the Muslim community.

1) Both agreed on the point that the relationship between the Centre and the provinces should be federal

in character. They also agreed that the powers of the Centre and the provinces shold be strictly defined. But, however strict the difinition, there would still remain some subjects which would come neither under the Centre nor the provinces. The Report proposed that the "residuary powers" on such subjects should be vested in the Centre. Hindu organizations like the Hindu Mahasabha and political parties like the Liberal Federation supported this. The League maintained that the residuary powers should be vested in the provinces.

2) In the election to the Central and provincial legislatures, the Report proposed reservation for Muslims in Hindu majority provinces and for non-Muslims in N W F P and other Muslim majority provinces with representation in proportion to the population of the particular communities. The Muslim League demanded one-third representation in the Central legislature for Muslims and seats reservation in proportion to the population in the Muslim majority provinces of Punjab and Bengal.

3) The Nehru Committee recommended that all communities should have equal voting rights in the election to reserved seats. Jinnah, who was the representative of the Muslim League, did not demand at that stage separate constituencies with voting right exclusively for the Muslims. But other Muslim leaders who had broken away from Jinnah did raise the issue. Later, Jinnah too adopted this position. This was an important subject which came up during the subseqent discussions on the Hindu-Muslim problems.

In the face of opposition on these issues which the Committee refused to concede, Jinnah walked out of the Committee and joined hands with the Aga Khan and other Muslim leaders who had already left the League earlier to demand more on behalf of the Muslims in an aggressive way.

Following Jinnah's walk out, the representatives of the Sikhs, non-Brahmins, Depressed Castes, and the Christians also kept away from the deliberations of the All-Parties Committee leaving the Congress, the Liberal Federation and

certain Hindu organizations including the Hindu Mahasabha in the Committee. In the circumstances, the leaders who remained in the Committee decided to wind up the Committee.

Although the All-Parties Conference and Committee were thus dissolved, the report of the Committee had become a public document. The problem came up before the Congress as to what should be its attitude towards the Committee's report. The specific question was whether it should accept the scheme contained in the report which fell short of even the Dominion Status or it should remain firm on the objective of full independence rejecting the Nehru Report.

This problem had, in fact, come up even before the Committee's report was adopted by the All-Parties Conference. Jawaharlal Nehru said that people like him who stood for full independence were in a quandery. If the report would help to solve the communal question, they would not stand in its path, but they could not compromise on the objective of full independence. Accordingly, after consulting his colleagues, Jawaharlal Nehru made a statement in the Conference to the effect that while they did not agree with the degrading of full independence, they did not want to stand in the way of communal unity.

It may be noted that this statement was made while Jinnah was still participating in the All-Parties discussions.

Later when the Calcutta session of the Congress was held in December 1928 with Motilal Nehru, the chief architect of the Nehru Report, in chair, the father and the son were found themselves in the opposite camps. Jawaharlal Nehru has mentioned in passing in his *Autobiography* the consequent mental agomy he had been undergoing.

It is hardly a question of tension between a father and a son, but a question of tension that existed between one another among all from top to bottom in the Congress. Neither side was willing to yield its position. However, both were equally convinced that a split as it took place first in Surat and again in Gaya would be disastrous to the Congress.

It was at this juncture that Gandhi returned to the active leadership of the Congress. Gandhi had not been participating in the activities of the Congress since his arrest in 1922, except on occasions like bringing about rapprochement between the Congress and the Swaraj Party. In the background in which some parties including the League had broken away and doubts persisted if the advocates of full independence would likewise leave the Congress, pressures were brought on Gandhi to be present at the Calcutta session in order to maintain the unity in the Congress. As an experienced bourgeois politician, Gandhi himself was convinced of the need for it. Accordingly, Gandhi attented the Calcutta session and after holding discussion with both the camps, he brought out a compromise solution in the form of a resolution which stated: "Congress will adopt the constitution in its entirety...as a great step in political advance, especially as it represents the largest measure of agreement attained among the important parties in the country...if it is accepted by the British Parliament on or before December 31st, 1929, but in the event of its non-acceptance by that date or its earlier rejection, Congress will organise a non-violent non-cooperation by advising the country to refuse taxation and such other manner as is settled."

This compromise was not acceptable to Jawharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and other leftwing Congressmen. On behalf of the left, Bose moved an amendment to Gandhis' resolution, standing firm on the objective of full independence. It was, however, lost with 973 voting for and 1350 voting against it.

That the section of the Congress led by Gandhi and Motilal Nehru had only a small majority as shown by the voting was an indication of the growing strength of the left in the Congress.

Although the left wing Congreasmen led by Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose brought an amendmentto the resolution introduced by Gandhi they did not intend to go against the majority of the Calcutta session. They were prepared to wait as specified in the resolution. They decided to go ahead with

the preparation for the imminent direct action. In that sense it can be unhesitatingly stated that the Calcutta session was a compromise between the advocates of full independence and those of the Dominion Status.

But, a highly significant incident took place at the Calcutta session. It was the march of fifty thousand workers into the venue of the session. This was a clear indication to the fact that the working class had risen as an organized political force and that they had begun to enter the platform of the bourgeois politics led by Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and others. The celebrated poet of Kerala, Vallathol Narayana Menon, who was an observer in the Congress session had narrated this incident in one of his poems.) It was a prelude to the strengthening of the anti-imperialist struggle with Jawaharlal Nehru and others fighting inside the Congress and the organized working class outside it.

III. MAIN POLITICAL FORCES IN THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

The mammoth march of workers into the venue of the Calcutta session was not an isolated incident. It was a high level demonstration of the workers' movement which had been growing systematically over the past few years as well as of the political consciousness that had begun to emerge within that movement.

Earlier, we had described in some details the friendship and cooperation between the anti-imperialist national leaders and the workers and other labouring masses that had begun to grow since the emergence of the extremist political movement under the leadership of Tilak. The political condition that existed during the Khilafat-non-cooperation movements helped to strengthen this process.

But as distinct from the earlier days when it was an appendage of the Congress and other nationalist organizations, now the working class had acquired the necessary

organizational consciousness to organize the primary form of its own class organization, the trade union, and to form an all-India organization, the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) to coordinate the various trade unions. That is, in place of conducting demonstrations and struggles as an appendage of the bourgeoisie which is basically an enemy class, the workers have tranformed themselves into a class fighting for their own demand under their own class organization.

This is borne out by the strike struggles waged by the workers during the seven years following 1921, the pleak period of the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement.

Year	Number of strikes	Number of workers involved	Number of Man-days lost
1921	396	600,351	6,984,426
1922	278	433,434	3,972,727
1923	213	301,044	5,051,704
1924	133	312,462	8,730,918
1925	134	270,423	12,578,129
1926	128	189,811	1,097,478
1927	129	131,655	2,019,970

These strikes were not conducted under the leadership of any political party. They were conducted by their own organizations, the trade unions, working above political parties, although workers of many political parties had rendered them assistance. Although much after the emergence of the political party of the bourgeoisie, the congress, and the non-political organizations of the same class like merchants' chambers, etc., the working class had started to wage struggles in defence of their own demands under the leadership of the all-India organization of their own.

The accounts of the strikes given above point to an important fact. Though the trade union organizations were organizationally above party politics, the strike struggles conducted under their leadership were inseparably linked with the anti-imperialist struggles waged under the leadership

of the bourgeoisie. Thus, the number of strikes reached the highest in 1921, the peak period of the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement, which went down regularly thereafter. It shows that the stagnation set in Indian politics and the disappointment of the political activists cooled off the fighting spirit of the working class.

The number of workers participated in the strikes and the number of man-days lost also show another feature. It can be seen that the number of strikes, the number of workers participating in them as well as the number of man-days lost decreasd in 1922, the year in which the non-cooperation and civil disobedience were called off. In 1923, the number of man-power lost increased in spite of of a decrease in the nember of strikes as well as the number of workers participating in the strikes. In 1924, though the number of strikes came down to a third of that of 1921, the number of man-power lost in 1925 was almost twice that of 1921, although the number of strikes remained almost the same as in 1924. It shows that the workers' capacity increased year by year to fight determinedly, to stand firm on prolonged strikes facing all kinds on obstructions.

The statistics pertaining to 1926 and 1927 provide direct evidence to show that the stagnation and despondency that afflicted politics had considerably affected the militancy of the working class. The number of strikes, the workers participating in them and the man-days lost were all at their lowest during this period. But the number of man-days lost in 1627 was almost twice that of 1926, indicating the beginning of a new upsurge in struggles.

In order to assess correctly the facts revealed, it is necessary to examine the political forces that were at work in the organized working class movement and the relations that existed among them.

As we have already seen, it was the workers inspired by the anti-imperialist movement under the bourgeois leadership that first entered the field of struggle and that the workers of Bombay, like other sections of the people, had revered

Tilak as "Tilak Maharaj". Lala Lajpat Rai, Dewan Chamanlal, C. R. Das and others has been active in the AI TUC in its formative years. But the bourgeois leadership of the Congress was frightened by the growth of the working class as an independent organized force. In 1922, C. R. Das, in his presidential address at the Gaya session of the Congress, underlined the significance of the interest shown by the Congress in the labour issue:

> We have delayed the matter already too long. If the Congress fails to do its duty, you may except to find organisations set up in the country by Labourers and Peasants detached from you dissociated from the cause of Swaraj, which will inevitably bring within the arena of the peaceful revolution class struggles and the war of special interests. If the object of the Congress be to avoid that disgraceful issue let us take Labourers and the Peasantry in hand, and let us organise them both from the point of view of their own special interest and also from the point of view of the higher ideal which demands satisfaction of the special interests and the devotion of such interest to the cause of Swaraj.

This was not just the expression of the opinion of an individual, but the beginning of a policy which the Congress as a whole was to adopt in the coming years. The building up of the organizations of agricultural and industrial workers was an important item in the constructive programme approved by the Kanpur session of the Congress in 1925. In 1927, the AICC directed the Working Committee to send propagandists and organizers to the industrial and agricultural workers. In all those years the Congress leaders had made concerted efforts to capture the organizational leadership of the AITUC in which they had been successful to some extent. Lajpat Rai and C. R. Das had been the presidents of the AITUC in its early years.

But this was only one side. On the other, there was a labour organization in Ahmedabad under the leadership of Gandhi and his disciples without keeping contact with organizations like theAITUC. It was functining in accordance with

the infamous Gandhian theory of "trusteeship". Its leaders ware guided by a social outlook of building an organization "above class struggle", as desired by Das in his Gaya presidential address.

Whatever the form, it is evident that the Congress leaders of all persuations, from Gandhi to Das and Lajpat Rai, were working with a bourgeois nationalist moderate outlook. However, they all were nationalists and anti-imperialists and were trying to link the working class with the anti-imperialist struggle.

Realizing the danger inherent in this approach, the imperialists and the monopoly capitalists under their protection desired to bring the growing working class movement in India under their control without being influenced by Indian bourgeois nationalism. For this purpose, they sent the representatives of the British Labour Party and the British Trade Union Congress to India on several occasions. They tried to affiliate the AITUC and other trade unions to the reformist International Federation of the Trade Unions based in Amsterdam (The Amsterdam International). Although they failed in their attempts with regard to AITUC, they succeeded in bringing around certain other trade unions, including the railwaymen's unions to take a decision favourable with the Amsterdam International.

It was in the midst of these attempts on the part of Indian bourgeoisie on the one hamd, and the leadership of the British Labour Party on the other, to convert the organized Indian trade union movement into their appendage that Communists and other leftists entered the scene with the message of a revolutionary worker's movement independent of these two. We have already referred to the attempts made by the Communist International to form a revolutionary party of the working class in India by unifying the various communist and socialist groups in the country. We have also referred to the formation of a Communist Party of India in 1925 by unifying the various communist groups in India. With this emerged a new political force working

within the organized working class movement with a real working class outlook against the reformist outlook of both the bourgeois nationalism of the Congress and imperialism of the British Labour Party.

This new revolutionary political force was not, however, confined to the Communists alone. There had also emerged in those days various other revolutionary groups including those of the leftist Congressmen all over the country. The Communists decided to unify all these groups and form an organization to fight the reformism both in the Congress politics and in the trade union movement. The formation of the various Workers' and Peasants' Parties in 1926 and 1927 was the result of this decision which was warmly welcomed by other revolutionaries.

The Workers' and Peasants' Parties come into being first in Bengal, Bombay, Punjab and the United Provinces. Journals like *Kranti* in Marathi, *Ganavani* in Bengali, *Kirti* in Punjabi and *Mehnatkaksh* in Urdu were published by the Party. Muzaffar Ahmad and Sohansingh Josh who later became prominent communists and took initiative in these activities were the editors of *Ganavani* and *Kirti*, respectively. Similarly, S.S. Mirajkar and P.C. Joshi were the secretaries of the Party in Bombay and U.P., respectively, Although the Workers' and Peasants' Parties were more broad based organizations than that of the Communists, the Communists were in the leading positions in these parties.

From its inception the Workers 'and Peasants' Parties had been issuing appeals on issues affecting the anti-imperialist movement in general and the organized working class movement in particular to synchronize with the Congress sessions and the committee meetings of the Congress. For example, a summary of the resolution prepard by the Party in Bombay on the occasion of the AICC meeting in May 1927 is as follows.

A. The present leadership of the Congress has tied itself and the Congress machinery to a programme of work which is of benefit only to an insignificant section of the

people, the big capitalist and their allies... Therefore, the bulk of the population have lost all interest in and sympathy to the Congress.

B. In the interest of the vast majority of the people it is urgently necessary to free the Congress from the narrow shackles of class interests, and to yoke it to the task of attaining national freedom from the imperialist bondage, as a step towards complete emancipation of the masses from exploitation and oppression.

C. The aim of the Indian National Congress is (should be) the attainment of complete national independence from imperialism and the establishment of a Swaraj based upon universal adult suffrage.

D. It(should)reiterate (s) its faith in civil disobedience, i.e., direct action as the only effective weapon that will ultimately free the people of India from their subject position,

E. but realises that great general awakening will have to be brought before this weapon of direct action can be effectively used.

All efforts must be directed to the attainment...of the general awakening, and for this purpose the Congress(should) adopt(s) a practical programme.[2]

The resolution also pointed to the immediate issues affecting the workers and peasants and suggested solutions to these issues.

It must be stated specifically that the Workers' and Peasants' Party with Communists in leading positions adopted this resolution before the Congress adopted the resolution of full independence at the Madras session. For there was a myth widely circulated all over the country that the Congress adopted the objective of full independence solely due to the efforts of certain leftwing Congressmen like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. This is not the truth.

2 G. Adhikari (ed). *Documents of the History of the Communist Party of India*, Vol III B, 1979, pp. 169-170

From the beginning of the Communist International some Indian Communists had tried to maintain lively contact with the ordinary nationalists who were far more numerous than themselves to build up a united revolutionary movement in the country. In parallel to this, an organized mass movement of the working class was growing. The bourgeois national leadership of the Congress on the one said, and the imperialist reformist leadership of the British Labour Party on the other had tried to capture the leadership of this movemet. Against this, the Workers' and Peasants' Parties had emerged under the leadership of the Communisis as a broad mass revolutionary front to organize the working class on a revelutionary basis and to establish unity with the leftwing of the bourgeois nationalist movement. The leftwing Congressmen including Nehru and Bose who came under the influence of these developments fought for full independence. This was the fact.

The enthusiastic march by 50,000 workers to the *pandal* of the Calcutta session of the Congress in which Jawaharlal Nehru and Bose were forcefully arguing for full indedendence was a lively demonstration of this. It was a spectacular demonstration of fraternity and unity between the leftists among the bourgeois-petty-bourgeois sections and the working class which was moving towards the left.

IV. MEERUT AND LAHORE

This surge of the revolutionary working class angered the British rulers who decided to suppress it. Consequetly the government filed a conspirscy case in the Meerut magistrate's court against the Communists and non-Communists working among the workers and peasants.

In order to explain the background to this case which is known as the "Meerut Conspiracy Case", it is necessary to bring at least in brief the growth of the movement of the

workers and peasants and also its impact on the nationalists and Congressmen both the left and the right.

As we have seen earlier, the Madras session of the Congresse adopted a number of resolutions of anti-imperialim in content along with the resolution on full independence. It was in order to systematize the day-to-day activities of the Congress in accordance with this new approach that Jawaharlal Nehru was selected as one of the general secretaries of the Congress.

With this, an important change began to appear in the general outlook of the Congress. The Congress accepted the fact that India's freedom struggle was an inseparable part of the world-wide anti-imperialist struggle. Symbolic of it was the relationship that the Congress had established with the international organization of the League against Imperialism. Both the leftwing Congressman Jawaharlal Nehru and the rightwing Congressman Motilal Nehru attended its conference. Their visit to Moscow, followed by the publication of Jawaharlal's impressions of the Soviet Union, had their impact on the leftists both inside and outside the Congress. The Indian patriots, for once, realized that the consitant anti-Soviet and anti-Communist propaganda made by the rulers was intended to protest their own vested interests.

An important section of the revolutionaries outside the Congress was those who were engaged in bomb-politics and known as terrorists. Many of them (especially in Bengal) were Congress workers. Even those who were not Congressmen had the sympathy of a considerable section of the Congress leaders. The first indication of a substantial change in the general outlook of this section was the growth of the Communist movement. The ideas propagated by the Communist and non-Communist activists of the Workers' and Peasants' Parties began to spread among them. A clear evidence of such a change was the formation of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association under the leader ship of Bhagat Singh in Punjab which spread to all over

the country. In a letter sent from the prison before his martyrdom, Bhagat Singh said: "The real fight for freedom can only be fought by mobilising *Mazdurs, Kirsans* and the common people ...It is my considered opinion that bombs cannot serve our purpose. This is proved by the history of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association...Our chief aim should be to mobilise the toiling masses."[3]

This change, however, did not detract them from the 'bomb-politics'. On the contary, Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw bombs at the Central Assembly when it was in session, following which they were arrested and after a prolonged trial, sentenced to death.

Even while engaged in these activities, a political rethinking was going on among them. In those days when people in general were thinking in terms of either the bomb-politics of the revolutionaries or the Gandhian non-violence, the propaganda carried out by the Workers' and Peasants' Parties and the Communist Party exerted influence on them in this re-thinking. Many of the co-accused in the Central Assembly bombing case in which Bhagat Singh was sentenced to death became active workers of the Communist Party after their release from prison. One of them, the late Ajoy Kumar Ghosh, was the General Secretary of the undivided Communist Party of India for over a decade. The emotional memoirs he wrote about his former colleagues including Bhagat Singh reflect the change the young generation of the petty-bourgeoisie was undergoing half a century ago. One of their contemporaries Shiva Varma, affectionately called 'Shivda', is still an active worker of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) in Kanpur.

In addition to this change among the adherents of the bomb-politics, a revolutionary enthusiasm was spreading rapidly among the petty-bourgeois youth also, including those who had hitherto remained apolitical. This was another important feature of the 1928-29 period. Youth organizations

3 Manmathnath Gupta, *Bhagat Singh and His Times*, New Delhi, Lipi Prakashan 1977, pp 189-191.

were being formed throughout the country embracing all trends of thought, from Gandhism to the ideology of bomb politics. What linked them together was the idea of direct action rallying the entire working masses for full independence.

The growth of these organizations went parallel with the upswing of the workers' and peasants' organizations. These two channels came together to form the great movement of the Independence League under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and others.

All these had influenced the Congress leadership as a whole. Those who opposed the British propaganda that the Communists were mischief makers and Russian agents included some well-known right-wing Congressmen. For instance, Motilal Nehru, whose only relation with the left movement was that he was the father of a leftist, stoutly defended the Communists in the Central Legislative Assembly.

This was not an isolated opinion of an individual. Rather, certain events that took place in the Central Legislative Assembly towards the end of 1928 and early 1929 showed that this was the general opinion .prevailing among members of the Congress Parliamentary Party who were known to be rightists.

The Government of India introduced two bills, the Public Safety Bill and the Trades Disputes Bill, to face the rapidly spreading revolutionary movement of the working class. The target of both bills was the worker and peasant movement. From a class point of view, the Congress leaders in the Assembly should have been substantially in agreement with the bills. They, however, strongly opposed them. While Motilal Nehru, Lajpat Rai and others in the opposition exposed the monstrous character of the bills, the President of the Central Assembly, Vithalbhai Patel, cornered the Government by his historic rulings.

The stated objective of the Public Safety Bill was to "prevant the activities of foreign Communists in India".

Apparently, the bill would not apply even to Indian Communists. However, the Congress members in the Assembly argued that it could be used against the non-Cmmunist nationalists.

According to the bill, it was an offence to argue directly or indirectly for the overthrow of the "legally constituted government in British India". Pointing to this provision in the bill, Lajpat Rai stated that even Jawaharlal Nehru and Srinivasa Iyengar who argued for full independence would come within the purview of the bill.

It was obvious that the Congress leadership realized that the weapon of the repressive laws being introduced on the pretext of curbing activities of foreign Communists in India would turn against all freedom fighters. In other words, the antagonism of the bourgeoisie as a class towards the Communists and the working class gave way to the opposition of the entire national movement including the bourgeoisie to imperialism,

The plan of the government to get the Public Safety Bill through quickly was defeated by the determined opposition of the members belonging to the Congress and other opposition parties: Despite mustering the full strength of nominated members in favour of the bill, the voting on the bill was 61 for and 61 against. The president of the Assembly, Vithalbhai Patel exercised his casting vote againt the bill and consequently the bill was rejected. Following this, the Public Safety bill and the Trades Disputes Bill came to be widely debated. which together with the historic rulings of the President of the Assembly filled the newspaper columns.

It was in the last phase of this, on 8th April 1929, the day on which the Government got the Trades Disputes Bill passed disregarding the opposition that the historic bomb attack inside the Assembly took place. Bhagat Singh and Dutt who dropped the bombs did not try to escape by running away from the scene, but threw the leaflets carried by them, shouted slogans like "Long Live the Revolution", and stood firm to court arrest.

This incident which enthralled millions of youngmen including the present author was symbolic of the contradictions in the political approach of Bhagat Singh and his comrades who had been moving from the bomb-politics to the potitics of mass struggle. Throwing bomb like revolutionaries who have no faith in non-violence, raising slogans and courting arrest, knowing that giving in meant gallows, like Gandhian *satyagrahis*, distributing leaflets calling for mass struggles like Communists—all these were combined in an action which was, in fact, a pointer to the future revolutionary politics in India.

This was followed by the Lahore Conspiracy Case leading to the hanging of Bhagat Singh, Rajaguru and Sukhdev. Almost simultaneously, the Meerut conspiracy Case was also in progress.

The background of the Meerut case is as follows. In December 1928, an all-India conference was held in Meerut to form a national organization of the Workers'and Peasants' Parties which were started in the provinces of Bombay, Bengal, U. P. and Punjab and later spread to other parts of India. Over a hundred delegates from the different parts of the country attended the conference which adopted a common minimum programme for these parties in the different provinces. Besides, the conference condemned the Motilal Report which satisfied itself with a scheme with less than Dominion Status, and advocated strongly a programme of direct action for full independence.

Over 30 activists of the Workers'and Peasants' Parties who attended this conference were accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. They included the well-known communist leaders like P. C. Joshi, Dr. G. Adhikari, S. A Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad and S. V. Ghate. Besides, three Englishmen working in India representing the British working class and the socialist-communist movements, were also among the accused. Among them, Philip Spratt and Lester Hutchinson later left politics. The third, Ben Bradley, worked tirelessly

till his last days as one of the British Communist leaders paying special attention to India affairs.

The government utilized the Conpiracy Case to 'expose' communism and the Soviet Union. The Communists, on the other hand, used it in accordance with the tradition set by Karl Marx in the historic Cologne trial as a platform to expose the existing social and state structure and to prove the inevitability of a social revolution. The statement signed by all the accused communists, except Dange, and read out by R. S. Nimbkar in the court was a document which analyzed the Indian situation on the basis of Marxist-Leninist outlook. (Dange was not a member of the party and hence not a signatory of the statement. He made a separate statement.)

The fact that the Meerut Conspiracy Case and the Lahore Conspiracy Case were going on simultaneously was meaningful. The reports of these trials contained facts and arguments which helped millions of youth in the country to choose between the path of mass revolutionary struggles and bomb-politics based on adventurism. What is more, the letter sent by Bhagat Singh from jail and the subseqent activities of Ajoy Ghosh, Siva Varma and other accused in the Lahore case revealed that the reports of the Meerut case had influenced them considerably.

The years 1928 and 1929 were crucial. A new mass upsurge, new sections of people entering into the political arena for the first time, new attempts to link the Indian freedom struggle with the world-wide anti-imperialist movement and the resultant new streams of thought in the old parties and organizations themselves—these were the factors that gave vitality and life to the Lahore session of the Congress held towards the end of 1929 and to the subsequent civil disobedience movement under Gandhi's leadership and made them historic.

12

TOWARDS FULL INDEPENDENCE

I. THE DIVIDE AND RULE TACTICS

Whenever there was a mass upsurge, the British used to resort to the divide and rule tactics to beat it back. As we have seen earlier, they rallied the moderates against the extremists and turned the Muslim big-wigs against the Congress in 1905-06, and in 1919-21 used the moderates and several communal and casteist organizations against the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement. The same tactics were used against the new mass upsurge which was started in 1928-29.

The first and foremost success they achieved was in the field of trade union movement. As we know, workers' organizations emerged in India linked with the freedom movement in the wake of the extremist politics. We also know that the attempts made by the British to stop this trend and to make it an appendage of British imperialism and its agent,

the Amsterdam International, had failed. In 1928-29, they adopted new tactics to make up this failure and to achieve their objective. And they were successful in that attempt.

Along with the Simon Commission which was appointed to go into the question of constitutional reforms, certain other commissions and committees had also been appointed by the Government to draw the attention of the elite sections of the Indian society to its side.

It had become necessary for the British monopoly capitalism to bring about a capitalist transformation in agriculture in India. Changes in the agrarian structure too had become necessary to rally the landlord classes behind them. For this purpose, an agricultural commission was appointed with Lord Linlithgow as chairman. Similarly, a committee with Sir Philip Hartog as chairman to prepare a report on educational reforms to suit capitalist development and a labour commission with Whitley as chairman were also appointed. Whitley had the distinction of having drawn up a number of planned schemes of industrial relations in Britain which skilfully transformed the British trade union movement into an appendage of British imperialism.

Since all these commissions and committess were intended to protect the British imperialist rule, the militant sections both inside and outside the Congress were against extending cooperation to them. We have referred to earlies the successful boycott of the Simon Commission, the most important of the these commissions, thanks to the unity of the left and right forces inside and outside the Congress. A similar approach was adopted by the leftists including the Congressmen with regard to the Whitely Commission.

Although the left Congressmen and Communists had considerable influence in the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), the moderates were not an insignificient minority in it. True, the AITUC was far ahead of the Congress in raising the immediate demands of the workers and in adopting the objective of socialism. It may be noted that it had adopted the objective of socialism in 1928, some three

decades before the Congress adopted, formally though, "socialistic pattern" as its objective.

However, the AITUC was lagging behind the Congress on matters relating to the general political issues of anti-imperialism. For instance, on account of the opposition of the moderate leadership, AITUC could not adopt a resolution to affiliate to the League against Imperialison whereas, the Congress had affiliated itself to the League and sent delegates to its world conference.

This becomes further clear from the approach adopted by the Congress towards the Simon Commission and the attitude of the moderates in the AITUC towards the Whiteley Commission. Both the left and right sections in the Congress were united in the boycott of the Simon Commission. But there was no such a unity between the right and left sections in the AITUC in the boycott of the Whitely Commission. Further, the AITUC split on this issue, the first split in the Indian trade union movement.

Although a large number of top Congress leaders inculding Tilak, Lajpat Rai and C. R. Das, had played a significant role in the growth of the trade union movement, there was a section of leaders under the political influence of Gokhale and other moderates in the AITUC. Just as the world Communist movement had influenced the leftists in the AITUC, so the Amsterdam International had influenced the rightist trade union leaders. Thus, the leftist section including the Congress who cooperated with the Communists and other leftists and the rightists section under the influence of the Amsterdam International came to a clash with each other.

The central point of dispute between these two groups was the approach towards the Whiteley Commission. The ruling circles who saw the depth and the extent of the people's protest against the Simon Commission were shrewd enough to take the necessary precaution to see that the commission on labour had Indian representatives.

Thus, the Whitley Commission had two representatives of Indian workers on it. The moderate labour leaders, N. M. Joshi and Dewan Chamanlal unilaterally agreed to serve in the commission without consulting either the AITUC or the different political groups in it. In fact, it was only after they had accepted the membership that the very issue of approach to the Commission came up before the AITUC. Naturally, it aroused deep resentment among the delegates to the Nagpur session of the AITUC in 1929.

It was in the atmosphere of this resentment that the decision to boycott the Whitley Commission was adopted. Simultaneously, two resolutions were passed, one demanding the release of the accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case the other for affiliating the AITUC with the League aganist Imperialism. Protesting aganist these resolutions adopted by the majority, the moderate leadership walked out of the conference and formed a rival trade union organization based on moderatist outlook.

The British rulers realized that the success they had achieved in splitting the trade union movement could not be repeated easily in the political field. All shades of opinion from the moderates outside the Congress to the leftists inside the Congress and the different revolutionary groups outside, had raised in one voice the demand of "at least a Dominion Status". An ultimatum had already been served by the Congress to the effect that if this demand was not conceded before 31st December 1929, direct action, including non-payment of tax, would be launched. In the circumstances, the British were forced to evolve a new tactic to engineer a split in the political front.

Meanwhile, a political change favourable to this had come about in Britain itself. In May 1929 the Labour Party come to power defeating the ruling Conservatives. Although the Commissions referred to above were apponted by the Conservative Government, the Labour Party had played its own role in all actions intented to tighten the British monopolist grip on India. Therefore, it was clear that there would not be any

change in the government policy despite the Labour Party being in power. But the Labour Party leaders had to pretend that theirs was a government trying to protect the interests of the British workers and the Indian democratic movement to the extent possible. So, the Labour Party government came up to take certain seemingly conciliatory steps without effecting any fundamental change in the structure or terms of reference of the Simon Commission. Thus, the Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, called the Viceroy to England for consultations. Further, it was proposed to hold a conference in London with leaders of the different political parties and sections to ascertain the Indian public opinion before enacting an appropriate bill in accordance with the report of the Simon Commission.

The Government accepted this proposal and the Viceroy Lord Irwin accordingly issued a statement on 31st October. In the statement, the Viceroy declared that the perspective before the government in all considerations with regard to constitutional reform, in general, was Dominion Status. It marked the beginning of a calculated move to create disunity between the Congress and the moderates, between the leftists and the rightists in the Congress, amog the different organizations which dealt with communal-caste politics, including the Muslim League and between these sections,on the one hand and the Congress, on the other. As we shall see later, these proposed (Round Table) conferences turned out to be a platform to stretch out these disputes and quarrels endlessly.

However, these tactics of the government failed for the time being. An all-India leadership conference was held in Delhi within 24 hours after Irwin issued the statement. The Conference in which Congress leaders like Gandhi and Motilal Nehru and the liberals like Sapru and the President of the Central Assembly Vithalbhai Patel partcipated, decided to accept the Viceroy's proposals subject to the following conditions.

1. The scheme which should form the basis of discussion at the Conference should be the implementation of Dominion Status.

2. A majority of the delegates to the conference should be from the Congress.

3. All political prisoners should be released forthwith.

4. The functions of the existing government of India, as far as possible in the persent context, should be befitting a government of Dominion Status.

This resolution adopted by Congress and the moderates outside it was, according to Jawaharlal Nehru, a success as a decision of a conference in which the leftists and moderates were participants; but as far as the Congress was concerned it was a step backwards".

For the Congress, the four conditions included in the resolusion were not negotiable. It the government were not willing to accept them, the Congress would be unwilling to cooperate with it. But, for liberals, this constituted their maximum demand. Hence, they were willing for a compromise. This was Nehru's evaluation of the resolution.

Thus the leadership conference of November 1929 ended in creating conditions for a break between the Congress and the liberals. However, it helped to keep the liberals with the Congress at least for the time being. The resolution also helped to prevent a rupture between the left and right wings inside the Congress and to move them together into a struggle to be launched under Gandhi's leadership.

In accordance with the Calcutta resolution, the leftists were obliged to wait for a year; meanwhile, if the government granted Dominion Status, then the Congress would accept it. On the contrary, if the government was unwilling to grant this demand, the Congress, including Gandhi, was obliged to launch a struggle.

Gandhi and Motilal Nehru used the leadership conference as a means to fulfil the obligations of both sides and at the same time to maintain the unity of the Congress. They utilized the developments following the leaders' conference to

accede to the demand of the left wing Congressmen to move along the path of direct action as directed by the Calcutta session, since the government had refused to concede even the very moderate demands of a liberal leader like Sapru.

II. PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEW STRUGGLE

The general thinking prevalent among the Congressmen after the Calcutta session was that since the granting of Dominion Status within one year as demanded at the session was highly improbable, the Congress must make all preparations to launch a struggle. However, Gandhi had his own view on the nature of such preparations. The form of struggle that Gandhi had visualized was one of "complete non-violence", and of mobilizing the national force of the masses patiently tolerating all the repressions that might come form the "other side". And this must be achieved through the "constructive" programmes he had formulated.

Soon after the Calcutta session, the Congress Working Committe appointed a number of sub-committees to strengthen mass contact and also to implement the "constructive" programme. The sub-committees were intended to take care of boycott of foreign cloth, prohibition of liquior, removal of untouchability, Congress organization, volunteer organization and redressal of women's grievances.

The sub-committees on all these issues (except on the last which remained on paper only) worked vigorously. Gandhi himself was the chairman of the committee for the boycott of foreign cloth. Rajagopalachari was in charge of prohibition and Jamnalal Bajaj was to lead the activities for the removal of untouchability. The tours and other activities of these leaders, though conducted in connection with the discharge of their specific responsibilities, did help to create a general awareness among the people about the Congress

session scheduled for the year-end and the developments that were likely to take place subsequent to it.

The work of the Congress and volunteer organizations served to create a wide mass base, unprecedented except perhaps for the 1920-21 period. This showed that the Congress had begun to grow with a base firmer than what it was in 1920-21.

It was during this period that the Hindusthan Seva Dal, a volunteer organization of Karnataka, became an all-India organization. The Seva Dal and its camps were utilized to impart elementary physical training as well as political education that were essential for the volunteers. Decisions were taken to enrol a certain percentage of the total population of the provinces as members of Congress and establish functionally effective committees in at least a minimum number of districts with active members of the Congress contributing a fixed percentage of their income towards the Congress fund. Work based on these decisions helped transform the Congress into a well-knit mass organization.

Work in the legislatures had begun to bear the mark of the impending struggle. In the Central Assembly, President Vithalbhai Patel gave the ruling that a debate on the Public Safety Bill in the House would prejudice a fair trial of the Meerut Conspiracy Case which was going on simultaneously. The ruling and the speech made by the Viceroy in utter disregard to the ruling caused a havoc in the Assembly. In Bengal, following the repeated defeats of the government in the legislature, the legislature itself was dissolved. The general impact of these events was so great and the fighting mood of the people so high that it was decided that the Congress members in the Central and provincial assemblies needed attend the legislatures only to retain their membership, utilizing the rest of the time for political work.

The Congress movedon these lines at a time when the activities of the revolutionaries were going on with increased vigour. The Lahore Conspiracy Case trial involving Bhagat

Singh and his colleagues was progressing. The fast undertaken by the accused in the jail and the death of one of them (Jatin Das) had made the Indian people in general and the youth in particular indignant. Proceedings of the Meerut Conspiracy Case involving many prominent Communist, and non-Communist trade union workers were also going on. A large number of nationalist activists including many prominent Congress leaders were imprisoned on various counts.

In this background, there was a widespread feeling that the "constructive programme", organizational work and partial boycott of the legislature, etc., being carried out by the Congress leadership were inadequate to meet the situation. All this turned out to make the soil fertile for bomb-politics.

It was in these backgrounds that the leaders of the Congress and the moderates entered into negotiations with the British. This evoked sharp protests from the ranks, as a reflection of which Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose who were regarded as leftist leaders tendered resignation form the Congress Working Committee. The revolutionaries outside the Congress who were engaged in bomb-politics intensified their activities. They even tried to blow up the train in which the Viceroy was travelling, injuring some of his attendants. It was obvious that the attack on the viceregal train was intended to prevent the negotiations between the Viceroy and the Congress leaders or at least to make them fruitless.

It was in this background again that the question came up as to who should be the president of the Lahore session. The general consensus was that at a time when a struggle for independence was imminent, Gandhi was the only individual strong enough to be its commander- in-chief. Ten provincial committees proposed his name. The name of Vallabhbhai Patel was proposed by five PCCs. Patel's nomination was obviously in recognition of the leadership that he had given to the successful Bardoli peasant struggle and of his capability to lead the forthcoming struggle. Jawaharlal Nehru with the support of three provinces was placed in the third position in the list of presidential candidates.

Gandhi, however, decined his nomination. Nor did he approve of the nomination of Patel who was in the second position, Instead, he expressed his opinion in favour of Jawaharlal Nehru whose position was third in the list. The entire Congress leadership including Patel accepted Gandhi's porposal. Thus, Jawaharlal Nehru who had never concealed opposition to the policies pursued by the Congress leadership including Gandhi and Motilal Nehru, was elected president of the Congress.

This was an incident that invited considerable debate in the political circles. What was the secret behind Gandhi, the trusted leader of the majority, giving up the presidentship of the Congress in favour of Jawaharlal Nehru, the representative of a minority in the Congress? Why did the entire Congress leadership decide to transfer the Congress presidentship from the renowned moderate leader Motilal to his son Jawaharlal? How far personal sentiments like Gandhi's interest in Jawaharlal and Motilal's affection to his son influenced the decision?

We have referred to above certain facts helpful in finding answers to these questions. No matter how extensive the popular force the Congress was able to rally behind itself through "constructive programmes" and organizational work, this alone was not sufficient to conduct a bitter anti-Britishs truggle.For the leftists inside and outside the Congress were not less active and militant than the Congress workers who were engaged in constructive programmes or organized in *Seva Dals*. Only a leadership capable of mobilizing their sense of self-sacrifice and cautious activities would be able to inspire the millions in the struggle. Realizing this fact, it was necessary to create the impression both among the people and the Congress workers that the young generation of leftists was being brought up to the leadership position.

Another factor that promted Gandhi to propose Jawaharlal to the presidentship of the Congress was his opinion about his personality. However strongly he might express his leftist ideology in his articles and speeches, Jawaharlal

Nehru was in the final analysis a "disciplined" disciple of Gandhi. True, he was a staunch opponent of the views of his father and leader; but when faced with practical politics Jawaharlal transforms himself into a devoted Gandhian—this was Gandhi's assessment of Jawaharlal's personality.

For instance, nominating Jawaharlal to the presidentship Gandhi stated: "And if he has the dash and the rashness of a warrior, he has also the prudence of a statesman. A lover of discipline, he has shown himself to be capable of rigidly submitting to it even where it has seemed irksome. He is undoubtedly an extremist, thinking far ahead of his surroundings. But he is humble and practical enough not to force to pace to the breaking point. He is pure as a crystal, he is faithful beyond suspecion. He is a knight *sans peur, sans reproche*. The nation is safe in his hands."[1]

Subsequent events have proved the correctness of this assessment. In his first presidential address and in numerous speeches, statements and articles that followed, Nehru formulated his leftist thoughts. Offen it brought crises in the leadership circles of the Congress and on occasions, he had to give up the leadership position to freely express his dissent. But on all such occasions he remained a trusted follower of Gandhi. Whenever formidable challenges were raised against the Gandhian leadership, its outlook and programmes, Jawaharlal created the impression among the people that he stood "between Gandhi and the leftists". In effect, however, he had been saving the Gandhian leadership from the challenges it had been facing. In the following pages, we shall see this repeating again and again. Here we will only point out the understanding Gandhi and other leaders had on the forthcoming struggle following the Lahore Congress and the role played by the election of Jawaharlal Nehru in the struggle.

It would be useful here to make a comparative analysis of the struggles of 1920-21 and the forthcoming struggle of 1928-29. The basis of the former was the popular reaction

1. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol II, New Delhi, Publications Division, 1969, p. 372.

to the deepening economic and political crises in the post-war years. Gandhi tried to provide an organized form to this popular reaction for which he was the most skilful and experienced of all the bourgeois political leaders. He was successful in accomplishing this by raising such simple slogans as "Swaraj in one year", collecting the Tilak Swaraj Fund and propagating the spinning wheel. And the limitations of this approach were demonstrated themselves through the Chauri Chaura and other incidents.

The situation in 1928-29 was different. There were now not only the masses who had imbibed the spirit of mass struggles, but also organized movements borne out of their struggles as well as the revolutionary ideologies leading them. There were the trade unions and their strike struggles, the youth organizations and their forms of struggle, the agitations and struggles of the peasantry and the revolutionary organizations imbing the communist and socialist ideologies which had tremendously influenced these movements and struggles. The impact of all these was found on the ranks and active workers of the Congress as well as on a section of its leadership. Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and other leaders of the younger generation, in fact, emerged as the representatives of these sections.

It was a necessity for the bourgeois Congress leadership including Gandhi, to rally under its own banner these new forces which had not yet emerged in 1920-21. At the same time, they had to see to it that these revolutionary forces did not cross the bounds set by the bourgeois leadership on to 'dangerous' paths. In other words, they had to "tame" these revolutionary forces which were likely to constitute themselves a challenge to the bourgeois leadership. The most suitable means for it was to install as Congress president a widely accepted "young leader" like Jawaharlal who was a devoted disciple of Gandhi and to exercise the control of the right wing leadership on him.

Although the present decision pertained only to the question of who should preside over the Lahore session of

the Congress, it marked the beginning of the future developments. Through this decision Gandhi declared that his successor in Indian politics would be none of the well known Gandhians like Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajagopalachari and Rajendra Prasad, but Jawaharlal Nehru who was known to be an opponent of himself. The kind of freedom struggle Gandhi visualized would not be complete even with leaders like the eminent parliamentarian, Motilal Nehru and constructive workers like Patel and Rajagopalachari. For that purpose the leftist forces represented by Jawaharlal Nehru must also be mobilized. Not only that. There must be a guarantee that the leftist forces thus mobilized did not go boyond the control of the social forces which he represented. Gandhi was able to accomplish all this. And he knew that Jawaharlal Nehru would be of greatest assistance to him in "taming the leftist forces".

We have referred to earlier the statement of Tilak that Gandhi represented the new mass upsurge and that he would not stand in his way. Now the situation was somewhat different from what was known as the "end of the Tilak era". In 1928-29, Gandhi could not claim the sole representation of the mass upsurge; Gandhi's leadership would become useful and effective only if the new revolutionary forces represented by Jawaharlal Nehru were mobilized. However, without Gandhi and his right wing leadership, Jawaharlal would not become the full representative of the new popular upsurge. In other words, the bourgeois national leadership would be complete only if the disciples of Gandhi, the parlimentarians and the younger generation of the left forces were brought together. The election of Jawaharlal Nehru was an open declaration of this fact.

III. THE LAHORE SESSION

At the midnight of 31st December 1929, the hour at which the one year grace period given at the Calcutta session

of December 1928 ended, the Lahore session of the Congress passed the resolution affirming full independence as the national objective. Soon after, the delegates led by President Jawaharlal Nehru left the *Pandal* to unfurl the Indian independence flag.

The resolution was adopted almost unanimously, with hardly 15 hands raising against in a gathering of thousands of delegates. It was a rare spectacle of the disciples of Gandhi, advocates of participation in legislature, leftists and all other sections rallying behind the objective of full independence and the imminent struggle to achieve the objective. A new voice of mass upsurge reverberated throughout the country.

But behind this demonstration of unity revealed the intense clash that took place among the various trends of political thought and groups. On a number of occasions, divisions were taken for voting and issues decided with a narrow majority. Even in the case of the main resolution on full independence, its different clauses came under heavy attack before they were adopted with a narrow margin of votes.

Though the president of the session was an acknowledged leftist leader, the leftists moved a number of amendments to many resolutions and to many clauses of the main resolution moved officially. The point by point fight they put up ended in votings. In the final stage of the session, Subhas Bose and other leftist leaders who could not agree with the leadership on the composition of the new Working Committee, formed a new organization called the Congress Democratic Party. Only the civil disobedience movement which was launched a few weeks after that could save the Congress from another split.

As we know, Jawaharlal Nehru was installed president of the Congress as the representative of the younger generation with leftist ideologies. In fact, his presidential address was in consonance with the expectations of the delegates as well as of the people at large. In the address, Jawaharlal

Nehru declared that he was a socialist and republican fighting againat all royal and feudal privileges. It was for the first time that a Congress President was delivering such a speech. And it was on this basis that he handled issues like full indepenance and opposition to Dominion Status.

Based on the experience he had gained through the participation in the Anti-imperialist League and the visit to the Soviet Union, he tried to link the freedom struggle with the world-wide anti-imperialist struggle and to the advance of socialism. At the same time, he was of the view that the struggle under the leadership of the Congress must be valued as high as or even greater than his own views as a leftist. In the Presidential address, he made clear that he was endeavouring to get along well with his colleagues including the Gandhians, on a number of issues such as the role of non-violence in the struggle. Consequently he remained firm with the leadership rather than with his leftist colleagues like Subhas Bose on questions of the composition of the Working Committee and the subsequent formation of the Congress Democratic Party.

The position taken by Nehru as president in no way influenced the leftist delegates. As mentioned above, they fought out issue by issue. They even defeated some of the proposals put forward by Gandhi by joining hands with other non-Gandhian sections. For example, Gandhi suggested that the programmes of the boycott of foreign cloth, prohibition and removal of untouchability should be conducted under the auspices of organizations independent of the Congress. (The manufacture and sale of *Khadi* had already been entrusted to the Spinners' Association, an organization independent of the Congress.) This suggestion was rejected. Similarly, as with the means of struggle, Gandhi suggested that "peaceful and just" be replaced by "truthfull and non-violent". This too was rejected.

However, the sharpest confrontation was between the leftists on the one hand and the disciples of Gandhi and the advocates of participation in the legislature on the other. It was

as a sequal to this that the leadership had secured only a narrow margin of votes. For example, the leadership had moved a resolution condemning the bomb attack of the train in which the Viceroy was travelling just a week before the Lahore Congress. It was passed by a margin of only 48 votes.

Again, the resolution on full independence began with an appreciation of the statement of the leadership made in response to the Viceroy's announcement of 31st October and the efforts made by the Viceroy. This part of the resolution evoked heated discussions. The left wing contented that the statement of the leadership was a backpedalling from the objective of the Congress and the Viceroy's announcement a trap. On this issue the leadership could carry only a narrow majority of 180 votes with them.

The main resolution *inter alia* stated that "nothing is to be gained in the existing circumstances by the Congress being represented at the proposed Round Table Conference." The phrase "in the existing circumstances" was subjected to severe criticism. The left argued that this phrase was a loophole left by the leadership in the resolution to enable them to participate in a round table conference in the future on the pretext of "changed circumstances". Here also the combined force of Gandhians and the protagonists of parliamentary activities defeated the left wing with a narrow margin.

The main resolution finally emerged in the session was one that inspired a large majority of the delegates and even the entire country, except a few among the protagonists of parliamentary activities. The major features of the resolution are as follows.

1) Although appreciating the Viceroy and leadership which issued the statement following his announcement and with the phrase "in the existing circumstances", the resolution declared that the Congress would not attend the Round Table Conference to be called by the British.

2) Since the grace period allowed by the Calcutta session had come to an end and also since the moves made by the government in conceding the national demand was not satisfactory, the session declared that the immediate demand of the Congress was full independence. As a corollary of this, the Motilal Nehru Report envisaging Dominion Status had become out-dated.

3) As a preliminary step towards organizing a campaign for full independence, the session called upon complete boycott of the legislatures and committees constituted by the government and directed Congressmen and others taking part in the national movement to abstain from participating in the future elections and the present members of the legislatures to resign their seats.

4) While appealing the people to zealously carry on the constructive programmes of the Congress, the resolution authorized the AICC "where it deems fit, to launch upon a programme of civil disobedience, including the non-payment of taxes, whether in selected areas or otherwise and under such safeguards as it may consider necessary".

The Lahore session adopted two other resolutions which deserve special mention. One of them requested the rulers of the princely states to establish responsible governments in the states and guarantee the protection of civil liberties of the people. This represented a change in the policy of "non-interference in the internal affairs of the princely states" which had hitherto been followed by the Gandhian leadership of the Congress.

The other resolution was more sensational. It was a reiteration of a resolution passed earlier at the Gaya session making it clear that the Indian people would not be held responsible for the unjust public debt imposed by the British rulers on India. It also warned the prospective creditors of future debts that free India would be liable to pay back the debt only if it was convinced that it was just and reasonable.

These resolutions showed that the Congress which was preparing for a struggle to achieve the immediate objective

of full independence had started taking a different attitude towards the rulers of the princely states who were the henchmen of the British and towards those who were giving the British government financial assistance. In other words, the bourgeois leadership became convinced of the need for such a new approach to inspire the people to take part in the freedom struggle which was going to be launched within a few weeks.

However, the composition of the new Working Committee formed after the Lahore session was not in accord with the leftist ideology expressed in the presidential address and in the resolutions passed in the session. The leftists did not get representation in the Working Committee in proportion to their strength among the delegates as displayed by the pattern of voting on the different resolutions. All members in the committee, except President Jawaharlal Nehru, were either the disciples of Gandhi or the advocates of parliamentary participation. It may be noted that the demand of the leftists that the election to the Working Committee must be democratic was rejected by the leadership. Thus, Jawaharlal Nehru became the head of a leadership which was formed in a manner which was not in correspondence with the political thinking current among the delegates and the common people.

But surpassing all these issues and pushing them to the background, the problem of the imminent struggle for full independence came up before the people. The new Working Committee met soon after the close of the Congress session and decided to observe 26th January as Full Independence Day throughout the country as the first step towards making preparation for the struggle. The Working Committee also prepared a declaration to be read and adopted throughout the country, as part of the observation of Independence Day. The text of the declaration which inspired the entire people and was repeated many a time is as follows.

We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to

enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence.

India has been ruined economically. The revenue derived from our people is out of all propotion to our income. Our average income is seven pice, less than two pence, per day, and of the heavy taxes we pay, twenty percent are raised from the land revenue derived from the peasantry and three percent from the salt tax, which falls most heavily on the poor.

Village industries, such as handspinning, have been destroyed, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year, and dulling their intellect for want of handicrafts, and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries, for the crafts thus destroyed.

Customs and currency have been so manipulated as to heap further burdens on the peasantry. The British manifactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for British manufacturers,and revenue form them is used not to lessen the burden on the masses, but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration. Still more arbitrary has been the manipulation of the exchange ratio which has resulted in millions being drained away from the country.

Politically, India's status has never been so reduced, as under the British regime. No reforms have given real political power to the people. The tallest of us have to bend before foreign authority. The rights of free expression of opinion and free association have been denied to

us, and many of our countrymen are compelled to live in exile abroad and they cannot return to their homes. All administrative talent is killed, and the masses have to be satisfied with petty village offices and clerckships.

Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our moorings, our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us.

Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly, and the presence of an alien army of occupation, employed with deadly effect to crush in us the spirit of resistance, has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves or put up a defence against foreign aggression, or defend our homes and families from the attacks of thieves, robbers, and miscreants.

We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this four fold disaster in our country. We recognise, therefore, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can, all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help, stop payment of taxes without doing violence, even under provocation, the end of this inhuman role is assured. We, therefore, hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing Purna Swaraj.

This Independence Pledge is a milestone in the history not only of the Indian National Congress but in the journey of the entire people of the country.

IV. THE DANDI MARCH

The Independence Day was first observed on 26th January 1930 all over the country. There was no province

or district which kept aloof from it. The thousands of public meetings and the tens of thousands people who took the pledge of complete independence made the resolution adopted at the Lahore Congress and the pledge prepared by the Congress Working Committee the common property of the people of the country.

The rulers got into a panic about the popular emotion that swept acorss the country. They tried to meet it with lathicharges and firings. Many, including the renowned leftist leader, Subhas Bose, were arrested and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

However, the rulers realized that the people's upsurge for complete independence could not be suppressed by these actions. Consequently they initiated certain "conciliatory" moves. Within 24 hours of the Independence Day observation, Lord Irwin issued a statement to "remove the doubts" in the minds of the Indians on the nature of the Round Table Conference. It was a repetition of the statements made earlier by the Viceroy himself and the British ministers. However, it was couched in a language of appeasement.

In response to this, Gandhi made a statement which deserves particular attention. The statement revealed the gulf and contradiction that existed between the mass sentiments expressed through the observation of Independence Day and the political approach of the leadership represented by Gandhi. The contents of Gandhi's statement can be summarised as follows:

1. It thanked the Viceroy "for having cleared the atmosphere and let us know exactly where we (the rulers and the Indian people) stand".

2. The Congress is striving for the liberation of the starving peasants. In the struggle for its liberation, the Congress will make every effort to prevent it turning violent.

3. The Viceroy can take certain practical steps, if he desires to avoid a confrontation between the British rulers and the Indian people.

Gandhi explained these steps as follows:

a. Total prohibition.

b. Fix the rate of exchange at 1s. 4 d. per rupee.

c. Reduce the land tax at least by 50 per cent and bring that department under popular control.

d. Abolish the salt tax.

e. Reduction of military expenditure at least by fifty per cent as a first step towards reducation of military expenditure.

f. Reduction of salary of the highest paid civil servant at least by 50 per cent in proportion to the reduction in revenue incomes.

g. Protective tariff against foreign cloth.

h. Enactment of a bill reserving shipping to Indians.

i. Release of all political prisoners except those who are sentenced for or undergoing trial for murder or attempted murder; withdraw prosecution on political grounds; repeal of section 124 (a) relating to treason and the 1918 Act relating to detention witout trial. Allow Indians living abroad to return to India.

j. Abolitian of the CID or bringing it under popular control.

k. Issue of licences for fire-arms for self-defance, subject to popular control.

It is obvious that these eleven demands put together would not even mean Dominion Status, let alone full independence. Hence the statement aroused concern and doubts among the leftists. Even Jawaharlal Nehru who was officially the head of the Congress, was doubtful about these "eleven-points".

But one who critically examines the events that took place at each stage since Gandhi's entry into politics, needs to have no doubt on that score. The bourgeois leaders—both Gandhians and pro-legislaturists—were utilizing every opportunity to protect and develop its own (bourgeois) class interest through negotiations with the British rulers and to organize the comman people, under strict control, in order

to create conditions for that. Gandhi's attempt to reduce the national demand into the "eleven-points" within a month after the adoption of the full independence resolution was another form of this method of struggle.

A close look at the "eleven-points" would reveal the class interest that lay behind them. Most of them were the demands raised by the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie. While the demand for reduction or abolition of land tax, salt tax, etc., which was of vital interest to the large majority of poor peasants, the landless and workers, helped to rally the large majority of the poor and the middle-classes, it did not in the least hurt the interests of landlord-capitalist classes. It is meaningful that Gandhi did not include such issues as the heavy rent and interests borne by the peasantry and the just wages for workers and middle class employees among the burning problems faced by the poverty stricken people of India.

Even after the Lahore session, the congress leadership, including Gandhi, was eager for starting negotiations with the British. In fact, there were many intermediaries working between the British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and the Congress leaders to arrive at a compromise and Gandhi's "eleven-points" formed the basis of such a compromise.

However, the situation prevailing at that time was not conducive for such negotiations. The mass sentiment that swept across the country before and after the Lahore Congress was against negotiations. Even if the Congress leaders were willing to disregard this factor and start negotiations with the British, the British rulers at that time were not willing for talks. However great the mass support of the Congress, there were the forces of communal-caste politics ready to rally against it. The rulers thought that by using these forces they could reject the national demand raised by the Congress. This was evident form the repeated statements made by the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for India in England and the Viceroy in India.

Thus, the politics of Gandhi who descended to the "points" ended up in political kite-flying. The kite raised by Gandhi, however, snapped in the storm of opposition from the British government.

As a natural consequence of this, the Congress—its bourgeois leadership—was compelled to take an approach of struggle. The Working Committee which met at Sabarmati for three days in the middle of February 1930 called upon the people and Congress organizations to prepare for a struggle. The Committee insisted that only those who take non-violence as a creed (i. e, not as a practical policy) should take part in the struggle. The Committee welcomed Gandhi's willingness to lead the struggle subject to this condition and authorized him and others who had accepted non-violence as a acreed to organize the struggle. The Committee appealed to Congressmen and the people to extend all cooperation to the non-violence civil disobedience to be launched under the leadership of Gandhi. The Committee also suggested that with the launching of the movement all those connected with official institutions, including lawyers and students, should withdraw their cooperation to the government.

An examination of this decision togetherwith the statements made by Gandhi before and after that would make two things clear. First, the bourgeois leadership including Gandhi visualized a mass struggle in which people would be brought to participate on the broadest possible scale. Second, the leadership was particular that this mass struggle should not go beyond the limits set by it and that if the doors of negotiations with the British government were opened at any stage of the struggle, that opportunity should be utilized to negotiate with them.

As Gandhi himself had made it clear in a letter to the Viceroy later and in many of his statements, the struggle under his leadership was organized, on the one hand, against the organized violence of the British government and, on the other, against the tendencies of violence spreading widely

among the people. That is, the aim of struggle was to convert the mass upsurge which Gandhi characterized as the "violent tendency spreading rapidly all over the country" into a mass movement that could be held in the grip of the bourgeoisie and from that position of strength bargain with the British rulers.

Gandhi who had been authorized to lead the struggle decided to organize country-wide civil disobedience on an issue which was suited most for the purpose. Salt was an essential article of the daily life of every family. The rules and duties imposed by the British government for about hundred years had deprived the people of their freedom to make salt. On the immediate minimum demand that the people should have the freedom to make salt, the Congress under Gandhi evolved a form of struggle of breaking the laws relating to the manufacture and distribution of salt.

This received country-wide publicity. While one section ridiculed the form of struggle of breaking the law by making salt from sea-water, another section was inspired by it. The "Salt Satyagraha" was discussed all over the country. The new wave of struggle swept across the country.

When statements regarding Salt *Satyagraha* began to come out, questions relating to its form and how and who would lead it came up before the people. Things became clear before long. It was made known that Gandhi himself would inaugurate the Salt *Satyagraha*, accompanied by about 75 inmates of the Sabarmati Ashram. They would start on a march on foot from the Ashram on 12th March and reach the village of Dandi on the coast of Gujarat on 5th April. On the next day which coincides with the 11th anniversary of the Jhallianwala Bagh massacre, they would make salt from the sea-water.

What would happen if Gandhi was arrested during the 26 day long Dandi March? Once Gandhi and his colleagues reached Dandi and broke the salt law, would civil disobedience be launched in other parts of the country? If so, how?

Would any other law besides the salt law be violated? If so, who would decide it, how would it be conducted?

Innumerable questions of this nature came up before the people and the Congress workers. Gandhi himself had thought over these questions and discussed them with his close colleagues. But, neither the people in general nor the Congress workers knew what the decisions were. As for them, this was of no consequence. They knew that India was going to witness an unprecedented country-wide mass struggle and that the Dandi March under Gandhi's leadership was its beginning. They had read the reports on this march in the newspapers. Articles comparing the Dandi March with other earlier historic marches had attracted their attention. They were thrilled by the idea that they were the eye-witnesses to a historic event which would decisively influence the future of the country as a whole. And they did not demand anything more than this.

Meanwhile, Gandhi made another attempt to knock at the door of negotiations. On 2nd March, ten days before the start of the march, Gandhi wrote one more letter to the Viceroy. Enumerating the misdeeds of the British rule which was plundering India, he made it clear to the Viceroy that he did not "intend harm to a single Englishman or to any legitimate interest he may have in India". He also added that his was an attempt also to convert the British people. He appealed to the British to change their policies at least at that late stage, and warned the Viceroy that if there was no indication of such a change, he and his colleagues would proceed to disregard the provisions of the salt law.

In response to the Viceroy's negative reply, Gandhi wrote: "On bended knees I asked for bread and I have received stone instead". He added: "It is open to the Viceroy to do any other things except sending the usual reply. But the time is not yet. He represents a nation that does not easily give in, that does not easily repent... It readily listens to physical force... The Viceroy's reply does not surprise me... the only public peace the nation knows is the peace of the

public prison. India is one vast prison-house. I repudiate this law, and regard it as my sacred duty to break the mournful monotony of the compulsary peace that is chocking the heart of the nation for want of free vent."

It had become obvious even before the Dandi march began that it would develop into a great country-wide movement. Therefore Gandhi and the Dandi marchers led by him were left free, while other Congress leaders were arrested and sentenced. Vallabhbhai Patel who was on his way to organize receptions to the Dandi marchers along their way, was arrested and sentenced even before the march started. Other Congress leaders were subjected to the same treatment all over the country. But the national sentiments that had been aroused around the Dandi March did not weaken. On the contrary, the situation in the country as a whole had never been so militant. In the place of one arrested, several more came forward to take up his position. On one side were the reports on the daily arrests, the trials and sentences, etc., and the touching descriptions of the Dandi March which appeared daily in the newspaper. On the other, there was the growing determination on the part of the people in millions to surge ahead braving all repressions until the victory is achieved.

It was in this emotion-packed background that Gandhi and his followers reached Dandi on 5th April. Gandhi stated that they would disregard the salt law the next morning, followed by similar actions in different forms. Gandhi once again wrote to the Viceroy with an appeal to abolish the salt laws. Gandhi thus once again made it clear on behalf of the national bourgeoisie that positive response would be forthcoming from the Congress if the rulers were willing to adopt the path of negotiation even at that late stage. But the government was not willing to oblige, which made the struggle inevitable.

13

THE SALT SATYAGRAHA

I. BACKGROUND OF ECONOMIC CRISIS

To understand the political developments described in the last few sections and those to be dealt with in the following sections in their full import, it is essential to take a look at the world-wide economic crisis that appeared towards the late 1920s and the early 1930s.

It must be noted that the term "world-wide" employed here in relation to economic crisis is not entirely correct, because there was one country in the world which was free from this crisis—the U.S.S.R. Not only was there no crisis but the economic reconstruction there was progressing with amazing rapidity.

The developed capitalist countries like Britain, the USA, France, Germany, Japan, etc., as well as the backward, exploited countries including India were equally engulfed in a deep and widespread crisis. Absolutely free from this, the

economic system of a country which had hitherto remained backward, was being modernized and growing at an amazing speed.

Here we need not go into the question of how this affected the capitalist world in general, nor into the details of its economic impact on India. The relevant question is how it affected the feelings and emotion of the Indian people in general and the different classes in particular. Here we will deal with the question only to the extent it helps us to explain how the anti-imperialist mass feeling which had been swelling for the last few years, how the left political forces which were striving to give an organized form to this feeling and how the Congress leadership which was striving to come to a compromise with the rulers from a rightist stand-point as opposed to the left got crystallized.

As indicated earlier, it was a crisis of unprecedented depth, which affected simultaneously all capitalist countries, whether developed or underdeveloped. It was characterized as the "crisis of production", because foodgrains and consumer articles produced in factories piled up with no buyers. To save themselves from the consequent fall in prices, the capitalists were ready to destroy a considerable part of the goods produced by dumping them into the sea or by burning them.

But, it was not because there were no people who were in need of these articles, but the people who were in need of them had no money to buy them. Production above the purchasing power of the consumers—this is what is meant by "over-production". As a result of this crisis, factories were closed and farms were left fallow. Because of the policy of the capitalists to maintain the rate of profit by cutting down production, unemployment increased and the wages of those employed fell. As a result, the purchasing power of the potential buyers reduced further.

All these happened in India as well just as in the imperial countries including Britain. Production fell both in industry and agriculture. The prices of goods produced too

fell sharply. Small farmers and artisans could not get a fair price for the goods they produced, while their burden of tax and debt increased. At the same time, the prices of industrial goods needed for their daily use did not fall to the same extent as the fall in the prices of agricultural produce. For all these reasons, they were pauperized.

The land of the small and middle peasants and the capital investments of artisans and small businessmen were either mortgaged or sold.

Closure, retrenchment, and cut in wages were widespread in industries. A huge army of unemployed job-seekers rose in towns and villages, consisting of people coming out of educational and training institutions, workers retrenched from factories and those who lost their land and trade.

The unrest and discontent that arose out of these conditions formed the basis for the mass upsurge witnessed towards the end of the 1920s. The news coming from the Soviet Union where a new system free from such hardships was being built up, made the people sit up and think.

This was what led to the growth of leftist ideology, an inclination towards socialism, though vague as it was, among the younger generation. The propaganda conducted by Jawaharlal Nehru in favour of socialism and the Soviet Union, the dissent expressed by leaders like Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal too, with the compromising attitude of the Congress leadership including Gandhi—all these were the reflections of the new left wind that had begun to blow over India.

The world capitalist crisis not only imposed new burdens on the labouring masses like the peasants and workers, but also led to a serious political crisis in the entire capitalist world. In the atmosphere of a shrinking market for agricultural and industrial products, capitalist powers began to compete with each other to grab as much of the market as possible. Japan, Germany and the U.S.A. tried to push England back from her position as the leading capitalist force in the world, while England fought back to maintain her position.

As an inseparable part of the competition between the different capitalist powers and between different bourgeois groups in each capitalist country, the imperial powers like Britain began to tighten their grip on colonies like India. As a result, new burdens were imposed not only on the poor and middle classes in towns and countryside but also on landlords and capitalists. Thus, the latter too were forced to take anti-imperialist positions to some extent, that is, in a way that would not be detrimental to their narrow class interests.

In many of the documents prepared by the Congress leadership, including the letters written by Gandhi to the Viceroy, one can see the deep concern at and protest against the sacrifice of the interests of Indian capitalists for the benefit of the British capitalists. The parity of the rupee and the British pound, tariff regulations favouring the British capitalists, ships used for export and import of goods, etc., became issues for sharp criticism. On all these issues, the liberals outside the Congress and leaders like Jinnah who was engaged in caste-communal politics favoured the position taken by the Congress. The attempts made by the rulers to use India as the milch cow for the British capitalists and the resistance of the nationalists against them were found reflected in these issues.

In the background of the economic crisis that affected the entire capitalist world, the rulers of India put forward a proposal which intensified these problems. The proposal was to accord to Britain the most favoured treatment in the matter of import duties. That is, British imports into India would attract a lower duty compared as to those from Japan, Germany, etc. This policy, known as "Imperial Preference", came to sharp criticism from the Congress as well as the liberals.

Former Congressmen under the leadership of Malaviya and Dewan Chamanlal had kept themselves aloof from the decision to launch the Salt Satyagraha and Gandhi's Dandi march. They were continuing as members of the Central

Assembly defying the directive of the Congresmen to resign from all elected bodies. It was at a time when the entire country was discussing the Salt Satyagraha and the Dandi March that the Bill on Imperial Preference was introduced in the Central legislature. Pandit Malaviya, Dewan Chamanlal and others strongly opposed the Imperial Preference and moved amendments to it. Following the defeat of their amendments they staged a walk out and resigned from the legislature. The president of the Assembly, Vithalbhai Patel too resigned along with them and declared his intention to participate in the civil disobedience movement.

These developments showed that the contradiction between British and Indian capitalists got intensified as a natural consequence of the crisis that had affected the entire capitalist world. This also explains why the right wing Congress leaders like Gandhi and Motilal Nehru joined hands with the left wing Congressmen like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose and gave a call for a mass struggle against the British rulers.

There was another important issue which deserves special mention here. The competiton between the British, on the one hand, and other imperialist powers like Germany and Japan, on the other, compelled Britain to take an attitude different from what they had hither to been following with regard to industrialization of India. India was one of the important markets for the British industrial goods. The imperialist powers like Japan were striving to capture it. Hence, it was necessary for the British to protect the Indian market from encroachment by the rival powers. At the same time, it was also necessary for them to provide facilities to British capitalists for increased capital investment in India. It was with these twin objectives that the British adopted the policy of Imperial Preference. This helped industrialization of India to some extent. It also helded the British capitalists to compete with Indian capitalists.

During the 1929-33 economic crisis, a number of new industrial units came up in India, while the old ones were

further expanded. For example, the textile industry which had developed on a large scale in Bombay and Ahmedabad was extended to Madras. The sugar industry which was non-existent till then began to grow in a big way. Cement and other industries also began to grow during the same period.

A part of these industries was under British ownership. The British realized that, while protecting India from the attack of the capitalist rivals like Germany and Japan, the best way to continue to use India as the milch cow was to establish new industries in India under British ownership. This approach which the British capitalists adopted to save themselves from the growth of the Indian capitalists led to an intensification of the contradiction between them and the Indian capitalists.

During this period, a number of new industrial units under Indian ownership too had sprung up. Among these, the sugar industry deserves special mention. Till then, sugar from Jawa was being imported into India. As such, the British had nothing to lose if sugar industry developed here even if it was under Indian ownership. On the contrary, as a natural corollary to the growth of the sugar mills, sugar-cane cultivation would develop yielding income to the landlords and rich peasants engaged in its cultivation. This was politically advantageous to the British. The consolidation of the relation between the elites in the countryside and the owners of sugar mills would help the maintenance and growth of British influence in India.

Thus, utilizing the protective tariff against Jawa sugar, Birla, Dalmia, Singhania, Thapar, Narang and others began to extend their industrial operation to sugar industry. The surplus of the big landowners in the rural areas was also ploughed into the sugar industry. That is, landowners who invested in industries, capitalist farmers who produced raw materials for industries and the industrial capitalists interested in the agricultural sector had all joined hands in the task of modernizing Indian economy on capitalist lines.

This process was not, however, confined to the sugar industry alone. During the same period, many industries like cement, leather, *bidi* and so on came up. Big landowners and moneylenders entered the industrial sector for the first time. Thus, 'Imperial Preference,' introduced by the British rulers to protect themselves from capitalist rivals like Japan and Germany, in a sense, helped the growth of Indian capitalists as well.

At the same time, the British tried to prevent the growth of Indian capitalists in other areas utilizing the protective shield of 'Imperial Preference'. This led to the intensification of the contradiction between Indian and British capitalists. The Indian bourgeoisie was guided in general by the self-confidence gained through investment in certain industrial sectors and the resentment at the policy of the ruling powers preventing them from spreading to other sectors.

Along with this was another development which was equally significant. Among the Indian capitalists who grew within the limits of 'Imperial Preference', a small minority had grown swallowing the assets of small and medium capitalists who were crushed as a result of the economic crisis. Though there was common identity between big capitalists, on the one hand, and the medium and small capitalists, on the other, as a class, contradiction grew between them as rivals in the same class. The big capitalists became confident that they would be able to foster their class interest if they adopted the twin approach of opposition by all means to the British capitalists and of negotiation with them at the same time. For the medium and small scale capitalists competition from British capitalists was proving extremely dangerous.

In the circumstances, differences in policy and approach began to arise among the different sections of the Indian bourgeoisie in conformity with their class interests. One section thought in terms of an uncompromising struggle against imperialism in accordance with the feelings of the left-wing youth and the masses of workers and peasants, while another section thought in terms of safeguarding, to the

extent possible, their class interest by utilizing every opportunity of coming to a compromise with the rulers.

There were a number of instances of these two trends appearing by turn in one and the same group or even the same individual. But there was one group which continuously and consistently adhered to the position that no chance should be lost for a compromise and that was represented by the Congress leadership consisting of the disciples of Gandhi and pro-legislaturists. On the other side, there was another section that stood firm in the path of struggle without any compromise. It included a variety of individuals and groups like communists who had assumed by then an organized form, the emerging socialist groups, the left Congressmen like Bose who, unlike Nehru, were not influenced by Gandhism.

The clash between these two groups broke out at different stages and in different forms with which we shall deal in the following sections. However, the political characteristic of the period of the Salt *Satyagraha* consisted of the fact that it helped these two groups to stand together.

II. FORMS OF STRUGGLE: GANDHIAN AND NON-GANDHIAN

The salt satyagraha was launched on 6th April 1930. As pointed out earlier, Gandhi organized his struggle subject to severe restrictions. But, because of the emotion-charged situation, the forms of struggle that people resorted to all over the country violated the restrictions imposed by him.

Although the ritual violation of the salt law under Gandhi's leadership was performed on 6th April as sheduled, Gandhi was left free until 5th May. In between, almost all leaders except Gandhi were imprisoned. Vallabhbhai Patel was arrested in the course of the Dandi march itself. After the Satyagragha was launched, all top Congress leaders,

including Jawaharlal Nehru, were put behind the bars. And as the Salt *Satyagraha* spread all along the seacoast following the *Satyagraha* launched by Gandhi, the volunteers as well as the spectactors were subjected to unprecedented police brutality.

Protesting against these, *hartals*, strikes and demonstrations were held all over the country. The movement received wide publicity in the country and abroad. Although there was strict control on newspapers and other publications in India, the arrests, police repression and protest demonstrations, etc., got publicity to a considerable extent. Since Gandhi was free, the statements issued by him encouraged the protest demonstrations. He was determined to see that the struggle remained within the limits set by him. This was reflected in all his statments.

Relizing that he would not be allowed to remain outside the jail for long, Gandhi issued a number of statements elaborating how the struggle should be conducted in his absence. The last among them, issued just a few hours before his arrest, was a follows:

> Let not my companions or the people at large be perturbed over my arrest, for it is not I but God who is guiding the movement...Our path has already been chalked out for us. Let every village manufacture or fetch contraband salt, sisters should picket liqour shops, opium dens and foreign cloth dealers' shops. Young and old in every home should ply the *takli* and spin and get woven heaps of yarn every day. Foreign cloth should beburnt.Hindus should eschew untochability. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis and Christians should all achieve heart unity. Let the majority rest content with what remains after the minorities have been sastisfied. Let the students leave Government schools, and Government servents resign their service and devote themselves to service of the people, we shall find that Purna Swaraj will come knocking at our doors. [1]

1 G.D. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol 3, New Delhi, Publications Division, 1969, p. 32.

However, as Gandhi tried to draw the entire people into his non-violent struggle, other forms of struggle too were adopted in many parts of the country. Some incidents may be cited here to enable us to find the depth and form of people's fighting spirit.

One such incident was the raid of Chittagong armoury which took place before Gandhi issued the above statment. Chittagong town and its surrounding areas (now in Bangladesh) were the centres of bomb-politics. The armoury raid was designed to transform the countrywide anti-imperialist fighting spirit kindled by the call given by Gandhi into a revolutionary form of struggle as distinct from the Gandhian method.

The leader of this raid was Surya Sen, known as 'Master Da' among his followers. By a well-coordinated action, these revolutionaries were able to cut off the communication links with the town and capture the police camp. With the captured arms in their hands, they went around the city singing '*Vande mataram*'. They also captured all the police stations on their way and raised barricades to obstruct the movement of the military. The entire town was under their control for several days. They succeeded even in derailing a train carrying troops to quell them.

It was an act which inspired all anti-imperialists not stunted by commitment to Gandhian philosophy. Many of those who participated in the raid later became communists. But then they did not have the outlook of a working class revolutionary party for raising a revolutionary army on the foundations of mass struggles. Besides, they had the notion that they would be able to defeat the police force and the army of the British rulers by the courageous actions of a handful of self-scacrificing brave individuals. Viewed from this perspective, the Chittagong armoury raid was certainly the best organized of all the revolutionary programmes carried out by the politicians who believed in the cult of the bomb. Having been able to defeat the police force in a town and prevent the entry of the military, for a short time though it

was, by sheer grit and organization of a few well-trained young men and women, they set the most inspiring example for petty-bourgeois revolutionaries.

But this had all the weaknesses of the petty-bourgeois revolutionary path. Although they captured all the police camps in the harbour city of Chittagong, they did not capture the Chittagong harbour which was a base of the British army and one of its important communication links, which enabled the British authorities to deploy easily their forces in the harbour against the revolutionaries.

In addition to this weakness, which may be termed technical, they had another weakness which was political in nature. Theirs was not a revolutionary army which had organized the workers, peasants and other masses of the surrounding areas, winning their love and confidence. Therefore, when they decided to withdraw from the town in the wake of the arrival of the British army which they could not resist, they had already become isolated from the people. Even when the army entered the forests where they had taken shelter, the revolutionaries in the town and the rural areas could not organize an anti-British struggle in Chittagong. This is what distinguishes bomb-politics from the working class revolutionary methods practised in the national liberation struggle in Vietnam and in the guerilla war against the Nazi hordes. Thus within a few days, the British were able to capture the revolutionaries and institute proceedings against 30 of them. Though the leaders went underground for almost two years, the organization as a whole collapsed.

The mass upsurge that took place in the North West Frontier region, now part of Pakistan, was different from this. In that region, there was no organization of "bomb-politicians" as in Bengal. The area was inhabited by the Pathans, the Afridis, the Momandis and other tribes. It was an uphill task for the British to defeat them and bring them under their rule. Even after they were defeated, they continued to organize innumerable resistance struggles against the British. They took part in a big way in the anti-imperialist

struggles during the First World War and in the post-war years. The new upsurge that swept across the country in the wake of the Salt *Satyagraha* also inspired them.

Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, popularly known as the "Frontier Gandhi", was the most outstanding leader thrown up in the struggles. The popular upsurge of the Pathans under his leadership inspired India as a whole. The *Satyagrahis* who formally belonged to the Congress and the *Khudai Khidmatgars* (Servants of God) organized by Ghaffar Khan joined hands and raised a mass front of people's struggle. (*Khudai Khidmatgars* was a volunteer organization devoted to social reform and cultural progress. And they inevitably became part of the anti-imperialist movement. The colour of the uniform of the volunteers was white in the beginning, but taking into consideration the climate of the region, they changed it to red. Thus the *Khudai Khidmatgars* came to be known as the "Red Shirts".)

Viewed from a class point of view the *satyagraha* struggle in this region which turned into a mass movement under the leadership of the Frontier Gandhi, was similar to that in other parts of India. In the Frontier Province the *satyagraha* was conducted solely under the leadership of the upper sections of the society. But the Pathans led by Ghaffar Khan were able to maintain their tribal fraternity and raise it to the level of a strong anti-imperialist feeling. Besides, they were also able to organize the Afridi and the Momandi tribes on the basis of their tribal fraternity and make them part of the anti-imperialist political movement. Thus what one saw in the N. W. Frontier was an entire people rising against imperialist domination. And this distinguishes the mass movement in the N. W. Frontier from the Chittagong armoury raid.

Just as Gandhi, Ghaffar Khan too tried his best to keep the struggle non-violent. But once the tribals with the tradition of anti-imperialist struggle entered the field, it was difficult to keep it non-violent. Thus a demonstration held in Peshawar under the official leadership of the Congress

ended in a clash with the police. Many Congress leaders who went to the spot pleading with the demonstrators to remain non-violent themselves became the target of people's anger. Disregarding the advice and direction of the leaders, the peole went ahead. In the end, in Peshawar as in many other parts of India, the armed forces opened fire at the people.

A particular incident connected with this firing deserves special mention. That incident provided an indication to the revolutionary atmosphere that existed in those days. One of the army units which was ordered to shoot was the Garhwali tribal battalion, which refused to open fire as they considered it a cowardly act to fire unarmed people, an act against their own military tradition. (It must be noted here that the leader of this Garhwali unit, Chander Singh, later joined the Communist Party after completing his term of sentence.)

Though different from the atmosphere of Chittagong and Peshawar, another demostration of the anti-imperialist feeling inspired by Salt *satyagraha* was witnessed in Sholapur in Maharashtra. As in other provinces, the *satyagraha* in Sholapur was organized by an action council under the leadership of the Congress. Sholapur was a town with a population of industrial workers, though small in number. Besides, it was influenced by extremist politics from the time of Tilak. Consequently the struggle broke the limits of non-violence. On 28th may a few policemen were killed in a clash between the police and the people who participated in the *satyagraha*. The police opend fire at the people in which five persons were killed and more than a hundred wounded. Restless at the turn of events, the people threw overboard the principle of non-violence and turned against the police. Led by the worker volunteers, the people set fire to six police stations, a military record room, a number of British offices and liquor shops (they took particular care to see that the fire did not spread to the neighbouring residential areas). Along with the British officers, their trusted men and the

police had to flee the town. With the behaviour of the Garhwali soldiers in Peshawar fresh in their memory, the authorities did not send Indian troops to suppress the people of Sholapur. Instead, they used British troops for the purpose.

The nature of the incident that took place in Sholapur was different form those that took place in Chittagong and Peshawar. It was a movement based neither on a handful of brave adventurists as in Chittagong nor on the tribal fraternal consciousness as in Peshawar. In Sholapur, the organized industrial working class, in its primary stage though, a Congress leadership which was striving to bring them and other sections of the masses into the struggle,and political conditions in which extremist politics exercised a stronger influence on the people including the Congressmen than Gandhism were all combined in the organized mass movement. It was, in fact, a pointer to the nature of freedom struggle in the days to come.

In many other parts of India, the organized working class responded to the call given by the Congress leadership and fought vigorously against imperialist domination. They fought with greater determination and vigour than traders, students and other sections of the people. As distinct from the 1920-21 period, now the workers had their own exclusive organizations.

The workers in the 1930s had imbibed the experience of their struggles conducted earlier under the leadership of these organizations. Sholapur was the forerunner of the coming country-wide struggles of traders and students in the towns and of the peasants and other labouring masses in the countryside.

Two of the three events mentioned here—Chittagong and Peshawar—took place before Gandhi was arrested,which showed the character of the anti-imperialist movement of those days. But, Gandhi, who had called off the non-cooperation movement after the Chauri Chaura incident, did not call off the etruggle after Chittagong and Peshawar. After Gandhi's arrest, the leadership of the Congress outside the jail (the Working Committee) appealed to the people and the Congress

committees at the lower levels to adopt every from of struggle including a no-tax campaign.

Furthermore, Motilal Nehru who had come out after a few weeks of imprisonment stated that the people in the army and the police force were not bound to carry out illeagal orders. The fact that Motilal Nehru, an acclaimed right wing leader of the Congress, did appeal to follow the example shown by the Garhwali battalion was a reflection of the then existing conditions.

In brief, whatever be the intention of Gandhi, the Salt *Satyagraha*, in effect, turned out to be a programme which inspired the people to enter the field of struggle. That is, limitations of the Gandhian theory of struggle was no hindrance to raising the Salt *Satyagraha* to the level of a far wider and better organized struggle than that of the 1920-21 period in which a wider spectrum of people from children and women who had hitherto been confined to homes and Hindus, irrespective of caste distinctions, to members of religious minority communities, took part.

III. NEGOTIATIONS

While the people in different parts of the country were enthusiastically engaged in a glorious struggle, the Congress leaders at the top and the bourgeoisie which was giving full support to them were not acting in consonance with the feelings of the masses.

The capitalists, in general, tried to take advantage of the struggle including the boycott of foreign cloth. While millions of people braving the police lathi-charge and firings were carrying out the boycott of foreign cloth and setting fire to them, the Indian cotton mill owners did two things. On the one side, they gave liberal financial support to the struggle, including the picketing, to ensure the success of the programme of the boycott of foreign cloth, and on the other, induced the political workers out of jail to propagate

the use of *Swadeshi*, a programme which was more "practical" than the programme of boycott of foreign cloth. They reached an understanding with the Congress leaders that the latter would not stand in the way of selling the cloth produced in Indian textile mills.

Congressmen outside jails and non-Congress liberals began to implement a "constructive" programme in which the people were to take the pledge of wearing only *Swadeshi* cloth, while the mill owners were to observe certain conditions regarding the production of cloth.

Obviously, this was a step capable of serving the interests of Indian textile mill owners. The programmes of boycott of foreign cloth directly under the leadership of the Congress and the programme of propagation of *Swadeshi* not directly under Congress leadership together created the necessary conditions for the protection of the interests of the Indian mill owners. But the capitalist class was not satisfied with this alone. It also wanted solution to the political issue in which the entire capitalist class, including those in the textile industry, was interested.

The capitalists as a whole desired at least a constitutional change if not full independence as demanded at the Lahore session of the Congress. They desired to use the political atmosphere created by the country-wide struggle in which hundreds were shot dead and tens of thousands beaten up, to exert maximum pressure on the British rulers and thereby acquire as much power as possible. They also wanted the Congress to adopt a "pragmatic approach" necessary for this purpose. In other words, they proposed entering into negotiations with the British rulers, while at the same time, rallying the entire people in the glorious anti-imperialist struggle.

This was exactly what the Congress leaders, including Gandhi, were contemplating. It may be recalled here that within weeks of the adoption of the full Independence resolution at Lahore Congress—at a time when the Independence Day was being observed all over the country in which millions

of people participated—Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy reducing full independence to "eleven points" which made the leftist devotees of Gandhi like Nehru feel uneasy. In all the subsequent statements issued by Gandhi, in the speeches he made and in the letters he wrote to the Viceroy during the Dandi March and after launching the Salt *Satyagraha*, the approach of conciliation and negotiation was obvious. Just before and after launching the Salt *Satyagraha*, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy saying that he was aware of the dangerous possibilities inherent in the path of struggle he had adopted and that since he wanted to avoid it, the government must adopt a helpful attitude. He persisted in making such statements till he was arrested on 5th May.

After the arrest, Gandhi could not make such statements or speeches. But within two weeks of his arrest, he got an opportunity to reiterate his approach from jail and get worldwide publicity. The British rulers themselves helped to create an atmosphere for this.

To understand the import of this development, it is necessary to elaborate the attitude of the British rulers towards the struggle. In Britain, as we have noted earlier, the Conservatives who were in power till 1929 were replaced by the Labour Party which had been advocating a policy of conceding India's political rights. (Labour Party leader Clement Atlee who was a member of the Simon Commission had expressed himself in favour of conceding India's demands.) Besides, many prominent newspapers in Britain had written editorial articles protesting against the repression let loose by the government following the Salt *Satyagraha* and pleading for a conciliatory attitude towards the Congress. The newspapers in the U. S. A. and other foreign countries, as also foreign social and political leaders, religious heads and others, expressed themselves in favour of India's independence movement. In this international background, the British government could not pursue a policy of repression alone. The rulers had to adopt a dual policy of proceeding legally against the violation of laws, and creating at the same

time the impression that the doors were not closed for conciliation.

This explains why Gandhi was left free for weeks after launching the Salt *Satyagraha*. It was for the same reason that many top leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel were released immediately after a brief period of imprisonment.

As part of this policy, a British newspaper correspondent was allowed to interview Gandhi in jail and ascertain his views on the terms of a conciliation. And this correspondent was the representative in India of *Daily Herald*, the organ of the British Labour Party. He had written a number of articles in his paper expressing sympathy towards the struggle led by Gandhi.

It was meaningful that a British correspondent with such a political background was allowed to interview Gandhi. This was a clear indication that the British bourgeoisie and their government were eager to solve the problem by negotiations as well as the Indian bourgeoisie and its political leadership, the Congress. While the latter viewed the struggle as a means to bring pressure on the British rulers, the former viewed the repression and the proposal for the Round Table Conference as instruments to bring pressure on the Congress. They had made it clear that the Conference would be held even if the Congress dissociated from it and that necessary steps would be taken to "protect law and order" if the leadership launched the civil disobedience. While, on the one hand, the authorities took steps to teach the 'low-breakers' a lesson by perpetrating violence on tens of thousands of people, they, on the other hand, called the (first) Round Table Conference in London to which all leaders excluding Congressmen were invited.

However, both the sides knew that none of these methods was going to be effective in the final analysis.

The Congress leadership knew that however massive the civil disobedience movement, it would not take them to the goal of full independence demanded at the Lahore

Congress. Yet, it was not willing to adopt the means and forms of struggle proposed by left Congressmen and Communists.

Similarly, the British rulers knew that a round table conference without the participation of the Congress could not solve the political questions of India and also that the civil disobedience movement could not be suppressed by force. Hence, the authorities wished to persuade the Congress to postpone the civil disobedience movement and participate in the Round Table Conference.

The Congress leadership too wished to participate in the Round Table Conference on the condition that at least some limited political rights short of full independence demanded by them and taken by the people as their own, be granted. In fact, the Indian bourgeoisie as a whole expressed the desire to make such a move.

The foreign friends of India sympathetic to the Indian freedom movement as well as the liberals in India itself were wondering if, in the atmosphere of the pressure tactics exercised by both the sides, a compromise could be brought about on the basis of terms acceptable to both the sides.

It was in this background that George Slocombe, the Indian representatives of *Daily Herald*, held a talk with Gandhi in jail. Slocombe sought to know from Gandhi the terms on which the Congress would call off the civil disobedience movement and participate in the Round Table Conference. Gandhi's reply, published in *Daily Herald* and in other foreign and Indian papers contained the following terms:

1) The adoption of a constitution which grants the essence of independence to India should be brought within the purview of the Round Table Conference.
2) Concede the demands put forward by Gandhi with regard to the abolition of Salt Tax, Prohibition and the ban on foreign cloth.
3) Release all prisoners sentenced on political grounds with the suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement.

4) Leave the remaining part of the '11 points' which Gandhi had submitted to the Viceroy to future negotiations.

Needless to state, these terms constituted a going back not only from the Lahore resolution on independence but also from the position taken by Gandhi in his statements and in the letters he wrote to the Viceroy. The goal of full independence was reduced to the "essence of independence", and the majority of the minimum demand of '11-points' set aside for"future negotiations". Slocombe concluded his report with a warning that unless the authorities were willing to take the path of conciliation by accepting the very much scaled-down demand of Gandhi, both England and India would be caught in "a danger beyond imagination".

But the government was not willing to accept even this. Hence the struggle continued. A large number of Congress committees were declared illegal and their properties, including Anand Bhavan, the home of the Nerhu family in Allahabad which was donated to the congress when the disobedience movement was launched, confiscated. Undaunted the people in tens of thousands continued the disobedience programme in different forms in different places. Side by side, the top leaders of the Congress and the liberals continued their efforts to negotiate with the government.

On 20th June 1930, Motilal Nehru came out of the prison after serving his first term of sentence. Before long, Slocombe held an interview with him following which discussions were held among Motilal, Slocombe and the liberal leader, Jayakar. The subject of the discussion was the terms acceptable to the Congress to participate in the Round Table Conference. The opinions and suggestions that emerged in these discussions were conveyed in a letter to Spru. He in turn approached the Viceroy with that letter. In the light of the talks held with the Viceroy, Sapru and Jayakar visited Motial Nehru, who had been arrested once again, Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru in jail.

The efforts of these two liberal leaders to evolve the terms acceptable to both sides had the full support of the Viceroy. Hence, the Nehrus and Dr. Sayed Mohamud were brought to Yerwada jail where Gandhi had been kept. There, a conference was held which was attended by Gandhi, the Nehrus, Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr Mohamud, Jairamdas Daulatram and Sarojini Naidu. Sapru and Jayakar pleaded with the Congress leaders to climb down further from the position taken by Gandhi in his interview with Slocombe. But Congress leaders could not accept the plea. Some of them, in fact, were of the opinion that the terms put forward by Gandhi represented a backpedalling from the goal adopted by the Congress. Hence a further climb down from that position was out of the question. The authorities on their part were not willing to accept the terms put forward by Gandhi. Thus, the first negotiation held after the launching of the civil disobedience movement failed.

There was one important development which needs special mention here. Before the Yerwada discussion, Gandhi wrote to the Nehrus in the North Indian jails expressing the view that the time was not yet ripe for a negotiation. Gandhi feared that in the then prevailing atmosphere of a country-wide mass struggle, negotiations with the authorities by a few leaders would do more harm than good. That is, Gandhi's intention was to call upon the people to intensify the struggle against the authorities who were not willing to accept even the minimum demands put forward by him.

But this made one thing clear. Unlike the Congress ranks and the people who participated in the struggle, the Congress leaders were not thinking in terms of a "struggle till the goal is achieved". Their assessment of the situation was that there was no alternative but to advance along the path of struggle for the time being till the time became propicious for negotiations.

IV. THE FIRST ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

We have noted earlier that the British government had decided to hold the Round Table Conference even if the Congress did not participate in it, as a means to exert pressure on the Congress. This conference began on 31st October, 1930. In all 89 delegates attend it, 16 representing the different political parties in Britain, 16 representing the princely states of India, and 57 from the British Indian provinces.

Because of the absence of the Congress, the Conference was held in an atmosphere of unreality. It may be recalled that the Congress leaders had declared that any decision taken in the Conferenc would not be binding on them. Hence, the Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald's statement at the concluding session on 19th January,1931 expresed the hope that those who were not participating in the civil disobedience movement would accede to the appeal of the Viceroy and participate in the future proceedings of the Conference. And in expressing this hope, he was sincere. For the ruling powers were aware that a fruitful decision at a conference would be possible only if the Congress participated in it. Therefore, within a week after the conference, negotiations with the Congress started once again.

The British authorities had made all that was necessary to see to it that the new political set up that might emerge out of the negotiations was favourable to them. The organizational structure and the discussions in the Conference as well as the statement of the British Prime Minister at the end of the conference were orientated that way.

We have seen that there were three groups of participants in the First Round Table Conference. Of these,the representatives of the political parties of England and those respenting the Indian princely states were overtly opposed to the goal of full independence put forward by the Congress. They were bent on putting every obstruction on the path of realizing this goal. Among the British India delegates, there were,

besides the liberals like Spru, Jayakar and Srinivasa Sastri, representatives of minority communities like the Muslims, the Depressed Castes, etc. Obviously the liberals had no sympathy with the goal of full independence. The respresentatives of the minority communities were more interested in furthering their own communal interests than anything else.

And this provided a helpful atmosphere for the British to put into paractice their tactics of 'divide and rule'. The British representatives argued for provisions to safeguard the interests of the British capitalists who had invested in India and of British officers serving in different parts of India in various capacities. Besides, they tried to have the vital departments of defence and foreign affairs to be vested in the Viceroy instead of being handed over to the Indian representatives.

The respresentatives of the princely states asked for safeguards which would perpetuate their feudal rule. It was amidst all these that the representatives of Muslims and the Depressed Castes fought to bolster their special interests.

The authorities used this situation to widen the gulf that existed among these different interest groups, sharpen the contradiction between them and make it appear that it was because of these differences and contradictions that an agreed solution failed to emerge. The authorities thought that if this tactic succeeded, there would a big hurdle for the Congress to cross, when the Round Table Conference resumed later with the participation of the Congress.

The First Round Table Conference which was inaugurated in this background took certain decisions unanimously. One of the important decisions thus taken was that India's future constitution should be federal in character and that the Britsh Indian provinces and the princely states should have equal representation in it.

Apparently, it was a good decision. It meant that the rulers of 600 and odd princely states which claimed themselves to be fully independent and sovereign gave up that position and agreed to become part of an administrative system

through elected representatives of the people. However, they gave no assurance that the states which would become members of federal India, would themselves institute democratic governments based on the legislatures with elected representatives. The idea was that this would in effect create obstacles of autocratic rule in the states before the people of India marching along the path of democracy.

This together with the vested intrests of the British and the clims of minority communities made it extremely difficult for the realization of a system of bourgeois democratic set up as demanded even by the liberals. However, the moderates hoped that the decision with regard to a federal constitution unanimously taken in the Conference would help to advance along the path they desired. So, they wholeheartedly welcomed the proposal.

But, once the discussions on the problems of minority communities began, complications began to arise one after another. Separate electorate envisaged for Muslims was now demanded by the Depressed Castes leaders and certa.n other minority communities as well. But the representatives of the Muslim community stood firmly by their "special rights"and emphatically stated in one voice that a constitution which did not recognize this special right would not be acceptable to them.

With this, the conference came to a standstill and it became impossible to proceed further. At this stage the final plenary session of the delegates who were till then divided into different sub-committees was held on 19th January 1931. In that conference the Prime Minister made a statement on behalf of the British govenrment, which included the following points.

1. The view of the British Government is that the responsibility for the Governmet of India should be placed upon the legislatures, central and provincial, with such provision as may be necessary to guarantee, during the period of transition, the observance of certain obligations and to meet other special circumstances, and also with such guarantees

as are required by minorities to protect their political liberties and rights.

2. The British Government has taken note of the fact that the deliberations of the Conference have proceeded on the basis accepted by all parties, that the central Government should be a federation of all-India, embracing both the Indian states and British India in a bicameral legislature.

3. With the legislatures constitued on a federal basis, the British Government will be prepared to recognise the principle of the responsibility of the Executive to the Legislature.

4. Under the existing conditians the subjects of Defence and External Affairs will be reserved to the Governor General, and arrangements will be made to place in his hands the power necessary for the adminstration of these subjects. Moreover, as the Governor General must, as a last resort, be able in an emergency to manitain the tranquility of the State and must similarly be responsible for the observance of the constitutional rights of minorities, he must be granted the neccssary powers for these purposes.

5. The Governor's Provinces will be constituted on the basis of full responsibility. Their Ministers will be taken from the Legislature and will be jointly responsible to it. The range of Provincial subjects will be so defined as to give them the greatest possible measure of self-government. The authority of the Fedral Government will be limited to provisions required to secure its administration of Fedaral subjects and so discharge its responsibility for subjects defined in the constitution of all-India concern.

It also assured that while making stafeguards during the transition period as stated above, the reserved powers of the Governor General and the Governors would be framed and exercised "as not to prejudice the advance of India through the new constitution to full responsibility for her own Government".

Along with this, the Prime Minister made an observation regarbing the problem of minority communities. He stated

that the problem should be solved amicably through negotiations among the different communities. He promised the co-operation of his government in this regard.

He concluded his statement with an appeal to all those concerned (the Congressmen) to call off the civil disobedience and participate in the future proceedings of the Conference.

On 21 January, the Congress Working Committee gave a reply to this. It was stated emphatically that the proceedings claimed to have taken place at the Round Table Conference were not acceptable to the Congress. The Committee charged the government with inviting only those whom it liked and not those who really represented the Indian people. The Committee pointedly stated that the Conference was called by a government which had put behind the bars all the leaders of the people striving to give shape to their aspirations, a government which had resorted to ordinances one after another, a government which had subjected thousands of unarmed and peace-loving people to police lathi-charge and firings.

The Committee also made certain observations on the statement made by the Prime Minister on 19th January. It specifically stated that the Prime Minister's statement was extremely vague and general and that it contained no concrete proposal to justify a change in the policy of the Congress. It made unambiguously clear that in the circumstances, the only course open before the Congress and the people was to further strengthen the struggle. As an indication of the continuance of the struggle, the Committee appealed to the people to observe the 26th January 1931 as Independence Day, as a mighty demonstration of their firm determination to march forward undeterded by repression.

Though a resolution to this effect was adopted, the Committee decided against publishing it immediately. This was because, as pointed out earlier, the leaders were determined not to close the doors against any conciliatory move. They were led by the suspecion that there was something in

between the lines in the Prime Minister's statement and the desire to utilize it to go along the path of negotiation.

In this, they soon received an encouraging telegraphic communication from London sent jointly by Sapru and Srinivasa Sastri who had participated in the Round Table Conference. They had sent this message when they were returning to India after the Conference. It was an appeal to the Congress leaders not to take any hasty decision regarding the Prime Minister's statement and also a request for a discussion of the matter with them soon after their arrival in India. In deference to this, the Congress leaders decided to postpone the publication of the resolution.

Events moved swiftly thereafter. On 25th January, the Viceroy issued a statement. The essence of this statement was that his government had decided, with the approval of the provincial governments, to release from jail all members of the Working Committee, both original and co-opted, who were functioning from January 1930, in order to facilitate a discussion on matters contained in the Prime Minister's statement. The statement made it clear that the release would be unconditional. It also made it clear that this decision was an attempt to implement the Prime Minister's statement and that his government would be behind none in finding an amicable solution to the political and constitutional problems once the situation returned to normalcy. The Viceroy hoped that the Congress leaders would favourably respond to the decision taken by the government.

Following this, 26 members of the Working Committee, including those who had assumed charge temporarily, were released. In a statement issued on his release, Gandhi said: "I have come out of jail with an absolutely open mind, unfettered by enmity, unbiased in argument and prepared to study the situation, from every point of view and discuss the Premier's statement with Tej Bahadur Sapru and other delegates on their return. I make this statement in deference to the urgent wish expressed in a cable sent to me from London by some of the delegates."

With this, the conditions changed as a whole. It may be recalled that the talks which had taken place a few months earlier in Naini Tal and Yerwada jails between Congress leaders, on the one hand, and Sapru and Jayakar, on the other, turned out to be unsuccessful. Gandhi had then expressed the view that conditions prevailing at that time were not conducive to negotiations. Now, the conditions were becoming conducive. It was impossible then to call off the struggle or come to an agreement with the government on the basis of a decision by Congress leaders individually or by a few of them. Now, all the top leaders of the Congress were free. Thus it became possible for them to hold discussions and chalk out future programmes taking into consideration the background of the Round Table Conference held in their absence and the decisions emerging from it. Thus, a new chapter was being opened in the history of the *Satyagraha* struggle of 1930.

V. THE GANDHI-IRWIN PACT

As the top Congress leaders came out of the jail on the unilateral decision taken by the authorities, the Congress had to face a thoroughly confusing new situation. An impression had gained ground among the people that an agreement between the Congress and the government was in the offing and that the struggle would be withdrawn. This was strengthened by the decision of the Working Committee not to publish its resolution to continue the struggle.

However, the repression let loose against Congress workers with the launching of the Salt *Satyagraha* did not end with the release of the leaders. Police lathi-charge and other repressive actions continued as before. Moreover, there was a widespread feeling among Congress ranks and the people in general against holding talks with the authorities and reaching a compromise with them. Besides, the Congress leadership which had to conduct talks with the

authorities against popular feelings, had to face innumerable knotty problems in the course of the talks.

However, Gandhi and other top Congress leaders had no doubt that a "situation mature enough for negotiations" had come. So they held talks with Sastri, Sapru and Jayakar soon after their arrival from London. And they came to the conclusion that Gandhi and the Viceroy should begin talks. At the same time, they decided to continue the struggle while proceeding with talks. The Working Committee which met at Allahabad on 31st January adopted the following resolution:

"The Working Committee having, out of regard for the wishes of Syts Sastri, Sapru and Jayakar, suspended publication of its resolution passed an 21-1-31, an impression has got abroad that the movement of Civil Disobedience has been suspended. It is, therefore, necessary to reiterate the decision of the Committee that the movement is to continue unabated until explicit instructions are issued to the contrary. This meeting reminds the public that picketing of foreign cloth and drink and drug shops in itself is no part of the Civil Disobedience campaign, but that it is the exercise of the ordinary right of a citizen, so long as it remains stricty peaceful and causes no obstruction to the public.

"This meeting further reminds the sellers of foreign cloth, including foreign yarn, and Congress workers that the boycott of foreign cloth being a vital necessity in the interest of the masses, is a permanent feature of national activity and will remain so till the nation has acquired the power to exclude foreign cloth and foreign yarn form India, whether by total prohibition or by prohibitive tariff.

"Whilst the response made by dealers in foreign cloth and foreign yarn to the appeal of the Congress to bring about a boycott of foreign cloth, this meeting reminds them that it is not open to any Congress organization to hold out hopes of their being able to dispose of their existing stock in India."[2]

2. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of Indian National Congress*, Bombay Padma publication (1964 reprint), p. 430

It can be seen that though the resolution gave a general directive on the continuance of the struggle, it contained nothing concrete about anything, except on the boycott of foreign cloth and yarn. It was a time when various struggles, including a "no-tax campaign", were going on in many provinces including U. P., the home province of the Nehrus. The local Congress workers had to face numerous problems in relation to each of these struggles. The Committee which did not bother to give clear directions on these issues, however, made it clear that even if the civil disobedience movement was withdrawn, the boycott of foreign cloth would continue. That the civil disobedience movement might be put off subject to certain conditions was thus implied in the resolution which stated that the struggle must continue until specific instructions were received.

This later led to differences and contradictions between the leadership and ranks in the Congress, which we shall see in the following sections. Within the Congress leadership itself, there were some who looked upon the path of negotiations with subdued opposition out of personal reverence to Gandhi. Knowing all this, the leadership decided to take itself to the path of negotiations.

When these developments were taking place, Motilal was on his death-bed. He invited his colleagues in the Working Committee to Allahabad and expressed his wish to have the discussions, which were to decide the future of India, held in his presence at Swaraj Bhawan. He also made it clear that the path he had chosen was one of negotiations. At the same time, his only son, Jawaharlal, was badly disturbed at the path of negotiations. This difference in approach between the father and the son was symbolic of the difference of opinion that was growing among Congress workers all over the country.

Motilal Nehru passed away on 6th February before Sapru, Jayakar and other delegates returned from England. The impact of Motilal's death on Gandhi was revealed in several

of his statements. But what disturbed him more was the continuance of the policy of repression by the government even after his and his colleague's release from jail. Gandhi said: "Despite the official peace offer from Great Britain, unprovoked assaults on innocent persons still continue. Respectable persons are summarily and without apparent reason deprived of their immovable and movable property by mere executive action. A procession of women was forcibly disbursed. They were seized by the hair and kicked with boots. The continuance of such repression will make Congress cooperation impossible even if other difficulties are got over."

While all these were going on publicly, the Congress leadership had given certain secret instructions as well. According to Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the leadership instructed the "Congressmen not to start new struggles" and "not to create new situations, although they might vigorously continue the ongoing struggles". In other words, while voicing public protest against the repressive policy of the government, the leadership was in fact containing the fighting spirit of the Congressmen.

It was necessary for the leadership to show that the masses were behind it when it entered into negotiation with the government, and at the same time it did not want to see anything standing in the way of serious negotiations that might be started when the "situation became mature". The tactic they adopted was such that it served both these purposes.

Soon after their return from England, Sastri and Sapru went to Allahabad and held prolonged discussions with Gandhi and other Congress leaders. They suggested that, since the government had taken the initiative for bilateral negotiations in the form of releasing the top Congress leaders, Gandhi must, without hesitation, write to the Viceroy seeking appointment with him for direct talks. Accordingly, the first round of talks between Gandhi and the Viceroy was held on

17th February which continued for two more days. All the members of the Working Committee were summoned to Delhi, to become available for consultations during the talks. The talks and consultations went on for quite some days at different levels—between the Viceroy and Gandhi, between Gandhi and the members of the Working Committee, between the Viceroy and the authorities in London and so on. Enquiry into repression, the structure and powers of the Round Table Conference, the release of political prisoners and a number of other subjects came up for discussion. The question of withdrawal or suspension of the struggle launched by the Congress also came up. On each issue, contradictory proposals came up from each side and compromise proposals were worked out on a "give and take" basis.

At every stage the hope that the 'talks were progressing successfully' and the despair that they were 'foundering' alternated. In the end, by 5th March certain proposals acceptable to both Gandhi and the Viceroy were worked out. These proposals which Gandhi had accepted in his individual capacity were immediately placed before the Working Committee.

Nehru has gone on record in his *Autobiography* that one of the important proposals that Gandhi brought, viz., the proposal on the framework of the future constitution, shocked him. According to that proposal, what remained to be done was only a more detailed discussion of the scheme of administrative reforms which was already discussed at the first Round Table Conference. One of the essential elements of the scheme was Federation; the other elements were 'responsible government' for India and the introduction of the necessary safeguards in matters of defence and foreign relations in keeping with interests of India. Similar safeguards were to be introduced in other matters like the status of minorities, the economic status of India and the liability of public debt.

Nehru felt that the inclusion of these terms in the negotiations which Gandhi conducted, though as an individual, on behalf of the Congress endangered the objective of full independence. He wondered if it was for an administrative system with such 'safeguards' that they laboured so hard. Was it for this that the resolution of full independence and the pledge were repeated several times? Feeling utterly depressed, Nehru wrote in his *Autobiography*: "so I lay and pondered on that March night, and in my heart there was a great emptiness as of something percious gone, almost beyond recall."

To satisfy Nehru and those of his thinking, Gandhi gave certain interpretations to these terms. The explanation was that it had been clearly stated that the safeguards visualized in the compromise proposals worked out by him and the Viceroy would be in the interests of India. Though this did not covince him, Nehru stated, the talks he had with Gandhi soothed his feelings to some extent. Accordingly, despite the mental conflict and physical strain it caused, he decided to accept the compromise proposal as interpreted by Gandhi and make others accept it also.

Although Nehru and some other leaders accepted it out of personal regard for Gandhi and their unshaken confidence in him, discontent spread fast among the Congress ranks particularly among the younger generation. Presiding over the conference of the All-India Naujawan Bharat Sabha held a fewdays after the conclusion of the Gandhi-Irwin pact, Subhas Bose gave vent to this discontent. A resolution incorporating the feelings he had expressed was passed by the conference. Also, at the Karachi session of the Congress held during the same period, similar feelings were expressed against the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

One of the reasons for the expression of such feelings was the continuance of the repression by the government and the fact that no political prisoners other than the *Satyagrahis* were released from jail. Bhagat Singh and his

comrades were awaiting the hangman's noose. The government was not willing to commute their death sentence. Tens of thousands of people sentenced for "violent activities" (many of them were Congressmen themselves) were languishing in jails. What made the ordinary political workers angry was the fact that Gandhi had agreed to discontinue the struggle at a time when the government was resorting to revengeful actions against the activists who had devoted their lives to the service of the country.

Gandhi did try to give expression to this feeling of the people. He did not hesitate to plead with the Viceroy in the most humble manner to save the life of Bhagat Singh and his comrades and the release of all the political prisoners. But his efforts proved to be of no avail. The Viceroy only stayed the execution of Bhagat Singh and others for a few days and promised to re-examine the cases of other political prisoners in a lenient way.

The issue of those who had lost their jobs in the course of the struggle, of political workers and other citizens who had lost their properties, etc., were also brought to the attention of the Viceroy in all their seriousness. But the government was not willing to give any serious consideration to these issues.

At the same time, on the issue of constitution, the Congress retreated not only from its declared objective of full independence but also from Dominion Status. This was what made the ordinary Congressmen and a considerable section of the people uneasy and dissatisfied. However, as far as the Congress leadership, including Gandhi, was concerned, the main consideration was to make maximum gain out of the struggle which had been going on for nearly a year. They had succeeded in making the government recognize the fact that no talks on reforms would be fruitful without the participation of the Congress. The Congress leaders and the majority of Congress workers had been released; and it was possible now to strengthen the organization through the tireless activities of these workers.

In this circumstance, the leadership of the Congress gave formally its approval "unanimously" to the compromise (despite the opposition privately expressed by Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel and some others) in the hope that with the newly acquired political stature and influence, it would be possible to meet the manoeuvres of the authorities and reach its goal step by step.

14

AFTER THE PACT

I. SUPPORTERS AND OPPONENTS OF THE PACT

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed on 5th March 1931. It evoked both favourable and unfavourable reactions in the Congress leadership and among the people. Both these reactions found expression in the Karachi session of the Congress held towards the end of the month.

However, there were certain things in the Pact which caused joy and enthusiasm among ordinary Congress workers as well as the masses. The volunteers who participated in the prolonged civil disobedience movement as well as people at large felt proud and self-confident of the fact that the rulers who realized that the propaganda slander let loose by them against the movement and the brutal repression let loose failed to stem the popular upsurge, were finally compelled to negotiate with the national leadership.

The fact that Gandhi who had been ridiculed as the "half-naked fakir" was invited to the Viceroy's lodge where he held talks with the representative of the British Crown as equals leading to the signing of a pact between the two brought immense prestige to the national leadership in the eyes of millions in India and abroad. This helped to make Indian people confident of their organized strength and to reinforce their determination to utilize it to march forward to full independece.

The terms of agreement were also helpful to create such an impression. On the very issue on which Gandhi had launched his Dandi March a year earlier, the authorities had climbed down to some extent, and the people got the right to make salt subject to certain conditions. The people also got the right subject to certain restrictions to picket foreign cloth shops and liquor shops. The Congress committees which were declared illegal following the civil disobedience movement regained their freedom to function.

Above all, tens of thousands of *Satyagrahis* who were jailed following the civil disobedience were released. The thousands of meetings which were organized to accord reception to them became full-scale propaganda meetings combined with demonstration. The men and women who underwent imprisonment for participating in the *Satyagraha* won the recognition and respect of the society. As a reflection of this, the Congress leadership issued the directive to the effect that 50 per cent of the delegates attending the Karachi Congress should be the *Satyagrahis* released from jails or those elected by the *Satyagrahis*.

There was, however, another side of the coin. A considerable section of the *Satyagrahis* and lakhs of people felt that though the authorities were compelled to climb down to a considerable extent from the position they had taken before the civil disobedience movement, the Congress leadership surrendered on many vital issues. The local authorities were continuing their repressive actions, particularly

against the peasant movement of U. P which was started as part of the civil disobedience movement, the "Red Shirt" movement of NWFP, etc. Besides, when people began to exercise their rights granted as per the terms of the Pact, such as making salt and picketing foreign cloth and liquor shops, the local authorities put numerous obstructions before them. Because of all this, even ordinary Congressmen who were not known as leftists got concerned about the desirability of the "Pact" and the future mode of action.

To crown all these, there was the problem of the release of political prisoners. According to the terms of the Pact, only the *Satyagrahis* were to be released. Hence, those who were put behind the bars for "bomb politics" or communism or even trade union activities did not come within the purview of the agreement. Even among the *Satyagrahis*, those convicted for "violent activities" would have to continue in Jail. Among them were a large number of ordinary Congressmen. Besides, there were a number of revolutionaries who were confined to jail without trial right from the beginning of the First World War.

In this context, the death sentence on Bhagat Singh, Rajaguru and Sukhdev deserves particular mention. The demand had come from all over the country that they should be saved from the gallows. The very millions who adored Gandhi as the leader of the civil disobedience movment also adored Bhagat Singh as another noble symbol of the national struggle. Hence, it made the people generally uneasy when Gandhi had made a pact with a Viceroy who refused to commute the death sentence on Bhagat Sing and his comrades. A section among them and the leftist political workers publicly criticized Gandhi for such a compromise, And as a protest against this, when Gandhi and the president-elect Vallabhbhai Patel arrived at Karachi for the Congress session, a section of the people came out to receive them with black garlands and flowers.

Even at the time of signing the Pact, Gandhi was aware of the feelings of the people. In a statement to the press issued immediately after signing it, Gandhi said:

> I owe a word to hundreds, if not thousands of my erstwhile fellow prisoners on whose behalf I have been receiving wires, and who will still be languishing in jails when Satyagrahi prisoners who were jailed during the past 12 months will have been discharged. Personally I do not believe imprisoning, by way of punishment, even those who commit violence, through political motives, are entitled to claim, if not the same wisdom, certainly the same spirit of love and self sacrifice that I would claim for myself. And, therefore, I could have justly secured their liberty in preference to my own, or that of fellow Satyagrahis, I should truthfully have secured it.
>
> But I trust they will realize that I could not in justice ask for their discharge. But that does not mean that I or the members of the Working Committee have not them in mind. The Congress has embarked deliberately, though provionally, on a career of co-operation. If Congressmen honourably and fully implement the conditions applicable to them of the settlement, the Congress will obtain an irresistible prestige and would have inspired the Government with confidence in its ability to ensure peace as, I think, it has proved its ability to conduct disobedience.
>
> And if the people in general will clothe the Congress with that power and prestige, I promise that it will not be long before every one of these political prisoners is discharged, including the detenus, the Meerut prisoners, and all the rest.[1]

In this statement Gandhi dealt not only with the question of political prisoners but also with the parties and groups which had adopted revolutionary means as distinct from his path of non-violence. He appealed to them to give up the

1. Cited in Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of Indian National Congress* Vol. I, Bombay, Padma Publications (1946 reprint), p 447.

path of violence, if not as a creed but at least from the practical point of view. He appealed to them to examine what a tremendous people's might was unleashed by the struggle he organized on the basis of non-violence. He requested them: "Let them preserve their precious lives for the service of the motherland to which all will be presently called, and let then give to the Congress an opportunity of securing the release of all the political prisoners and may be even securing from the gallows those who are condemned to them as being guilty of murder."

At the same time, he made it clear that he did not propose to make the people victims to any baseless optimism. He could only declare openly what he personally and the Congress desired; results were always in the hands of God—that was his position.

What prompted Gandhi to issue such a statement was his realization of the stubbornness on the part of the government, on the one side, and the intensity of the people's feelings, on the other. The authorities were not wholly willing even to release the *Satyagrahis*. In the circumstances, one need not speculate on the position they would take on the question of commutation of the death sentence on Bhagat Singh and his comrades and the release of those sentenced for "violent" activities.

On the contrary, for the people the touchstone of the intentions of the authorities was their attitude towards the death sentence on Bhagat Singh and his colleagues and the release of other political prisoners. In fact, these two issues played a crucial role in the Gandhi-Irwin talks. There were two courses open before Gandhi: Either to end the talks on the basis of disagreement on these issues and restart the struggle or get at least the *Satyagrahis* released and the restrictions placed on the Congress withdrawn, thereby creating the hope in the minds of the people that it would be possible to get the political prisoners released along with the resolution of other issues through organized activities of the Congress. It was

clear from Gandhi's statement that he had chosen the latter course. Thus, the Karachi Congress was held while thousands of political prisoners, who, according to Gandhi himself, were "partiotic and self-sacrificing though working through a wrong method", were languishing in prisons, and Bhagat Singh and his comrades had already been executed. (Realizing the difficulty the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades might create for Gandhi and the Congress, Irwin offered to stay the execution till after the Karachi session. But Gandhi rejected the offer. Gandhi made it clear that if the authorities were determined to hang these young men, he would face its consequence and that he did not need any concession in the matter. Thus, on 23rd March they were hanged. The Karachi Congress began on the 29th.)

The Karachi Congress which met in this background witnessed many a stormy situation. Among the delegates there was a large section which basically challenged the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. At least a small minority in the leadership too was of the same opinion. We have already referred to the speech that Subhas Bose made as the repesentative of the Congress Youth and the leftists, and the resolution passed at the session of the youth held under his chairmanship. Jawaharlal himself was unhappy. He wrote in his *Autobiography :*

> The principal resolution at Karachi dealt with the Delhi Pact and the Round Table Conference. I accepted it, of course, as it emerged from the Working Committe, but when I was asked to move it in the open Congress, I hesitated. I went against the grain, and I refused first, and then this seemed a weak and unsatisfactory position to take up. Either I was for it or against it, and it was not proper to prevaricate or leave people guessing in the matter. Almost at the last moment, a few minutes before the resolution was taken up in the open Congress, I decided to sponsor it. In my speech I tried to lay before the gathering quite trankly what my feelings were and why I have

wholeheartedly accepted that resolution and pleaded with them to accept it. That speech made on the spur of the moment and coming from the heart, and with little ornament or fine phrasing in it, was probably a great success than many of my other efforts, which had followed a more careful preparations.

This was also the position of a majority of the delegates. They in fact, could not digest this compromise. They felt there was something wrong with it. But, the question as to what other course was open before them worried them. However, the release of a large number of their colleagues and the freedom of activity which came in the wake of the compromise had put some confidence in them. Thus, like Nehru, they too, with hesitation, finally accepted it.

But during the discussions on the resolution on the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, the emotion of the delegates became evident. The resolution which began with, "This Congress while dissociating itself from and disapproving of political violence in any shape or form", placed on record "its admiration of the bravery and sacrifice of Bhagat Singh and his comrades, Sukhadev and Rajaguru". The resolution further stated that by their execution, "the Government have lost the golden opportunity of promoting good will between the two nations, admittedly held to be essential at this juncture, and of winning over to the method of peace, the party which, being driven to despire, resorts to political violence".

Many delegates demanded deletion of the introductory part of the resolution. While a heated debate on this was going on inside, a huge black-flag demonstration was going on outside. It was a demonstration of the feelings of the leftist who held that Gandhi and the Congress leadership which was holding fast the Gandhian method of "non-violence", were mainly responsible for not commuting the death sentence of Bhagat Singh and his comrades.

The resolution ratifying the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was adopted formally without any serious opposition. But the resolution against the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades was adopted in the face of opposition of an organized minority. Although this clearly indicated the gap that existed between Gandhi and his followers, with the adoption of the resolution with the approval of the large majority of the delegates, the unity of the Congress and the leading role of Gandhi in it were consolidated.

II RESOLUTION ON FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

The Karachi Congress adopted a few more resolutions besides the one ratifying the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the one protesting against the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. The most important of these was the one enunciating the fundamental rights which were to be adopted as the "directive principles of the future constitution".

The Policy of Gandhi and the Congress High Command was one of making such declarations as would satisfy the 'leftists' and of bargaining with the authorities under that cover to bring about such changes in the administrative set up as would protect their own (bourgeois) class interests. It was as part of this strategy that they came forward, with much hesitiation though, to adopt the resolution on full independence at Lahore. It was with the same intention that Gandhi and Vallabhbhai Patel, who commanded much larger support withdrew to make Jawaharlal Nehru, the known leftist leader, the president of the Congress. The resolution on fundamental rights adopted at Karachi was only a continuation of this strategy.

As already indicated, there was bitter resentment among the people against the Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades. This had spread among the ranks of the Congress as well. In the words of

Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, "At Karachi, there was a cetain cleavage between the younger and the order sections. People were not wanting who began to doubt whether, after all, the Congress was not drifting with the old current of Dominion Status, British Imperialism and a Brown Bureaucracy and whether the labour problem—of the peasants and the workers—and socialistic ideals were not going by the board. It was necessary to reassure the country on this subject. Gandhi was game for any issue provided it was an issue based on Truth and Non-violence, and it was an issue too of the village and the poor man."[2]

It was in these circumstances that Jawaharlal Nehru raised the question of fundamental rights in which he was specially interested and presented it in the form of a resolution before the Working Committee. Sitaramayya states that there were many who doubted if it was proper to adopt a resolution in such a hurry. Consequently the AICC was entrusted with the task of reviewing the resolution to be presented at the Karachi session and introducing suitable amendments to it.

It is thus clear that Gandhi and his colleagues came forward to adopt the left-oriented resolution prepared by Nehru as a means to appease a section of the Congressmen and the people at large who felt dissatisfied at the compromise which Gandhi made with the rulers who had ordered the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades.

In a sense, the very introduction to the resolution on fundamental rights revealed the real situation. It said: "This Congress is of the opinion that to enable the masses to appreciate what swaraj as conceived by the Congress, will mean to them, it is desirable to state the position of the Congress in a manner easily understood by them. In order to end the expoitation of the masses, political freedom must include real economic freedom of the starving millions. The Congress, therefore, declares that any constitution which

2. Pattabhi Sitaramayya. *Ibid*, p.462

may be agreed to on its behalf, should provide or enable the swaraj government to provide for the following:"

As an inseparable part of the resolution ratifying the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, it was decided that the Congress should participate in the Second Round Table Conference subject to certain conditions. It was doubted, quite justifiably, if a conference called by the British with the participation of such disparate groups as the native princes, organizations of communal and caste politics and the liberal political leaders would lead to the declared objective of full independence. (It was, in fact, this doubt which created discontent among the people and the Congress ranks.) In order to resolve this problem, the resolution while ratifying the Pact, made it clear that the Congress delegates to the Round Table Conference would be working for a system in which India would have the right to sever relations with Britain at any time and the people's representatives would have the real right to exercise power over all departments, including deference. But, even with this, the discontent among Congress ranks, particularly the youth, could not be met. The resolution on fundamental rights was yet another attempt designed to serve the purpose.

It is worth noicing in this connection what Nehru states in his *Autobiography:*

> (The resolution on Fundamental Rights) interested me especially, partly because of what it contained, and even more so because it represented a new outlook in the Congress. So far the Congress has thought along purely nationalist lines, and had avoided facing economic issues, except in so far as it encouraged cottage industries and *Swadeshi* generally. In the Karachi resolution, it took a step in a socialist direction by advocating nationalisation of key industries and services, and various other measures to lessen the burden on the poor and increase it on the rich. This was not socialism at all, and a capitalist state could easily accept almost everything contained in that resolution.

Though Nehru declared that there was surely no socialism in it, the contents of the resolution on fundamental rights which he got adopted on his own initiative made a tremendous impact all over the country. Hundreds of thousands of Congressmen and the masses of people who had no particular links with socialism or communism till then were happy at and inspired by this resolution unanimously passed under Nehru's initiative with Gandhi's blessings, by the Congress.

However, the official circles, the feudal-bourgeois interests and the bureaucracy got panicky over it. It was widely propagated following the footsteps of imperialism and its agents, that behind the Karachi Congress were hidden "Bolshevik conspiracy" and "Russian gold". Nehru himself has mentioned in his autobiography about the rumour spread by these circles that "an unknown person with communist leanings" met him at Karachi and the resolution he moved was drafted by that man. Nehru emphatically stated that all these were false and he only placed before the Congress certain proposals which he considered right. None who has studied his nature and read his autobiography could ever question this statement. Though Nehru used to maintain contacts with communists and socialists and tried to understand their ideas, at no time did he show any indication of being amenable to the suggestions of any group other than the Congress. Other than picking an idea helpful to his "left" bourgeois outlook and pleading for that inside the Congress, at no time did he adopt working class politics against left bourgeois politics. This was, in fact, the "principal merit" that Gandhi and other Congress leaders had found in him.

However, one could still discern certain communist and socialist ideas reflected in the Karachi resolution on fundamental rights. Though the Communists had ceased to be an organized force following the Meerut Conspiracy Case, many of them were still working within the Congress and outside, in co-operation with individual Congressmen. There were

also other political groups which, though not communists, were working for the class interests of workers and peasants. They were all with the Congressmen in jails for participating in the civil disobedience movement. Also with Congressmen in jails were the revolutionary groups which were more numerous than the communist and socialist groups.

Traces of intimacy and friendship with them were evident inside the Congress and among the delegates to the Karachi session. Besides, M. N. Roy who played an important role in the growth of the Indian Communist movement in its early days had arrived in India and started working in in contact with different political groups, after being expelled from the Communist International. It was rumoured in the official circles that the "unknown person" mentioned in Nehru's autobiography was M. N. Roy.

Though under the influence of different revolutionary groups, the resolution on fundamental rights which Nehru got passed at the Karachi Congress was a programme which, in his own words, "a capitalist state could easily accept". The Karachi resolution on the fundamental rights did not contain anything beyond the bourgeois democratic slogans raised by those who led bourgeois revolutions in France and other European countries. To enable the readers to appreciate this, the Declaration of Fundamental Rights contained in the resolution, as varied by the AICC meeting held in Bombay in August 1931, is reproduced below. Under the head "Fundamental Rights and Duties" 14 items are listed, as follows;

1. Every citizen in India has the right of free expression of opinion, the right of free association and combination, and the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, for purposes not opposed to law and morality.
2. Every citizen shall enjoy freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess and practise his religion, subject to public order and morality.

3. The culture, the language and script of the minorities and of the different linguistic areas shall be protected.
4. All citizens are equal before the law, irrespective of religion, caste, creed or sex.
5. No disability attaches to any citizen, by reasan of his or her religion, caste, creed or sex, in regard to public employment, office of power or honour, and in the exercise of any trade or calling.
6. All citizens have equal rights and duties in regard to wells, tanks, roads, schools and places of public resort, maintained out of State or local funds, or dedicated by private persons for the use of the general public.
7. Every citizen has the right to keep and bear arms, in accordance with regulations and reservations made in that behalf.
8. No person shall be deprived of his liberty nor shall his dwelling or property be entered, sequestered, or confiscated, save in accordance with law.
9. The State shall observe neutrality in regard to all religions.
10. The franchise shall be on the basis of universal adult suffrage.
11. The state shall provide for free and compulsary primary education.
12. The state shall confer no titles.
13. There shall be no capital punishment.
14. Every citizen is free to move throughout India and to stay and settle in any part thereof, to acquire property and to follow any trade or calling, and to be treated equally with regard to legal prosecution of protection in all parts of India.

A close examination of these 14 items reveals that not one of them goes beyond the scope of bourgeois democracy. In fact, they constituted the basis for the Fundemantal Rights enshrined in the constitution of free India adopted in 1950. Suffice it to say that the Constitution was framed by limiting

the scope of many of the items included in the Karachi resolution and by incorporating certain rights which it had originally denied to the vested interests (e.g., the right of religious bodies to conduct their own educational institutions). Obviously, there was not an iota of socialism in it.

Another paragraph in the resolution is concerned with labour. It includes the following items.

1. The organisation of economic life must conform to the principle of justice, to the end that it may secure a decent standard of living.
2. The state shall safeguard the interests of industrial workers and shall secure for them, by suitable legislation and in other ways, a living wage, healthy conditions of work, limited hours of labour, suitable machinery for the settlement of disputes between employers and workmen, and protection aganist the economic consequences of old age, sickness, and unemployment.
3. Labour to be freed from serfdom and conditions bordering on serfdom.
4. Protection of women workers, and especially, adequate provision for leave during meternity period.
5. Children of school going age shall not be employed in mines and factories.
6. Peasants and workers shall have the right to form unions to protect their interests.

It needs no particular mention that this does not provide any rights to workers and employees beyond those granted in capitalist countries, including England, where social democratic parties were in power. But the Congress till then was not willing to adopt even these provisions officially. It may be stated that these were the provisions which did not find a place in the programme formulated by Gandhi when the Khilafat-Non-cooperation movements were launched or before launching the Salt *Sathyagraha*, but demanded by the AITUC and the socialist-communist groups from their very inception. It is, therefore, important that they were now included in the official resolution adopted by the Congress.

Equally important were the following items listed in the paragraph on "Taxes and Expenditure".

1. The system of land tenure and revenue and rent shall be reformed and on equitable adjustment made of the burden on agricultural land, immediately giving relief to the smaller peasantry, by a substantial reduction of agricultural rent and revenue now paid by them, and in case of uneconomic holdings, exempting them from rent so long as necessary, with such relief as may be just and necessary to holders of small estates affected by such exemption or reduction in rent, and to the same end, imposing a graded tax on net income from land above a reasonable minimum.
2. Death duties on a graduated scale shall be levied on property above a fixed minimum.
3. There shall be a drastic reduction of military expenditure so as to bring it down to at least one half of the present scale.
4. Expenditure and salaries in civil departments shall be largely reduced. No servent of the state, other than specially employed experts and the like, shall be paid above a certain fixed figure, which should not ordinarily exceed Rs. 500 per month.
5. No duty shall be levied on salt manufactured in India.

The influence of the organized peasant movement can be seen in the first item. Even here, apart from the reducation in the rates of tax and rent, the question of elimination of big landlords was not raised. Thus, in the matter of land relations, the Congress, at that stage, did not adopt even the path of bourgeois *transformation*, let alone that of bourgeois *revolution*.

The last paragraph of the Karachi Resolution dealt with the"Economic and Social Programme". It contained:

1. The state shall protect indigenous cloth; and for this purpose the policy of exclusion of foreign cloth and foreign yarn from the country and adopt such other

measures as may be found necessary. The state shall also protect other indigenous industries, when necessary, against foreign competition.

2. Intoxicating drinks aud drugs shall be totally prohibited, except for medicinal purposes.
3. Currency and exchange shall be regulated in the national interest.
4. The state shall own or control key industries and services, mineral resources, railways, waterways, shipping and other means of public transport.
5. Relief of agricultural indebtedness and control of usury—direct and indirect.
6. The state shall provide for the military training to citizens so as to organise a means of national defence apart from the regular military forces.

It is clear that even this paragraph did not contain anything beyond the scope of a bourgeois government. Later events demonstrated the realization on the part of the bourgeoisie that those sectors of industries which are of vital importance even for capitalist development should be under the ownership and control of the government. Only this idea was included in the Karachi resolution.

But, as pointed out by Nehru in his *Autobiography* and by Dr.Sitramayya in his *History of the Indian National Congress* this resolution helped to meet, to an extent, the discontent of the leftists. While continuing the policy of bargaining with the rulers either through Gandhi and others leaders participating in the Round Table Conference or otherwise, they were thus able to tie down the leftists to their own organized political leadership by creating confidence in them that they could approach the people with the resolution on fundamental rights.

III. ATMOSPHERE OF TENSION AND COMPROMISE AGAIN

As we have noted, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed on the understanding that the Congress would participate in the (second) Round Table Conference. Consequently, when the Karachi Congress adopted the resolution ratifying the Pact, it was decided that Gandhi and those nominated by the Working Committee would participate in the Conference.

In the first Working Committee meeting following the Congress, the question came up as to how many should participate in the Conference. It was proposed first that because many difficult problems were to be handled, a team of 15 to 20 representatives shouid be sent. In the discussion it was, however, made clear that the task of the Conference was not to frame the future constitution of independent India, but to negotiate with the British rulers on the future administrative set up of India. As such, it was finally decided to send Gandhi as the sole representative of the Congress. Besides, Gandhi had got an assurance from Viceroy Irwin that besides the official representative of the Congress, Pandit Malaviya, Sarojini Naidu and Dr. Ansari would be nominated by the Government.

But, by the time the delegates had reached home after the Karachi Congress, the situation had begun to deteriorate. There were constant frictions between the Congress workers and the local authorities. Before going into details, a central fact needs to be stated here. The understanding arrived at between Gandhi and Lord Irwin, and between the bureaucrats under Irwin and Gandhi was absent in the case of Congress workers and the government officials at the local level. As a result of the struggle that had gone on for a year, the Congress workers had gained the confidence that theirs was an organization with its own political individuality and they were determined to utilize it to further consolidate their rapport with the people. They engaged themselves in

arranging heroic welcomes to the leaders and volunteers coming out of the jail, revitalizing the Congress committees which were banned in the wake of the civil disobedience movement, and organizing Congress committees wherever the organization did not exist before the struggle. The leaders and workers at all levels were also engaged in propaganda campaigns explaining to the people the issues involved in the civil disobedience movement, the stands taken by the Government and the Congress on each of these issues and the terms of agreement reached between Gandhi and Irwin on them.

As part of this, campaign meetings and demonstrations were held constantly in different parts of the country. The Congress flag flew aloft all over the country. In accordance with the terms of the agreement, the popularization of *swadeshi*, the picketing of foreign cloth and liquor shops, volunteer training, etc., had also begun. Thus Congressmen demonstrated through their action that they were the leaders of a movement which was surging ahead challenging all the repressions unleashed by the government.

These things disturbed the local authorities. They accused the Congressmen of running the organization as a parallel government. Violating the terms of the Pact, they resorted to lathi-charge against Congress demonstrations in a number of places. In many places, officers refused to release those who were still in jail or to return the fines realized from the people. They also refused to reinstate the dismissed government employees; nor did they care to pay off the due benefits to those who had resigned their jobs. Restrictions were imposed on the number of volunteers and the places chosen for picketing.

In short, conscious attempts were made by the local authorities to take back some and to restrict all the rights which the Congressmen regarded as having won through the year-long struggle.

As a natural consequence of this, the question arose as to who was violating the terms of the Pact. The government and the Congress accused each other of violating it.

In the circumstances, Gandhi suggested that the only way left for the government was to refer the issue to a tribunal. But this was not acceptable to the government. Thus the relations between the two sides began to deteriorate more and more.

This situation prevailed all over the country. But it came up with greater importance in the Bardoli taluk of Gujarat, in U. P. and NWFP. In these areas, the friction between the two was more acute.

These three provinces had one characteristic in common. During the period of the civil disobedience movement, these areas witnessed the growth of movements and organizations based on the most broad based popular unity and the deep-rooted day-to-day problems of the people. Along with this common characteristic, each area had its own special features. Frictions developed between the local officials and the Congressmen in each of these areas in different forms. But because of their common character, these turned into a friction at the all-India level, i. e., between Gandhi and the authorities in Delhi.

The Bardoli taluk was renowned for its peasant struggles. We have already referred to the no-tax campaign conducted there with the blessings of Gandhi and under the direct leadership of Vallabhbhai Patel. It continued even in the months after the launching of the Salt *Satyagraha*. But with the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the situation changed. Gandhi and the Congress advised those who had refused to pay land tax during the campaign to pay the arrears as much as possible. At the same time, Gandhi brought to the notice of the authorities that on account of the fall in the prices of agricultural produce, the farmers might not be able to the pay the tax arrears in full. He also made an appeal to authorities to take into account the losses the peasants had to suffer as a consequence of the civil disobedience movement.

He further reminded the authorities of the fact that because of the persuasive efforts made by himself and his colleagues, an amount Rs 2.1 million had been paid out of

Rs 2.2 million due from the taluk and so it would be wrong to resort to repressive measures to collect the balance. He further pointed out that the government had already given concessions to the tune of more than a lakh of rupees to the peasants who had not taken part in the movement considering their financial difficulties and as such it would be an injustice to take actions to collect this amount from those who had participated in the movement. Therefore, he asked the authorities to stop all actions to recover the amount.

The reply given by the provincial government was that there were established rules and procedures to determine to whom and on what reasons remission of current tax or tax arrears might be allowed. The government's stand was that the remissions allowed earlier were in accordance with these rules and procedures and that they were yet prepared to allow it to those who deserved it, again, in accordance with these rules and procedures. The government also pointed out that instead of trying to get tax remission to those who deserved it in accordance with these rules and procedures, the Congress was raising it as an issue of the relationship between the Congress and government to which they could not agree.

The situation in U. P. was different. An organized peasant struggle as in Bardoli had not taken place there. However, before and during the Salt *Satyagraha* widespread activites had been going on among the peasants. Jawaharlal Nehru himself had actively participated in these activities. (During the Salt *Satyagraha*, when he was released from jail for a few weeks, he had set his attention mostly on peasants.)

Unlike in Bardoli, what worried the peasants and Congress workers in U.P. was not the *Ryotwari* system and the land tax. The collection of rent and other oppressive extractions by the big landlords, the Zamindars and the Talukdars, the dominat position these elements held in socio-cultural fields and the suffering of the people under them were the live issues in U. P. That is, the peasant movement in U. P. emerged not as much against exploitation in the

form of land tax by the government as in the case of Gujarat, as against the all round exploitation and oppression by big landlords like Zamindars and Talukdars.

Nonetheless, this movement, too, was directed against the British rule. For the Zamindars, Talukdars and other vested interests in the countryside constituted the social base of the British rule in the areas. It was against this that the Congress and the peasant movement under its leadership directed its onslaught, as a natural consequenee of which the Congress was emerging as a militant mass movement firmly entrenched in the millions of the countryside. So, it was necessary for the British rulers to block this development at any cost in the interest of their own existence.

The conditions in NWFP were still different. There, an organized peasant movement as in Bardoli or U. P. had not yet developed, nor was a form of struggle like the no-tax campaign adopted. But, as pointed out earlier, mass movements of the Pathans and other sections of the people based on tribal fraternity had begun to rally under the banner of the Congress. After the launching of the Salt *Satyagraha* these tribal sections as a whole had been waging anti-British struggles under the Congress. After the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, their tribal organization, the 'Afghan Jirga', was formally affiliated to the Provincial Congress Committee, and the 'Red Shirts' under Ghaffar Khan to the Congress volunteer force. Thus, the entire tribal people of the area became an inseparable part of the Congress organization. The political status of the Congress as an all-India organization together with the tribal organization of the frontier region made it a great political force in the region.

We have merely mentioned the situations prevailing in these three regions in some detail. In other places too disputes arose in one way or the other around the interpretation of the terms of the Pact and the behaviour of the authorities. Gandhi proposed that an impartial permanent arbitration be constituted to settle all such disputes. The main issues which were proposed to be referred to the board were as follows:

1. Does picketing of liquor shops and liquor shop auctions include in picketing referred to in the terms of agreement?
2. Do the Provincial governments have the authority to specify the spot of picketing the liquor shops so as to keep them away from the immediate vicinity of the shops?
3. Do the governments have the authority to restrict the number of picketers, thereby preventing them from picketing all the entrances to the shops.
4. Do the government have the authority to prevent peaceful picketing of the sale of liquor at the place and timing other than those for which licences were issued?
5. Does it come within the authority of the government to demand and undertaking from the students who had participated in the civil disobedience movement to get re-entry into schools and colleges and from those who were denied pension and grants during the struggle for reinstating the pension and grants, that they would not participate in the civil disobedience movements in future?

Gandhi also proposed that the scope of meaning of the different terms used in the terms of agreement and the usages of such terms should also be left for arbitration.

The appeal made by Gandhi to the Government of India for constituting a permanent arbitration board to settle the disputes in respect of these issues and the appeal made to the respective provincial governments to settle the disputes in Bardoli and in U. P. were rejected. The result of exchanging letters and holding negotiations for about three months was disappointing. Therefore, on 11th August 1931 Gandhi sent a telegram to the Viceroy in which he stated:

I exceedingly regret to inform you that a letter from the Bombay Government just received renders impossible my departure for London. The letter raises issues of first magnitude, as well as of facts as of law, and contends that

the Government must be the final judge on both. In naked terms, this means that the Government should be both the prosecutor and the judge with reference to matters arising out of a contract to which they and the complainarts are parties. This is impossible for the Congress to accept. When I read the Bombay Government's letter together with Sri Malcolm Hailey's telegram received in answer to my enquiry, and the reports of continuing harassment in the U. P., Frontier Province, and other Provinces, they seem to me complete indication that I must not sail as I promised. To communicate with you before coming to a final decision, I have brought the foregoing facts to your notice. I shall await reply before making an announcement.

The reply received from the Viceroy was not at all satisfactory and on 13th August Gandhi conveyed to him his final decision not to go to London. At the same time, the Congress Working Committee informed the lower committees that with the decision not to participate in the Round Table Conference, the Gandhi-Irwin Pact should be considered as non-operative but they could continue with the activities which they had been conducting so far until further instructions.

Following this, Gandhi and the Congress leaders issued statements explaining the reason for taking such a decision. They blamed the government for adopting an approach which, in effect, negated the understanding reached at the time of signing the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. The response of the government to the statement helped only to increase the tension between the Congress and the government.

It was in these circumstances that the other delegates to the Round Table Conference embarked on their journey to London. Malaviya and Sarojini Naidu, the two nominated members, decided not to proceed to London in the circumstances in which Gandhi would not attend the conference. (The government had violated the earlier understanding that

Dr. Ansari also would be nominated.) Among the other representatives, only Prabhashankar Pattani decided not to participate in the conference because Gandhi was not attending it.

This created a new crisis. It was for holding a Round Table Conference with the Congress participation that the government came forward for the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Congress and the bourgeois leaders, of course, wanted to adopt the path of negotiation and avoid a struggle as far as possible. Hence, the moment it appeared that the government and the Congress were drifting apart, attempts were made once again to bring them together.

Thus, on 15th August, Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru and Prabhashankar Pattani met the Viceroy again. Following this, the government issued an official communique. Gandhi and the top government officials exchanged correspondence on the details of this communique, leading Gandhi to retract his earlier decision and decide to proceed to London.

An examination of the official communique and the correspondence exchanged between Gandhi and the authorities would reveal one thing: On none of the issues raised by Gandhi after the Karachi Conference did the government accept the terms to the satisfaction of the ordinary Congressmen or to the people at large. It was not that Gandhi saw any "change of heart" in the government which motivated him to go to London. As Gandhi had made it clear at the time of signing the Pact with Lord Irwin, the Congress had consciously decided to adopt the path of negotiations at least for the time being. Accordingly, any statement from the authorities, however incosequential, which would pave the way for Gandh's journey to London must be sezied upon. There was no other justification for this second compromise.

IV. THE SECOND ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE

The Second Round Table Conference had been formally started even before Gandhi and his colleagues reached London. After the plenary session, the delegates had been divided into different committees. It was in these committees that discussions were really held.

The subject of discussion in one committee was the form of federal set up in future India. Another one was to go into the different aspects of the main problem relating to the position the minority communities should have in the new administrative set up. The discussions in these two committees were of the utmost importance. Consequetly, Gandhi was a member of both these committees. And it was in the proceedings of these committees that he actively participated.

Before examining the discussions held at different levels and in different committees as well as the conclusions that emerged from these discussions, it is necessary to look back into the fundamental transforations that the British politics and the economy had undergone. The Lobour Party which was in power during the First Round Table Conference and the Gandhi-Irwin Pact went out of power in the middle of 1931. MacDonald, who was the Labour Party's Prime Minister, and few of his colleagues left the Party, and joined hands with the Conservatives to form a new government. MacDonald was formally the Prime Minister of that government also. But most of his former colleagues (Labour Party ministers) were in the opposition. In their place, ministers belonging to the Conservative Party were installed. Wedgwood Benn of the Labour Party who was the Secretary of States for India was replaced by Sir Samuel Hoare of the Conservative Party.

What led to the change of government was the deep economic crisis which had affected the capitalist world in

general and Britain in particular. We have already referred to the economic crisis which began in 1929 which had affected Britain very acutely. Goods piled up unsold, factories remained closed and millions of workers were out of employment. The adverse balance of payment became a grave problem. As a natural consequence of these and as a temporary solution to the difficulty arising from this, the pound sterling was delinked from the gold standard.

A majority of the members in the Labour Party was oposed to this policy of their leader, MacDhnald, for they feared that it would inevitably lead to rise in the cost of living of the workers and that the capitalists and the government would come out heavily against them. It was precisely for this reason that the Conservative Party decided to lend support to the Prime Minister and his colleagues who adopted this policy. Thus, it was, in fact, a Conservative government under the leadership of a (former) Labourite Prime Minister. It is but natural to expect such a government to pursue a policy against the freedom lovers in India as well as against the working class in England.

Some historians hold the view that but for this change in government, the Second Round Table Conference would have proved much more useful. But that was not the fact. It may be noted that the First Round Table Conference was held when the Labour Party was in power. Yet the British rulers utilized the Conference as a platform to rally the princes, organizations and parties which indulged in communal-caste politics, and isolated individuals with no following against the Congress. The Second Round Table Conference in which the Congress was brought in was but a continuation of the first.

Moreover, it was a Labour Party government with MacDonald as Prime Minister and Wedgwood Benn as Secretary of State for India that tried to suppress the Salt *Satyagraha* and the subsequent struggle as forcibly as a Conservative government would have done. On the other hand, only after realizing that the freedom movement under the leadership of

the Congress could not be suppressed even by the most repressive actions and that any round table conference without the participation of the Congress would only end in a failure, did the then Labour Party Government decide to bargain with Gandhi. But this new policy had the support of the Conservative Party.

The well-known journalist Durga Das, who was in London during the months immediately before the Second Round Table Conference has given in his memoirs the talks he had with the former Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin (who later became the leader of the Opposition) and the Labour Party leader, Attlee.

The statement made by Viceroy Lord Irwin as directed by the Labour Party government on India's right to Dominion status had the support of Baldwin. As Atlee had told Durga Das, "Baldwin's heart was with the Labour Party". With this background in mind, Durga Das wrote on his conversation with Baldwin, as follows:

> Baldwin traced the hostile climate to the hurt inflicted on Lancashire's textile industry by the Congress through its boycott of British goods. The financial crisis precipitated in Brtian by World War I had been aggravated by this boycott. The burden of Empire, he admitted candidly, was becoming more and more oppressive. It was more than likely that before long Britain would be compelled by sheer necessity to cut her losses.
>
> India, Baldwin declared reflectively, might secure self-government much earlier than anybody now thought possible .... He himself was convinced of the need for a meaningful dialogue with the Congress. He would urge the the Indian leaders to employ to the maximum advantage whatever instruments were available to them now and whatever others were placed at their disposal under the coming reforms."[3]

3. Durga Das, *India: From Curzon to Nehru and After*, London, Collins, 1969, pp. 153-154.

Along with this, Baldwin gave another piece of advice to Indian leaders: Reach a compromise with the Muslims. It was the aloofness of the Muslims, for reasons which may be real or imaginary, that would be used by the British enemies of India's self-rule.

Two things became evident from the views expressed by Baldwin, who was the spokesman of monopoly capitalism and also a realistic political leader. First, when the position of Britian in the capitalist world had eroded and the Indian freedom movement had strengthened, any attempt to keep India under its iron thumb would be a disadvantage rather than an advantage for the British ruling class. Second, the British ruling class was striving to protect their interests in India as much as possible, making use of the claims of Muslims and others.

In this respect there was no fundamental difference between the Labour and Conservative parties. Like the Labour Party, the Conservative Party also was of the opinion that efforts must be made to come to terms with the Congress by bargaining with them on the principle of self-rule for India. The Labour Party was equally interested in protecting the vital interests of Britain in India while arriving at any settlement. Both parties look upon the native princes, the Muslim, Christian, Anglo-Indian and European communal bigwigs and liberal political leaders as social forces helpful in implementing the basic policy which both the parties equally accept. Again, there was absolutely no difference between the two parties in creating the impression that the Indian question remained unresolved not because they were unwilling to give up power but because of the opposition from the above-mentioned sections.

There is, however, no denying the fact that there were minor differences between the Labour government and the Conservative government on the practical steps they took in implementing this common policy. But the policy that the Labour party and its government pursued in relation to the British working class as well as the Indian people was, in

the final analysis, one of protecting the class interests of the British monopolists.

Right from the early years of the 20th century when, under the leadership of Tilak and his colleagues the objective of *Swaraj* was adopted and the means of struggle to achieve it were evolved, the British rulers had been pursuing the policy of rallying the Muslim communal leaders and the big-wigs of other minorities as well as the moderate politicians against the Congress. Not only the earlier Conservative and Libaral governments but also the Labour government which came to power later, consistantly followed these same tactics. What was witnessed in the the Round Table Confereces was only a new revised edition of this strategy.

As against this, the Congress adopted a two-pronged counter-strategy: (1) to organize the people on a large scale under its own flag to bring the necessary pressure on Britain to make them accept the Indian demand of *Swaraj* and bargain with the British from the position of this organized mass strength, and (2) simultaneously try to negotiate with leaders of the Muslim and other minority communities in order to find a solution to the minority problem acceptable to them.

What was witnessed at the Second Round Table Conference was a clash between these two policies being pursued by the rulers and the Congress. The authorities argued that the transfer of power to the Indian hands was impossible without solving the "Muslim question" which had been there for the past quarter of a century and also without a guarantee that the interests of the Christians, Anglo-Indians, European traders and the depressed communities would be protected. Gandhi, on the other hand, argued that the main question was not that of the minority communities but the unwillingness to give up power on the part of the government. Besides, each side competed for making the leaders of the minority communities accept its view-point .The Second Round Table Conference was a scene of this competition.

In the midst of this controversy, the speeches made by Gandhi in the Constitution Committee and the Minorities Committee reflected clearly the position of bourgeois leadership which the Congress represented. Only certain relevant points are summarised as follows.

1. The need of the day was not the preparation of a political constitution as Britain wanted to do, but to decide on the conditions for co-operations between India and Britain as two independent nations.

2. All other delegates were argueing for their respective communities or sections but he and the Congress which he represented were argueing for the entire Indian people.

3. All the proposals put forward by the government were intended to evade the vital issue of transfer of power to peoples' representatives in the name of minority communities. The talk of the authorities who were unwilling to part with power, of the share of the minority communities was like a talk of sharing a corpse.

4. Gandhi claimed that he was also argueing for the princely states. He made it clear that the policy of the Congress was not to participate in the internal political struggles in the princely states. Accusing the British government of refusing to part with power on the pretext of safeguarding the interests of the princes, Gandhi urged for the latter's co-operation.

5. Gandhi pointed out that he could understand the claims of other minority communities, but not those which were raised in the name of the depressed communities. The Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and others would continue to remain as separate religion groups. He asked his opponents whether they wanted the depressed communities to remain depressed in perpetuity. Gandhi stated:

> I would far rather that Hinduism die than that untouchability lived. I will not bargain away their rights for their kingdom of the whole world. Those who speak of political rights of untouchables do not know India, do not know how Indian society is today constructed, and, therefore,

I want to say with all emphasis that I can command, that if I was the only person to resist this thing, I would resist it with my life."

With all his persuasive speeches in the different committees, Gandhi could not influence the direction of the Roud Table Conference. The representatives of the minority communities, including the Depressed Castes, signed a joint statement. It was a document which enumerated the demands of each of the minority communities and pledging support to the claims of each by all others. This was not acceptable to Gandhi, nor was Gandhi's proposal to them.

In the circumstances, the proceedings of the Conference as a whole were dead-locked making it evident that there was no use in continuing it. MacDonald told the Conference that if each representative gave him in writing their willingness to abide by his decision on issues which the delegates could not solve by mutual discussions, he was willing to mediate in the matter. Gandhi said he was willing to accept his mediation if it was confined to the problems of the Muslim and Sikh communities. But the government was not willing to accept Gandhi's proposal.

Thus the conference ended without coming to any decision and Gandhi returned home empty handed. The authorities were to make a world-wide propaganda that the conference failed because Gandhi and the Congress could not solve the problems of the minority communities.

15

SECOND CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

I. TOWARDS CONFRONTATION AGAIN

After the Round Table Conference, Gandhi reached Bombay on 28th December 1931. Even before that, the political situation in India had already become tense. The government had started moving in a direction of confrontation with the Congress soon after the return of Gandhi.

It may be recalled that Gandhi had earlier cancelled his journey to London in view of the mounting tension in Bardoli, U. P. and NWFP. It was following certain oral understanding reached between him and the authorities on these issues that he decided to proceed to London. These understandings, as pointed out earlier, were not very firm. Once it was realized that the trend of the Round Table Conference was against the Congress, the government

began to tighten its grip on all issues. Of course, the Congress leaders and the authorities of the concerned provinces were carrying on continuous correspondence and discussions, but the top officials of the government haughty and proud of their success in rallying the minority communities against Gandhi at the Round Table Conference were making the situation worse by not allowing a single issue to be solved in a reasonable way.

The Viceroy had given an assurance to Gandhi that an enquiry would be conducted into the tax arrears in Bardoli. Accordingly, a high official had been assigned with the job. The famous lawyer Bhulabhai Desai was appointed to represent the Congress. Besides, Vallabhbhai Patel was there to give him the necessary guidance in the matter. But from the very beginning of the enquiry it became clear that the enquiring officer was putting all types of obstructions against the Congress collecting evidence. At every stage, the Congress lodged its protest against the behaviour of the official, but continued to take part in the enquiry. But soon the situation became such that it could no longer continue its co-operation and consequently withdrew from the enquiry. Thus, the relation between the Congress and the government ended in a visible rupture on this issue.

The situation in U. P. was much more serious. As pointed out earlier, the main issue there was the rent due to the big landowners like the Zamindars, Talukdars, etc. The Congress Committee which was convinced of the fact that because of the pauperization of the peasantry on account of the economic crisis, the peasants were unable to pay the rent. At the same time, the Committee assured the government that it would withdraw the advice given to the peasants if the goverment were willing to enquire into the ability of the peasants to pay and allow them the necessary remissions. The goverment on its part said that if the Congress winthrew its advice against the payment of rent, it would consider the question of an enquiry. (It was obvious that this

was no guarantee for a remission of rent). In the circumstances, the Committee decided not to withdraw the advice already given to the peasants, but reiterated it once again.

These activities were conducted directly under the U.P. Congress Committee. Its president T A K Sherwani had the full support and co-operation of Jawaharlal Nehru and other Congress leaders. Thus the U. P. Congress leadership considered activities among peasants based on their day-to-day life problems its main task.

This enraged the authorities. They launched an organized attack on the U. P. Congress leaders. Purushotham Das Tandan, a Congress leader of the Allahabad, and many others were arrested. Jawaharlal Nehru who had gone to Bombay to make arrangements for the treatment of his ailing wife was served with an order of internment on his return confining him within the limits of Allahabad and prohibiting him from speaking in public meetings or writing in newspapers. Similar orders were served on the U. P. Congress President Sherwani and many other leaders. Disregarding these orders, Nehru and Sherwani boarded a train for Bombay on 26th December to meet Gandhi who was to reach there on the 28th. The moment the train passed Allahabad town, it was stopped and both of them were arrested.

Meanwhile, the U.P. Government had issued an ordinance to suppress the no-rent movement. A similar ordinance was issued in NWFP as well to suppress the Red Shirt movement. There Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, his brother, Dr Khan Saheb, and many other leaders were arrested. Besides, Police firing also took place in a number of places. Thus, U. P. and the North West Frontier Province came under an Ordinance Raj.

In Bengal, too, the repression was getting intensified. There was no mass movement there based either on agrarian issues as in U. P. and Gujarat or on tribal fraternity as in NWFP. But the younger Congress workers in Bengal were far ahead in militancy of their comrades in other parts of

the country. Consequently thousands of young activists were thrown into jail without trial. In one of the prisons in Hooghly a beastly manhunt was carried out in which two prisoners were killed and over twenty were seriously injured. Simultaneously, in Chittagong, which had witnessed the armoury raid earlier, the people had to face the most barbarous repression. Hundreds of them were beaten up and tortured in many ways. Ordinances were issued on the pretext of suppressing terrorists, which in practice were utilized to hunt out the Congress workers.

In short, Gandhi who had to return to India helpless and empty handed on account of the united stand taken by the minority communal leaders, had to face an extremely difficult situation. Before dealing with the steps that he took in relation to this new situation and the government's response to them, it is necessary to say a few words on the sympathy and fraternity the Indian freedom movement had earned from the democrats of other countries as a consequence of Gandhi's journey abroad.

On his way to London, Gandhi was received by the representatives of the national democratic movements of Egypt and other Arab countries, who promised their cooperation to India's freedom struggle. During his stay in London, ordinary workers, activists of the Labour Party and trade unions, journalists and others expressed and demonstrated their regard and sympathy to Gandhi and the movement he represented. A number of well-known public leaders and popular journals of many countries, including England and the U. S. A., expressed their sympathy towards the Indian freedom movement. The speeches that Gandhi made in the plenary session of the Round Table Conference and in the committees and the many statements that he made outside the Conference received world-wide publicity. In other words, Gandhi was able to make at least a small section among the democrats of other countries conscious about the manoeuvres of the British and the falsity of the official propaganda that Britain was continuing its rule in India

because of the inability of Gandhi to solve the problems of the minority communities.

The Congress representatives and members of the Working Committee had reached Bombay at the time of Gandhi's arrival there to discuss with him and find solutions to the innumerable issues referred to above. It was evident that in the context of the failure of the Round Table Conference and the deterioration in the situation in the country as a whole, a country-wide struggle was inevitable. As a part of it, Gandhi decided to establish direct contact with the Viceroy. On 29th December, Gandhi sent a telegram to the Viceroy: "I was unprepared on landing yesterday to find Frontier and United Provinces ordinances, shooting in Frontier and arrests of valued comrades in both, on the top of the Bengal ordinance waiting me. I do not know whether I am to regard these as an indication that the friendly relations between us are closed, or whether you expect me still to see you and receive guidance from you as to the course I am to pursue in advising the Congress. I would esteem a wire in reply."

Within two days (on 31st December) a reply telegram was received from the Private Secretary of the Viceroy, condemning the activities of the Congressmen in Bengal, U. P., and NWFP and justifying the steps taken by the government to face these activities. The telegram stated: "...His Excellency feels bound to emplasize that he will not be prepared to discuss with you the measures which the Government of India, with the full approval of his Majesty's Government, have found it necessary to adopt in Bengal, the United Provinces, and the North-West Frontier Province. These measures must in any case be kept in force until they have served the purpose for which they were imposed, namely, the preservation of law and order essential to a good government."

The message made it obvious that unlike Viceroy Lord Irwin who, under instructions from the then Labour government, initiated discussions with the Congress to solve

the issues under dispute, the new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, under the Conservative government, was not willing to follow the path of his predecessor. The rulers were convinced that as a result of the clever policies pursued by the Secretaries of State for India and the Viceroys in accordance with the directives of both the Labour and Conservative governments, the Congress had been successfully isolated and that conditions were ripe for a direct confrontation with it. Therefore, the Congress had no other choice but to leave the path of negotiation and enter the path of struggle.

Yet, it was necessary to explain why the struggle was being launched. So, Gandhi sent one more telegram to the Viceroy on Ist January 1932, in which he gave a reply to the allegation raised by the government with regard to the conditions in U. P., Bengal and NWFP. Regarding the allegation that the terrorists in Bengal were resorting to violence. Gandhi said:

> As to Bengal, the Congress is at one with the Government in condemning assassinations and should heartily cooperate with the Government in measures that may be found necessary to stamp out such crimes. But whilst the Congress would condemn in unmeasured terms, methods of terrorism, it can in no way associate itself with Government terrorism as is betrayed by the Bengal Ordinance and the acts done thereunder, but must resist within the limits of its prescribed creed of non-violence such measures of legalised Government terrorism.

He accused the government of its unwillingness to enter into talks on the situation prevailing in Bengal and other provinces. He informed the Viceroy that in the absence of an alternative, he was compelled to advise the Congress Working Committee to embark on civil disobedience, the inseparable part of his creed of non-violence. A copy of the resolution adopted by the Working Committee in accordance with his advice was also sent along with the message. The resolution stated:

"The absence of any satisfactory response from the Government in terms of (the main issues) the Working Committee will regard as an indication on the part of the Government that it has reduced to nullity the Delhi Pact. In the event of a satisfactory response not forthcoming, the Working Committee calls upon the nation to resume Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes under the following conditions and illustrative heads.

1. No province or district or Tehsil or village is bound to take up Civil Disobedience unless the people thereof understand the non-violent nature of the struggle with all its implications and are ready to undergo sufferings involving loss of life and property.

2. Non-violence must be observed in thought, word and deed in the face of the gravest provocation, it being understood that the compaign is not one of seeking revenge or inflicting injuries on the oppressor but it is one of converting him through self-suffering and self-purification.

3. Social boycott with the intention of inflicting injury on Government Officers, police or anti-nationalists with the spirit of non-violence.

4. It should be borne in mind that non-violent compaigns are independent of pecuniary assistence. Therefore, there should be no hired volunteers, but their bare maintenance and maintenance of the dependents of poor men and women who might have been imprisoned or killed is permissible wherever it is possible. The Working Committee, however, expects workers in the cause to continue the struggle even though they might have to suffer privations.

5. Boycott of all foreign cloth whether British or of other countries is obligatory under all circumstances.

6. All Congressmen and women are expected to use handspun and hand-woven khaddar to the exclusion of even cloth manufactured in the indigenous mills.

7. Picketing of liquor shops and foreign cloth shops should be vigorously conducted chiefly by women, but always so as to ensure perfect non-violence.

8. Unlicensed manufacture and collection of salt should be resumed.

9. If processions and demostrations are organised, only those should join them who will stand lathi charges or bullets without moving from their respective places.

10. Even in non-violent war boycott of goods manufactured by the oppressor is perfectly lawful in as much as it is never the duty of the victim to promote or retain commercial relations with the oppressor.

Therefore boycott of British goods and British concerns should be resumed and vigorously prosecuted.

11. Civil breach of non-moral laws and of laws and orders injurious to the people wherever it is considered possible and advisable may be practised.

12. All unjust orders issued under the ordinances may be civilly disobeyed."

On 2nd January Gandhi received a reply telegram from the Viceroy expressing regret at the decision of the Congress Working Committee to restart the civil disobedience movement and pointing out that Gandhi and the Congress would be held responsible for all the consequences arising out of it. In his reply to this message, Gandhi recalled that while he was conducting negotiations with the former Viceroy about a year back, the Congress had been conducting a civil disobedience movement, and it was never a hindrance to the talks. Gandhi further indicated that if the government desired to have talks even after the Congress had decided to restart the civil disobedience movement, there would be no difficulty whatsoever.

However, as pointed out earlier, the government had already decided to drag the Congress into a struggle again. Thousands of Congress leaders and workers, including Gandhi and the Congress president Vallabhbhai Patel, were arrested. All over the country there were police lathi-charges and firings. All that happened in 1930-31 was repeated on a broader scale and in a more intense form, With this started a new stage in the struggle known as the "Second Civil Disobedience Movement".

II. THE CRUCIAL TEST

It is clear that the Second Civil Disobedience Movement of 1932 was launched under conditions which were more favourable to the government than to the Congress. In fact, it would be more correct to say that the Second Civil Disobedience Movement was forced upon the Congress, rather than to say that it was launched by the Congress.

In 1930 the 'Salt Satyagraha' was launched after a long period of preparation. The Dandi March organized as a prelude to it, the violation of the salt law by Gandhi himself at the end of the march and the statements and speeches of Gandhi before and after the Dandi March, etc., had gained wide publicity in the country and abroad. The decision of the government to let Gandhi free for about a month and the discussions initiated by the government with the leaders in jail through mediators had created the impression that a compromise would be reached between the Congress and the government before long. Talks with the leaders on the one side and cruel repression on the other—this was the approach of the government.

In 1932, on the other hand, just a week after Gandhi's disembarkation at Bombay on 4th January, he and the top Congress leaders who were left outside jail were arrested. In the telegrams exchanged immediately before the arrests, the government had clearly ruled out any possibility of a compromise with the Congress. The government had categorically stated that it was not willing to discuss any of the issues which the Congress had raised through Gandhi. The exchange of telegrams during the week before the arrests was only to make this amply clear, and as soon as the Congress decided to launch the civil disobedience in protest against the attitude of the government, all the leaders were arrested.

In other words, while the initiative for launching the civil disobedience movement of 1930 was with the Congress,

in 1932 it was with the government. The principal reason for this difference has been indicated earlier. Before 1930, the government could not yet accomplish its task of rallying the native princes, the organizations and parties of communal-caste politics, the liberal politicians, etc., against the struggle organized by the Congress. Consequently, they were not able to rally against the Congress even those who were politically at logger head with the Congress. With the Second Round Table Conference, however, this task had been accomplished by the government.

A new constitution was promised with broad autonomy for the provinces and with wider powers to the elected members of the Central Assembly. Though the liberals were one with the Congress in expressing dissatisfaction with the proposed changes at the Centre, since they fell far short of even Dominion Status, they looked at the proposed changes at the provincial level as "so far so good". Hence, the programme of struggle like non-cooperation and civil disobedience was not to their liking. As for the leaders of minority community and caste and religious organizations, they came out openly against the Congress and its programme.

Making use of this situation, the government succeeded in unleashing a powerful propaganda campaign against the Congress and its programme for struggle. This was a new weapon which the government did not possess during the 1930 struggle.

But this was not the only weapon in the arsenal of the government. New ordinances were issued giving special powers to officials to deal with law and order. The new Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare of the Conservative party reiterated the government's determination to take every action to suppress "this challenge to our authority". He was, in fact, declaring in unambiguous terms what the Viceroy had told Gandhi in his telegram that "these measures must in any case be kept in force until they have served the purpose for which they are imposed".

We have noted earlier that certain special powers (ordinances) were already in use in Bengal, U. P. and NWFP

even before Gandhi had returned to India. Of these, one ordinance issued in Bengal was obstensibly meant for "suppressing terrorism". But, in fact, it contained many provisions which could be used against those who really were not involved in the terrorist movement. For example, it empowered any government official authorised by the government to arrest and question any one on suspicion. He had also the powers to resort to any step to enforce the arrest. Besides, it empowered the government to take possession, from the owner or the resident, of any building along with fittings and furniture, with or without compensation. District magistrates were given the powers to ban the entry of any person or persons into public places like the railways, impose restrictions on travel, and confiscate vehicles, etc,. They were also given the powers to demand and get assistance from landowners, teachers, etc., in the maintenance of law and order and to issue arrest warrant against any suspect. The government was vested with the powers to impose collective fines, and also exempt from it any one whom the government considerd fit, realize arrears of fine and revenue. After enforcing several such diabolical laws, it was declared that they could not be challenged in a court of law.

The U.P. ordinance was designed to face the no-rent movement there. Many of the provisions of the Bengal ordinance were incorporated in the U.P. ordinance. In NWFP, three oridinances were promulgated. There too any officer authorized by the government could impose restrictions on any one on suspicion and impose collective fine. It was in this background of denial of civil liberties that Gandhi's telegram to the Viceroy and the Congress Working Committee resolution pointed out the inevitability of civil disobedience. This was the situation prevailing before the exchange of telegrams between the Viceroy and Gandhi and the lauching of the civil disobedience. The violation of civil rights was then confined to three provinces. But with the exchange of telegrams between Gandhi and the Viceroy and the decision of the Working Committee to restart the civil

disobedience, the Viceroy promulgated four new ordinances extending the provisions of special powers to the whole country.

One of these ordinances was to extend the laws which were enforced earlier in the three states as mentioned above, giving wider powers to the police and the District Magistrates.

The second all-India ordinance was the Unlawful Instigation Ordinance. The principal provision in that ordinance was that it makes any one speaking against payment of dues to the government liable for fine and imprisonment upto six months.

The third, the Unlawful Organizations Ordinance empowered the provincial governments to confiscate the movable and immovable properties and funds of any organization declared illegal and to declare illegal any organization found to be working prejudicial to the maintence of law and order.

The fourth, entitled the Harassment and Boycott Prevention Ordinance, was designed to prevent the programme of boycott which was considered to have been effectively carried out during the first civil disobedience movement and the social boycott which was suspected to have been planned now. Clearly, this ordinance was promulgated to wreck any demonstration of popular anger at those who were siding with the government and betray the freedom struggle.

The Secretary of State for India, Samuel Hoare himself had declared in the Parliament that these ordinances which were in the mould even before the return of Gandhi and promulgated the day on which Gandhi and other leaders were arrested were very harsh and cruel. He further stated that what motivated the government for preparing these ordinances was the "sincere belief" that there was a threat of attack on the entire foundation of the government and that if these ordinances were not promulgated it would lead to anarchy. In other words, it was the aim of the government to destroy the popular base of the Congress by using all weapons in its

arsenal, and after accomplishing it, put forward a new constitutional reforms proposal acceptable to the liberal politicians and leaders of the caste-communal politics.

Following the promulgation of these ordinances, the Congress Working Committee, most of the provincial and district committees and the local committees in a number of places were banned. So also were a large number of social-cultural organizations under the leadership of patriotic individuals. Their properties were confiscated and bank deposits frozen. Nehru had stated in his *Autobiography* that there were rumours that Anand Bhavan (later,Swaraj Bhavan) in Allahabad, which was donated by Motilal Nehru during the 1930 civil disobedience movement and used as the all-India headquarters of the Congress, would be confiscated.

The income-tax for the year prior to the passing away of Motilal Nehru was in arrears because of the civil disobedience movement. One instalment towards the arrears had been paid in the months following the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. But with the launching of the second civil disobedience and the no-tax campaign being part of the movement, Jawaharlal Nehru did not pay further instalments of arrears. Nehru reasoned later that it would have been completely wrong and immoral on his part if he, a person who advised the peasants against payment of tax and rent, himself were to pay the income-tax. However, no action was taken on Anand Bhavan.

But, the movable and immovable properties of many Congress workers and Congress committees were confiscated or attached by the government. The government thought that, along with measures like lathi-charges, torture, firings, etc., if it could generate the fear that their properties also would be confiscated, the people could be kept away from the struggle. But, braving all these, the ordinary people all over the country came forward to raise the banner of the freedom struggle. Tens of thousands were thrown into prison. In every province, in different places, thousands took out processions in violation of the law and faced

ruthless police repression. (Nehru has recorded in a sorrowful but proud tone how his sisters and relatives and even his old and frail mother who led demonstrations were beaten up by the police so badly that they had to be carried away.)

As compared to 1930, women, students and youth came forward in larger numbers and participated more actively in the struggle. And each section had its own volunteer organization. Though the Congress and other organizations were declared illegal making it impossible for them to work openly, it became clear that these organizations and the national feeling they represented had not lost their position in the hearts of the people.

Another demonstration of the same was the change that came about in the Congress organization itself. In 1930, the procedure was that immediately a president and Working Committee members were arrested, a new president and Committee members filled their places. In 1932, however, instead of the president, there came into being a "dictator" and a "war council" to help him at all levels. The use of thes new terms was intended to create the belief among the people that, though based on non-violence, a country-wide war was being waged against the enemy of the nation.

Besides, there was a system in vogue under which when a "dictator" was arrested, a new "dictator" was nominated as his successor and he would evade arrest for two or three days before openly violating the law. Thus the absconding "dictators" evading the police would suddenly appear in public places and declare the violatlon of law. This was arranged through secret organizations.

There were also various other activities such a printing and distributing newspapers and leaflets in secret, pasting anti-British posters on walls, and hoisting the national flag over government offices without being noticed by the police. A characteristic feature of the second civil disobedience movement was the presence of an underground organization, opposed to the form of struggle conceived by Gandhi and anchored on "truth" though it was, to effectively carry out such programmes.

Another feature of the 1932 struggle was that it aroused a world public opinion in favour of the struggle and against the repression unleashed by the government. It was true that on account of the gagging of the press and other controls imposed on it, the movement did not get as much publicity as in 1930 in the Indian Press. But it got enormous publicity in the foreign newspapers.

Among the events that took place during the second disobedience movement, mention must be made particularly of the holding of all-India and local level conferances without being noticed by the police. Thus, an all-India conference of the Congress was announced to be held in Delhi in April 1932 under the presidentship of Pandit Malaviya. As soon as he left for Delhi, he was arrested. But over 500 delegates who had come from different povinces met secretly in Delhi and conducted the normal proceedings of the conference in a few minutes. Only towards the close of the conference did the police get information about it and rush to the spot and arrest the delegates. A similar all-India conference was held in Calcutta a year later, followed by the conferences at the provincial and district levels. All became convinced that, however sharp the weapons used to suppress the Congress, the movement that had developed under the leadership of the Congress was such that it could no longer be suppressed.

But the struggle which the authorities had decided to suppress at any cost—particularly the one under Gandhi's leadership, which had adopted non-violence as a creed—had its characteristic weaknesses. Whether it was a struggle as of 1930 launched under the initiative of the Congress, or like that of 1932 which was imposed on the Congress by the government, the mass enthusiasm witnessed at the beginning of the struggle would not last for long. Had there been a ground to expect that a long drawn out struggle would compel the government to come to a compromise as was the case in 1930-31, it would have been possible on that expectation to continue the struggle for some time. But under the

conditions of 1932 in which there was no room for such an expectation, the mass enthusiasm which was witnessed in the beginning of the struggle did not last long, although the masses of the people were clearly with the Congress and against the government.

Thus, the fatigue and the state of helplessness which manifested in the struggle gave rise to the question of "what next". We shall examine in the following sections Gandhi's answer to this question, the gain it could make through the strategy of the struggle under the bourgeois leadership as well as the danger it contained.

III. FASTING AND THE POONA PACT

As we know, the Second Civil Disobedience Movement was the result of the failure to arrive at an understanding on the minority issue at the Second Round Table Conference. This time, the authorities were determined not to give any concession to the Congress. As part of this policy, the work of framing a new constitution in accordance with the proposals placed by the Government in the Conference, continued. The Committee with Lord Lothian as Chairman which was appointed to decide on the question of voting right arrived in India on 17th January. Needless to say, while the Committee arrived in India, Gandhi and other leaders were in jail.

It was a clear indication to the fact that the government was determined to go ahead, as in the words of the Secretary of State for India, Sir Samuel Hoare, "let the dogs bark, the caravan will go on". It became further clear that however powerful the civil disobedience movement, the proposals presented by the government at the Second Round Table Conference were going to be included in the new constitution. Unlike what happened in the case of First Civil Disobedience Movement, now there was no possibility of a settlement after continuing the struggle for a few months.

It was at this juncture that Gandhi, with his characteristic skill of diplomacy, began to make moves on the chess board of bourgeois politics. While the authorities, as part of an attempt to suppress the entire freedon movement, were forcing the Congress under bourgeois leadership to surrender, Gandhi's move was designed to counter this move of the authorities. His line of thinking was that, although it might be possible for the authorities to suppress the freedom movement, they would not be able to distroy the influence he had on the people. Moreover, he wanted to force the authorities to retrace their steps at least on a minor issue.

We have already referred to a speech Gandhi made at the meeting of the Minority Committee of the Second Round Table Conference. In that speech he had stated that what ever the safeguards made for non-Hindus, like Muslims, Sikhs, Christians etc., he would oppose even at the cost his life the allocation of separate electorate for the depressed communities among the Hindus.

Observing the events following the Second Round Table Conference, Gandhi suspected that the proposals which were going to come from the government were those which he would have to "oppose even at the cost of his life". He paid deep thought as to what he and his colleague could do inside the jail while the work of the Lothian Committee was going unobstructed outside. As a result of this hard thinking, Gandhi sent a letter on 11th March to Samuel Hoare from the Yerwada jail, in which he reiterated his determination to "resit with life", separate electorate for the Depressed Castes.

Explaining in some detail why he had taken that stand, Gandhi stated emphatically that he was not against giving the Depressed Castes representation in the legislature. He added that he was in favour of giving voting right to the adults among them. Gandhi was of the opinion that even if educational qualification, property ownership, etc., were imposed on members of other communities as conditions for voting right, members of the Depressed Castes should be

exempted from such conditions. But he believed that a system of separate electorate for them as distinct from other Hindus would, instead of helping them, do harm to them. Gandhi warned that if the government's final proposals were to introduce such a system, he would go on a "fast unto death."

In his letter to the Secretary of State for India, Gandhi not only referred to the voting rights of the Depressed Castes and their representation in the legislature, but also wrote that he was shocked by the repression let loose by the government all over the country. All government servants, Gandhi pointed out, both Englishmen and Indians, were gradually being dehumanized and turned into heartless creatures; he could not say how long he could bear with it. May be, this too, Gandhi pointed out, would drive him to undertake another fast in future. However, for the present his fast would be on the question of voting rights and representation in the legislatures to the Depressed Castes.

Samuel Hoare sent a reply to this letter after one month, i.e., on 13th April, in which he stated that he was unable to say anything regarding the right to vote and the representation in the legislature to the Depressed Castes and that once the work of the concerned committee was over, the government would take a decision, taking into consideration Gandhi's opinion also. He, however, emphatically stated that the government could not show any mercy to those who were violating law and indulging in violonce against an "established government." As long as the civil disobedience movement continued, the emergency laws would operate, he said.

This exchange of letters between Samuel Hoare and Gandhi remained confidential. Gandhi had made it clear in that letter that none except Vallabhbhai Patel and Mahadev Desai who were in jail with him, would know about it. The government did not give any publicity to this exchange of letters, either. But, disregarding the warning given by Gandhi, the government took its own decision on the right to vote and the epresentation in the legislature of all sections, including the Depressed Castes.

On 17th August 1932, the government announced the scheme of minority representation, known as the Communal Award. The very next day (18th August) Gandhi wrote a letter to the British Prime Minister in which he gave notice that unless the proposals regarding the Depressed Castes were withdrawn, he would go on a "perpetual fast unto death" from 20th September. The Prime Minister replied on 8th September. When this letter was published on 12th September along with Gandhi's letter of 9th September, the earlier correspondence between Gandhi and Hoare was also published. It was only then that the people understood the meaning of Gandhi's phrase, "resist with my life."

Gandhi began his fast in Yerwada jail on 20th September. Earlier, his decision to go on fast had led to serious discussions and expressions of emotion in India and abroad. Appeals poured in from all parts of the world to save Gandhi's life by arriving at a settlement. But the government remained unmoved. The spokesmen of the government insisted that only those amendments which were unanimously agreed upon by all the concerned parties, including the leaders of the Depressed Castes, would be acceptable to them. While the attempts to save Gandhi's life continued vigorously, days dragged on and on.

Before going into how the fasting ended, it is necessary to take a closer look at the proposals on constitutional reforms put forward by the government. The government had not put forward any proposal on the administration at the Centre. Attempt were made only to solve the problems relating to provincial legislatures. This is the first and foremost fact which needs special mention.

It may be recalled that at the Round Table Conference it was made clear that the government was willing to make some concessions only on the question of extending the role of people's representatives in relation to the provincial administration. Hence, the government's proposal to continue with the bureaucratic rule at the Centre did not come near

even the Dominion Status envisaged by the moderate leadership, leave alone the demand of full independence made by the Congress. Consequently, even the liberals and the leaders of religious-caste politics were opposed to this part of the government proposals.

Gandhi's fast, however, was not on this central issue. Separate electoral constituencies have been proposed not only to the Depressed Castes and non-Hindu communities, but also to Europeans, Chamber of Commerce, landlords, etc. There were provisions in the proposal for separate electoral lists and representations for landlords, commercial interests and Europeans who feared that their interests would not be safeguarded by those who were to get elected from general constituencies or even by those elected from constituencies reserved for minority communities and Depreased Castes.

The reason for this is obvious. This provision was designed to increase the representation of the vested interests and reduce the representation of those with relatively more popular base. These special privileges allowed to the vested interests also did not attract protest from Gandhi. In fact, Gandhi himself had agreed to a separate electorate for the Muslim, Sikh and Christian relgious groups, because he thought it improper for him to raise objections on matters relating to these groups. What he was opposed to was the extension of this same provision to the Depressed Castes.

Utilizing this, Gandhi's opponents tried to characterize him an enemy of the Depressed Castes. This allegation was, in fact, contained in the letter of the Prime Minister. And to justify it, he had raised certain arguments which were in turn repeated by many of the leaders of the Depressed Castes in India.

But on 25th September, the sixth day of Gandhi's fast, an agreement was signed by certain prominent leaders of Depressed Castes and caste Hindus. This agreement known as the "Poona Pact" proposed important changes in the government proposal. In accordance with its own earlier declarations, the government had to accept these alternative proposals put forward jointly by the concerned parties.

How did this amazing change come about among the members of the Depressed Castes? Were their leaders compelled to change their position by Gandhi's pressure tactics of fasting? If so, was it not, in effect, a use of force against them?

The Gandhians might be able to answer this question in accordance with the Gandhian Philosophy. But ordinary people who have no particular sympathy or opposition to the Gandhian path have a different answer to give. If one compares the representation granted by the leaders of the minority communities to the Depressed Castes at the Second Round Table Conference, the representation granted in the proposals put forward by the government in August 1932, and the representation offered in the Poona Pact, it can be seen that the Poona Pact contained provisions more favourable to the Depressed Castes, as shown in the following table.

Province	Representation recognised by Minority Community leaders in 1931	According to Govt. proposal (Aug. 1932)	According to Poona Pact
1. Madras	40	18	30
2. Bombay	28	10	15
3. Punjab	10	0	8
4. Bihar & Orissa	14	7	18
5. Central Provinces	20	10	20
6. Assam	13	4	7
7. Bengal	35	10	30
8. U.P.	20	12	20
Total	180	71	148

From the table it is clear that according to the Poona Pact, the Depressed Castes were to get more than twice the

number of seats they could have got according to the government proposals. True, the Poona Pact granted a little less than the "maximum demand" conceded by other minority community leaders. But there was no question about the benefit derived from the "Poona Pact" as compared to that granted according to the government proposal.

In fact, in U.P. and C. P. the Poona Pact accepted as many seats as proposed by the minority community leaders in 1931. In Bihar and Orissa they were given more seates than what was proposed by the minority community leaders. In Punjab they were not allotted a single seat by the government, whereas the Poona Pact gave them eight. Briefly, had the Depressed Caste leaders stuck to the government proposals without accepting the terms of the Poona Pact, they would have been the losers.

At the London conference, the Depressed Caste leaders had claimed special constituencies as those for the non-Hindhu communities like the Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, etc., which was recognised by leaders of the minority communities. But the government formulated its proposals with an important change introducing in it. According to this, there would be a separate voters' list for Depressed Castes, and only those in this list had the right to vote and contest as candidates in the elections. In addition, the general voters' list for all Hindus would also include their names so that they could vote and contest elections in these general constituencies as well.

The argument put forward by the government was that since the Depressed Caste had the right to vote and to be elected from the general constituencies as well, they were not separated from the rest of the Hindus as feared by Gandhi. They also tried to show that those Depressed Castes capable of getting elected from general constituencies would boost their number in the legislature. But the Depressed Castes found it more advantageous to have a larger number of seats reserved for them as envisaged in the Poona Pact than to have fewer seats in reserved constituencies with the right in theory to contest and win from general constituencies.

It was the "profit and loss account" calculated in this manner that motivated Ambedkar, M. C. Rajah, Rajbhoj and other Depressed Caste leaders to sign the Poona Pact.

On the other hand, Gandhi was successful at least in driving a weage into the comprehensive scheme presented by the government. Thus the Congress was able to attract into its camp the Depressed Caste leaders who had taken their position in the camp of the Muslim League and other communal-caste politicians during the Second Round Table Conference.This enabled Gandhi to re-establish relation with the external world which had been cutoff since 4th January at least on one point. Soon after launching the fast on 20th September, he got an opportunity to meet and talk with other mass leaders. Although confined to jail, he got the freedom to conduct the activities for the upliftment of the Depressed Castes (the term "Harijan" began to be widely used during this period for the members of these castes).

However, this was a great blow to the freedom movement. For this led to the diversion of the people's attention from the objective of full independenee to the mundane issue of upliftment of the Harijans.

IV. THE POLITICS OF HARIJAN WELFARE

As we have noted earlier, Gandhi had indicated in his letter to samuel Hoare that he might have to go on fast on questions relating to the release of political prisoners and the ending of repression. But as the exchange of correspondence continued in the months of August and September and the fasting began, the question of repression receded to the background. In other words, Gandhi had come to the conclusion that a fast on that issue was not in keeping with practical politics.

But, immediately before and after the commencement of the fast,anumber of prominent leaders,bothCongress and non-Congress,met first in Bombay,then in Poona and again in Bombay, to find a solution to the Depressed Castes issue involved

in the fast. It was but natural that their discussions were not confined to the issue of the Depressed Castes alone. Discussions were also held informally on the political situation following the arrest of Gandhi and other leaders, ways of solving the political crisis as early as possible ending the repression and so one. Since the formal discussions were centred around the Depressed Caste issues alone and since the government had adopted a totally unhelpful attitude in the matter of implementing decisions emerging from political discussions, these informal discussions on political issues reached nowhere. But the formal discussions and the steps that Gandhi took on the basis of these discussions removed the struggle away from the masses and built a base for starting negotiations with the government once again.

As Gandhi began his fast, the government came up with a proposal to release him from the jail subject to certain conditions. But he took a firm position that he was not willing to be released subject to conditions. Gandhi realized that his coming out of the jail on conditions and at the mercy of the government without a solution to the issue of repression which he had raised would weaken the movement. At the same time, he had also realized that the situation of continuing repression by the government, on the one side, and the people's resistance, on the other, could not be prolonged and that a way had to be found to get out of the situation. What he told the press correspondents who met him in the jail on 20th September and what he wrote to the Government of Bombay on 21st September were reflections of this realization. The important points he mentioned are as follows. Gandhi stated:

> In attacking, untouchability I have gone to the very root of the matter, and therefore, it is an issue of transcendental value, far surpassing Swaraj in terms of political constitutions and I would say that such a constitution would be a dead-weight if it was not backed by a moral basis, in the shape of the present hope engendered in the breasts of the down-trodden millions that that weight is going to be lifted from their shoulders.

The issue of repression which Gandhi considered significant in his letter of 11th March was no longer significant for him now. Not only that. Now he had subordinated the struggle for *Swaraj* to the day-to-day activities for the upliftment of the Depressed Castes. What is more, Gandhi gave a moral (religious) character to this political approach, which he alone could do. Talking to the newsmen, he said:

If people won't laught at me, I would gently put forward a claim which I have always asserted that I am a 'touchable' by birth, but an 'untouchable' by choice, and I have endeavoured to qualify myself to represent, not the upper ten even among the 'touchables' because be it said to their shame that there was castes and classes among them, but my ambition is to represent and identify myself with, as far as possible, the lowest strata of the 'untouchables' namely the 'invisibles' and the 'unapproachables', whom I have always before my mind's eye wherever I go; for they have indeed drunk deep of the poison cup. I have met them in Malabar and in Orissa, and am convinced that if they are ever to rise, it will not be by reservation of seats but will be by the strenuous work of Hindu reformers in their midst.

He added:

There should be no coercion on those who are opposed to joint electorates. I have no difficulty in understanding their bitter opposition. They have every right to distrust me. Do I not belong to that Hindu section, mis-calld superior class or caste Hindus, who have ground down to powder the so-called untouchables? The marvel is the latter have remained nevertheless in the Hindu fold. But whilst I can justify this opposition I belive that they are in error. They will, if they can, separate the 'depressed' classes entirely form the Hindu society and from them into separate class —a standing and living reproach in Hinduism. I should not mind if thereby their interst could be really served. But an intimate acquaintance with every shade of untouchability convinces me that their lives as much as they are so intimately mixed with those of the caste Hindus in whose

midst and for whom they live that it is impossible to separate them. They are part of an individnal family. Their revolt against Hindus with whom they live and their apostasy from Hinduism, I should understand, but this, so far I can see, they will not do. There is a subtle something—quite indefinable—in Hinduism which keeps them in it even in spite of themselves.

Thus, the Congress as well as its undisputed leader, Gandhi, which was engaged in a country-wide struggle with the objective of liberating India from the British rule, engrossed itself in the programme of liberating the Depressed Castes and other Hindus from the curse of untouchability from which the entire Hindu religious community had been suffering. The government had given Gandhi the necessary freedom even while in jail to give leadership to this activity. The result of these activities was the formation of the Harijan Seva Sangh. The foundation for this was laid by the decision of the conference held in Bombay under the chairmanship of Pandit Malaviya immediately before the termination of Gandhi's fast. The decision which was taken in the form a resolution is as follows.

This conference resolves that hanceforth, amongst Hindus, no one shall be regarded as an untouchable by reason of his birth, and those who have been so regarded hitherto, will have the same right as other Hindus in regard to the use of public wells, public schools, public roads and other public institutions. This right will have statutory recognation at the first opportunity and shall be one of the earliest acts of the Swaraj parliament, if it shall not have received such recognition before to secure, by every legitimate and peaceful means, an early removal of all social disabilities now imposed by custom upon the so-called untouchable classes, including the bar in respect of admission to temples.

Following this meeting and in response to Gandhi's repeated appeals, a broad mass movement to remove unoutchability started throughout the country. The movement turned to different directions such as agitation for temple

entry to Harijans and other untouchables, inter caste dining, enrolment of Harijan children in schools, liberating them from traditional customs and so on.

It was in this atmosphere that in Kerala, K. Kelappan began his fast in front of the famous caste-Hindu temple of Guruvayoor. Kelappan who had to end his fast on the compulsive advice of Gandhi later dedicated himself to the service of Harijans, including temple entry. To coordinate such activities, an all-India Harijan Sevak Sangh with branches at provincial, district and local levels was formed. Gandhi coordinated its activities from jail in the early period and later from Delhi.

A direct result of this was the weakening of the civil disobedience movement. Thousands of Congress activists and many prominent leaders like Rajagopalachari, who were active in the midst of the civil disobedience movement for the past several months gave up their activities completely and got themselves involved fully in the movement for the upliftment of the Harijans, temple entry, etc.

Although, civil disobedience had in effect got weakened, it was continuing formally. But in continuing the activities as before, the movement had to pass a new obstruction. Following the informal political discussions held at Poona, the Congress leadership formally gave a directive to its lower level committees to wind up the underground machinery which they had set up to carry forward effectively the civil disobedience movement. It was obvious that under the prevailing conditions of the worst kind of repression, it was impossible even to sustain the semblence of the movement without an underground facility to print and distribute leaflets. Through the directive to give up the underground activity, the Congress leadership was, in effect, making the disobedience movement lifeless.

However, the struggle continued in a formal way. As distrinct from 1930-31, in the face of the government's uncompromising policy, the Congress had no choice but to continue the struggle, however weak it was. Therefore, new presidents

and secretaries assumed charge following the arrest of one after another of these functionaries and instructions were given to the lower committees on activities that could be carried on openly.

Two important events deserve special mention here. One was the directive given to observe 4th January 1933 as the anniversary of the commencement of mass arrests. The second was the Congress session held at Calcutta in April 1933.

Of these, the first was observed in different parts of the country. A large number of delegates arrived for the Calcutta Congress from different parts of the country as was the case with the Delhi Congress in the previous year. Proceedings went on despite the ban imposed on the organization. A thousand of the 2200 delegates who attended session and Pandit Malaviya who was to preside over the session along with many leaders were arrested. Many leaders and delegates were injured in the police lathi-charge.

But none of these could effect any change in the political situation. The government repeatedly stated that unless and until the Congress officially withdrew the call for civil disobedience, the question of the release of political prisoners or reducing the itensity of repression did not arise at all.

The Congress did not make any change in its declared position, either. When the Congress met in Calcutta disregarding the ban, the independence resolution of the Lahore Congress and the official decisions of the Working Committee on civil disobedience were reiterated. The resolution reviewing the then existing conditions gave a call to strengthen and widen the civil disobedience movement. The conference condemned the reform scheme published by the Government after the launching of the civil disobedience movement and the repressive actions against the movement.

Briefly, though a section of the Congress leaders and a majority of sympathizers had left the civil disobedience movement and involved themselves completely in the upliftment of the Harijans, the Congress did not deviate an inch

from its declared path. Civil disobedience continued, though nominally.

It was in this background that a new move came from Gandhi. On 8th May, he commenced a "self-purification" fast which was to last 21 days. The fast, which was not in protest against any one's action or on a concrete issue, according to Gandhi himself, was a whole-hearted appeal for self-purification in the sense of generating a sense of caution and vigil on the problems of the Harijans on his own part and on the part of his colleagues.

The fast had its immediate political impact. Considering the "nature of the objective of the fast and the sentiment expressed through it", the government declared its decision to unconditionally release Gandhi from jail. After coming out of the jail Gandhi issued a statement which kept the doors open for negotiations. In the statement he made the following points clear.

1. Although he was free now, Gandhi would continue his fast for self-purification.

2. Although his release from the jail was unconditional, Gandhi would not use the freedom to strengthen the civil disobidience movement or to give leadership to that movement. He would devote his time entirely for the Harijan movement.

3. His faith in the civil disobedience movement remained unshaken; the strength of the movement lay not in the number of people participating in it, but in their quality.

4. As long as he continued his fast, the sentiments and thought of those participating in the civil disobedience movement would naturally turn towards the fast and the Harijan movement basic to it. In these circumstances it would be proper for the Congress President to take a decision to suspend the civil disobedience movement for a month or six weeks.

5. At the same time, he made a request to the government: It must utilise the opportunity provided by the suspension of the civil disobedience movement to resume negotiations in order to establish the real peace in the country and weld the

chain of negotiations which was broken following the London Conference.

On Gandhi's advice, the Congress president announced the decision to suspend the civil disobedience movement for a period of six weeks. But the government emphatically stated that it would not make any change in the policy just because the movement had been suspended. The government spokesmen further made it clear that as long as the Congress possessed the weapon of civil disobedience ready for use against the government at any moment, the repression would surely continue. In other words, the government wanted an unconditional surrender by the Congress.

V. INDIVIDUAL SATYAGRAHA AND ITS WITHDRAWAL

Gandhi and other Congress leaders now had to conduct their activities in the face of not only the opposition from the government but also the discontent that had begun to rise among ordinary Congressmen.

Gandhi's fast on the issue of the Depressed Castes and the subsequent developments evoked strong opposition among the Congress workers and the masses in general who had to undergo untold hardships for having gone through the struggle called by the leadership during the second civil disobedience movement. When the acting Congress president, M. S. Aney suspended the civil disobedience for a period of six weeks on the advice of Gandhi, their discontent assumed a manifest form.

The clearest evidence of this was the statement jointly issued by Vithalbhai Patel and Subhas Bose from Vienna. (Following their arrest during the civil disobedience movement of 1932, their health deteriorated in jail; the government released them and permitted them to go to Vienna for treatment.) Characterizing the decision taken by Gandhi to

suspend the civil disobedience an "admission of defeat", the statement continued:

> The latest action of Mr. Gandhi in suspending Civil Disobedience is a confession of failure. We are clearly of the opinion that Mr. Gandhi as a political leader has failed. The time has therefore, come for a radical re-organisation of the Congress on a new principle with a new method, for which a new leader is essential, as it is unfair to expect Mr. Gandhi to work the programme not consistent with his life-long principles.[1]

The statement further pointed out that it would be welcome if the Congress as a whole was ready for such a change; otherwise, a new party of radicals would have to be formed within the Congress.

Subhas Bose was well known as the spokesman of the left Congressmen. As for Vithalbhai Patel, he was one of the top leaders who, in opposition to the Gandhian programme had argued a decade earlier for the programme of participation in the legislature. He was elected to the Central Assembly first as a candidate of the Swaraj Party and then as a Congress candidate. As the President of the Central Assembly, he had demonstrated his extraordinary individuality. The decision taken by Patel, who was never known as a leftist but appeared before the people as a real 'parliamentarian' leader, and by Bose, a renowned leftist leader, to challenge the leadership of Gandhi, created a number of organizational and political problems for the Congress leadership.

Even Nehru who, despite being a leftist, all along remained with the leadership, felt disturbed by these developments.

> ...gradually, the civil disobedience movement declined; but it still carried on, not without distiction. Progressively it ceased to be a mass movement. Apart from the severity of the Government repression, the first severe blow to it came in September 1932 when Gandhiji fasted

1. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of Indian National Congress*, Bombay, Padma Publications, (1946 reprint), p 561.

for the first time on the Harijan issue. That fast roused mass consciousness, but it directed it in another direction. Civil disobedience was finally killed for all practical purposes by the suspension of it in May 1933. It continued after that more in theory than in practice. It is no doubt true that, even without that suspension, it would have gradually petered out. India was numbed by the violence and harshness of repression. The nervous energy of the nation as a whole was for the movement exhausted, and it was not being re-charged. Individually there were still many who could carry on civil resistance, but they functioned in a somewhat artificial atmosphere.

It was not plasant for us in prison to learn of this slow decay of a great movement.

In the subsequent chapters of his *Autobiography*, Nehru has described at length how these developments made him to hard thinking. He has stated what reactions the contemperaneous developments had evoked in a person as he was, closely observing and analyzing the developments taking place in India and the world over.

The crisis and the bankruptcy of the capitalist social system, the rise and progress of the socialist Soviet Union, the repression unleashed by the British imperialist all over the world and in India in particular, and the support they received from the vested interests in India, the socialist-communist trends of thought which were slowly but unmistakably growing among the millions of poverty stricken people of India enthusiastically participating in the anti-imperialists struggle—all these were leading him to the left.

At the same time, the anti-communist notions inherent in the bourgeois democrats free from the revolutionary outlook of the working class, and the influence of Gandhian thought had been leading him to the right. These chapters in his *Autobiography* clearly show that he was being disturbed by all the internal contradictions characteristic of a sceptic helplessly caught in such a cross-current.

Vithalbhai Patel, Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru were not isolated individuals. Each of them was the respresentative of one or the other section of the Congress ranks. It was the opposition and challenge to the Gandhian method of struggle that brought Patel and Bose together. In this, Nehru's position was quite opposite of these two. But, in the matter of left political outlook, Nehru and Bose were somewhat close to each other. The position of Patel was a continuation of the position which he, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das and others had taken a decade earlier. All the three trends of thought and political positions were slowly but unmistakably getting crystallized in the Congress. This, in fact, led to the formation, on one side, of a new party, a new edition of the old Swaraj Party, concentrating on parliamentary activity and, on the other, of certain leftist parties like the Congress Socialist Party. The history of the emergence and development of these parties will be dealt with in the chapters that follow.

But the problem that the Congress was facing in May-June 1933 was not the emergence of these new parties. Neither these new parties nor the Congress could work openly and express their respective opinions in those days. The question that Gandhi and the Congress were facing was how to create a situation in which they could work freely and openly. It was with the hope of finding a means to end this situation that Gandhi turned the country's entire attention on Harijan service. It was again precisely for this purpose that Gandhi advised the Congress President to suspend the civil disobedience movement, and the President accepted his advice. The suspension of civil disobedience was further extended for another six weeks to enable Gandhi to regain health and resume discussions with his colleagues. This interval was also used to find ways to restart negotiations with the government.

But, as pointed out earlier, there was no favourable response from the government to any of these moves made by Gandhi and other Congress leaders.

The Congress leadership was caught in a dilemma created by its desire to find an opportunity to withdrew the civil disobedience, on the one hand, and the obstinate attitude of the government to which nothing short of a complete surrender was acceptable, on the other. So to find a way out of this dilemma, the Congress leaders decided to have informal discussions among themselves. Thus, on 12th July 1933, a meeting of Congress leaders who were then out of jail was held at Poona, in which different points of view were expressed. One section argued for an unconditional withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement, while another wanted the mass struggle to be stopped and individual civil disobedience launched in its stead. Both these views were, however, rejected. Finally, it was agreed to make attempts to find an opportunity for a discussion with the Viceroy. But the government once again made it clear that nothing short of a complete surrender was acceptable to it. Consequently, the meeting decided to continue the struggle "to uphold the honour of the country". But the new phase of the struggle should be 'Individual Satyagraha'.

Gandhi who himself took the lead in offering 'Individual Satyagraha' was arrested along with other leaders who took part in the *satyagraha*. Gandhi was released after a few days, but was rearrested for offering *satyagraha* once again. This time, however, he was denied the facility of carrying on the activities of Harijan welfare in the jail. Protesting against this, Gandhi once again went on a fast. The authorities did not relent at first. But as they apprehended a danger to Gandhi's life, he was released from jail.

The position Gandhi took this time was entirely different from that he had taken earlier. He declared that he was keeping himself aloof from civil disobedience this time and devoting his entire time to Harijan welfare work, since he was not a "free man" till 3rd August 1934, the day on which his term of imprisonment was to expire. At the same time, he made it clear that if those who were actively taking part in the civil disobedience sought his advice and guidance,

he would give them to save the movement from taking a "wrong path".

The subsequent months presented strange situations in Indian politics. The most revered leader of the civil disobedience movement kept himself aloof from it and, instead engaged himself in the activities of Harijan upliftment. (Gandhi who made a country-wide tour in connection with Harijan upliftment, used it as an opportunity for holding informal political discussions.) At the same time, thousands of his followers continued to remain in jail, while hundreds of individuals courted arrest participating afresh in the civil disobedience. In other words, though the civil disobedience was not formally withdrawn, its authentic spokesman and its topmost leader was outside jail engaged in activities not directly related with politics!

This naturally fostered discontent among the ranks. In the circumstances, the advocates of parliamentary activity, on the one side, and the leftists, including those with socialist-communist outlook, on the other, tried to extend their respective influence both inside the Congress and in the country at large. Meanwhile, utilizing the mounting difference of opinion and confusion among the Congress ranks and leadership, the government came out heavily to completely suppress the Congress.

It was in these circumstances that on 7th April 1934 Gandhi, the top-most leader of civil disobedience movement and its authentic spokesman, came out with a statement. The content of that statement can be summarized as follows:

(1) The reports he had been receiving on the activities of friends engaged in civil disobedience were causing great concern. It appeared that many of them did not really and fully accept the theory of *satyagraha*.

(2) The spiritual atmosphere necessary for a mass *satyagraha* struggle was lacking among the people. *Satyagraha* was purely a spiritual weapon.

(3) For these reasons, everybody except himself should keep aloof from individual *satyagraha*. When he heard the

"call from within", he would offer Individual *Satyagraha.*

Bereft of the language of spiritualism that Gandhi usually employed, it means, in common man's language, that Gandhi had decided to stop not only the mass struggle which was started in January 1932 but also its reduced version of Individual *Satyagraha* of August 1933. What prompted Gandhi to take this decision was concrete political conditions devoid of all elements of spiritualism. As pointed out by Nehru, the civil disobedience movement in its practical sense, was dead in May 1933. The statement made by Gandhi in April 1934 was only the formal recognition of its death.

16

AFTER THE WITHDRAWAL

I. THE REVIVAL OF SWARAJ PARTY

In March 1933, the Government issued a White Paper containing the details of what it was contemplating to do in the direction of constitutional reforms. According to the new proposal, the government at the Centre would by and large remain the same as before, while a certain degree of flexibility would be introduced in the administration of the provinces with as much restrictions imposed on the elected repesentatives as possible.

Following the publication of the White Paper, an attempt was also made to ascertain Indian public opinion on the new proposal for constitutional reforms. Also, a Joint Select Committee comprising members of both the Houses of the British Parliament was appointed to go into the new Government of India Bill framed on the basis of the White Paper. This committee was also assigned the task of ascertaining

the Indian public opinion. Commenting on this procedural steps and the White Paper, the liberal leader C. V. Chintamani said:

> The White Paper scheme was a cruel denial of the most cherished aspirations of the people of this country. It is utterly incorrect to say, as the British apologists of the new consitution have shown a repeated fondess for saying, that the report embodied the results of joint deliberation between the British and the Indians. The Indian 'delegates' presented two memoranda to the Committee, one by all British-Indian 'delegates' headed by His Highness the Aga Khan, and the other separately by Sir Tej Bahadur Saru. Their proposals did not err on the side of excess, and they stated the very minimum of changes which would satisfy any section of Indian opinion. But it was all love's labour lost. Not a solitary recommendation made by the Indian 'delegates' proved acceptable to the British. The Joint Select Committee achieved almost a miracle by making the White Paper scheme still worse—an amazing feat indeed. All the Bills in its passage in Parliament underwent further changes for the worse, all to satisfy the British die-hardism. Indian opinion was almost stunned by the result of years of agitation and cogitation, and many sections of it, including the Liberal and left, said that it would have been for better if no reform had been attempted.[1]

The Congressmen, the liberals and other nationalists were unanimous in arriving at the conclusion that though the new scheme contained some positive features, as it often happened with any scheme, it was on the whole not at all a step forward in the direction of constitutional reforms, as it was loudly claimed to be. It was, in fact, to isolate these sections that the government was making a conscious effort of placating the communal-caste politicans. And it was the Muslim League that stood in the forefront of the communal-caste

1. Cited in R.C. Majumdar, *The Histoy and Culture of Indian People*, Vol XI Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969, pp. 539-40.

politics. As we have noted earlier, Jinnah who had earlier held nationalist views against the League's sectarian attitude, later took an anti-Congress stance helpful to sectarianism following the adoption of the Nehru Report. We have also seen that Jinnah had put forward certain proposals known as the '14-points' to counter the principal themes contained in the Nehru Report, thereby giving an organized form to the Muslim sectarian politics. Similarly, Maulana Muhammed Ali, a close associate of Gandhi during the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement also took a completely sectarian position at the Second Round Table Conference. The attitude of a number of once staunch nationalists, including Muhammed Ali's brother Shoukat Ali, underwent a fimilar change.

On the other hand, a number of nationalist Muslims who consistently stood by the Congress were not recognized by the British as representatives of the Muslims. It may be recalled that the proposal to include Dr. Ansari among the Congress delegates to the Second Round Table Conference was rejected by the British on the pretext of opposition from other representatives of the Muslims. Furthermore, this Muslim communal politics turned out to be helpful to the government in rallying the christians, Anglo-Indians, the Depressed Castes and others against the Congress. The only gain of the fast undertaken by Gandhi in September 1932 and the subsequent events was that it enabled the Congress to win back the Depressed Castes from the government camp.

However, even the Muslim politicians who occupied a vital position in the anti-Congress manoeuvers of the British were critical of the new reforms proposal. For example, Jinnah stated that the proposals relating to the administration at the Centre which was an important part of the whole scheme were "devoid of all principles fundamental to a federation". He therefore characterized that part of the scheme "absolutely bad". But, according to him, the proposals relating to the administration in the provinces were different and constituted a step forward. At the same time, he

pointed at the provisions for special powers to the Governor and for the constitution of the upper house at the provincial level which he considered objectionable.

The Congress spokesman Bhulabhai Desai also protested against the denial of roles to Indians in the Central administration. As for the provincial level administration, he said that the ministers who should be responsible to the legislature were placed between the devil and the deep sea. On the one side was the Governor armed with special powers, and, on the other, the permanent bureaucracy capable of exerting tremendous influence through backdoor against the ministers to whom they were, in fact, responsible. Besides, the resources for national development were not under their control. "Why was such a ludicrous scheme, called 'provincial autonomy' placed before us?", he asked.

Thus, all the three sections, the Congress led by the bourgeoisie, the liberals, and the communal-religious politicians were equally opposed to the scheme formulated by the government obviously for the reason that, since there was no change in the administration at the Centre, the bourgeoisie would not be able to protect its class interests.

Besides, the special powers of the Governor and the opportunities they provided for the bureaucrats to act against the wishes of the people were sharply criticized by all the three sections. It is significant to note that Jinnah was against upper House, an issue left untouched by both Chintamani and Bhulabhai Desai. In other words, neither the communal political leader Jinnah, nor the liberal leader Chintamani had differences with the Congressman Bhulabhai Desai over the question of transfer of power from the British.

However, conditions were lacking then for the bourgeois leadership of these three sections to face the British unitedly. For there was no agreement among the leaders of the three sections on the apportioning of the power to be transferred from the British. Furthermore, there were serious differences between the liberals and the Congress led by Gandhi over the means to be adopted for obtaining power from the British.

On the basis of the evaluation that under the prevailing political conditions, the continuance of civil disobedience would do more harm than good, Gandhi and Aney held informal consultations with other top Congressmen and decided to withdraw the movement after reaching a settlement with the British, if possible, or unconditionally otherwise. Under these same political conditions, certain other moves came from a section of the Congress leaders. In the words of Pattabhi Sitaramayya:

> Ever since the Poona Conference of July, 1933, an increasing number of Congressmen were coming to form the view that, in the situation existing in the country as a result of Ordinance rule, a programme of entry into the Legislatures was necessary to find a way out of what was held to be a 'stalemate'. This view found an organized expression in a move to summon a Conference of Congress leaders sharing the above opinion for the purpose of giving concrete shape to the desire for a new line of action. This Conference met at Delhi on 31 March, 1933, under the Presidentship of Dr. Ansari. It resolved that the All-India Swaraj Party which had been in abeyance should be revived in order to enable Congressmen who were not offering Individual Civil Disobedience to undertake a thorough organization of the electorate and carry out the constructive programme as contemplated in the Poona statement of Mahatma Gandhi (July 1033).[2]

Accordingly, a team consisting of Dr. Ansari, Bhulabhai Desai and B. C Roy met Gandhi and held discussions with him. The central point of the talk was that the Swaraj Party or the Congress itself must contest the elections scheduled to be held towards the end of 1934. They also proposed two main issues to be place before the electorate: (1) withdrawal of all the existing repressive laws, (2) rejection of the government proposals relating to the constitutional reforms and adoption of the national demand on the

2 Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of Indian National Congress*, Bombay, Padma Publications (1946 reprint), p 567.

line proposed by Gandhi at the Round Table Conference. In other words, the objective of the resurgent Swaraj Party was to seek a popular mandate against the government on the basis of the very demands raised by Gandhi and other Congress leaders through the civil disobedience movement.

Subsequently, on 5th April Gandhi wrote a letter to Dr. Ansari in which he stated:

> I have no hesitation in welcoming the revival of the Swarajya Party and the decision of meeting to take part in the forthcoming elections to the Assembly which you tell me is about to be dissolved.
>
> My views on the utility of the Legislatures in the present state are well known. They remain, on the whole, what they were in 1920. But I feel that it is not only the right but it is the duty of every Congressman who, for some reason or another, does not want to or cannot take part in civil resistance and who have faith in entry into the Legislatures, to seek entry and form combinations in order to prosecute the programme which he or they believe to be in the interest of the country. Consistently with my view above mentioned, I shall be at the disposal of the party at all times and render such assistance as it is in my power to give.[3]

Two days later, Gandhi issued a statement limiting the respnosibility of civil disobedience to himself and relieving other Congressmen form it. The meaning of this exercise is clear. All except those who were not interested, like himself, in parliamentary activities would engaged themselves in parliamentary work. Others would withdraw themselves from the disobedience movement and would confine themselves to the activities like the production and propagation of *Khadi* Harijan welfare, anti-liquor campaign and other constructive activities.

For Gandhi and other Congress leaders, this approach had two distinct advantages. First, the demand of the government that the civil disobedience be stopped had, in

3. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *Ibid*, p. 568.

effect, been met, making it unjust on the part of the government to keep tens of thousands of Congressmen in jail on that score. Second, there was no compromise on matters relating to protest against repression and opposition to the constitutional reforms proposals put forward by the government at the Round Table Conference and thereafter. There was a possibility of rallying against the government the liberals and the communal-caste politicians through the programme of approaching the electorate with these issues. In other words, it would be possible to fight for the common interests of the bourgeoisie and exert pressure on the government through means far more effective than a protracted *satyagraha* struggle, individual or mass.

However, Gandhi knew that things would not materialize as easily as the liberal leaders expected them to. Even if the Congress won a massive victory in the elections to the Central Legislative Assembly, the government would be able to impose their constitutional reforms on the people with the backing of the princes and the communal-caste politicians. Under that scheme, there would be constant clashes between the government and the people's representatives. In that circumstance, it would be unwise to lay down permanently and completely the weapon of civil disobedience. That was why Gandhi issued a statement on 7th Apirl 1934 confining the right of civil disobedience to himself and declaring that he would resume the struggle in future only when his "inner voice" called upon him to do so.

The situation changed swiftly after this. The government allowed the congress to hold an AICC session to enable it to discuss and decide how it should function in the new situation. Accordingly, the AICC met on 18th and 19th May at Patna. It decided to contest the next elections by fielding its official candidates. A Parliamentary Board with Dr. Ansari as chairman was constituted to conduct the election work under its control.

It is important that this decision was taken at the instance of Gandhi, for, unlike a decade ago when the elections were

fought through the Swaraj Party, now it would be done directly by the Congress through its Parliamentary Board.

This was a development which no one could have imagined a couple of years ago. Parallel to this, certain other developments also took place which also could not have been imagined earlier. New trends of thought and outlook and new organizations were emerging both within and outside the Congress, as a result of which Indian politics in general and the Congress, in particular, were undergoing a transformation.

II. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA

In May 1934, the Congress which had been banned for over two years gained the facility to work openly. Within weeks, a party which had been hitherto functioning legally was declared illegal. That was the Communist Party of India.

We have already noted that sevaral communist groups were emerging in the different parts of the country in the beginning of the 1920s and that efforts were being made to unite them into a unified Communist Party of India. Mentions were also made of the several conspiracy cases instituted by the government with a view to place obstructions before these efforts to form a centralized Communist Party. However, the Party was never declared illegal. That is, apart from the individuals who were striving to form a communist organization and do their propaganda work, the Communist Party as an organization was not considered dangerous for the existence of imperialism.

But the situation had changed by 1934. An organization functioning under a centralized and perpetual leadership had emerged. Although it was only a small drop in the vast ocean of Indian politics, the rulers rightly feared that the Communist Party was likely to become a more dangerous and anti-imperialist organization than the Congress which was far stronger and more popular throughout the country.

Over 30 political workers, both communist and non-communist, were arrested. Earlier, we had dealt with the history of the Indian Communist movement up to what was known as the Meerut Conspiracy Case. The accused were arrested in March 1929. The trial lasted for four and a half years at different levels, from the megistrate court to the High Court.

The final judgement of the High Court came in August 1933. Earlier, both the Sessions Court and the High Court had set many accused free and the sentences on some others were reduced considering the period they were in prison. The sentence on yet some others was also reduced and they were released in November 1934.

As we have mentioned earlier, Dr. G. Adhikari and P. C. Joshi who were among the accused became prominent leaders of the Comunist Party and among other accused, S. V. Ghate, S. S. Mirajkar and Sohan Singh Josh played important roles in building up the party. In fact, all the accused, both communists, and non-communists, except Muzaffar Ahmed, S. A. Dange and Shaukat Usmani had come out of the jail before the end of 1933.

With their release began the efforts to reorganize the Communist Party. A Central Committee, its Polit Bureau and provincial committes in different provinces were formed. With this, there was not only a restoration of the old link which was snapped following the Meerut Case, but many individuals and groups were newly attracted to the party. The formation of the Central Committee and Polit Bureau marked the beginning of such activities as making available documents of the Communist International to communists and leftists, preparation of documents explaining the views and policies of the Communist Party on Indian political situation, organized trade union activities, establishing relations with left-wing politicians and so on.

This was not an easy task because the national and international situations were changing rapidly. Basic changes had begun to take place in the organization and policies of

the Communist International. The Meerut Case and the consequent imprisonment of the accused had left the party organization so disrupted that it could not comprehand the rapidly changing international and national situations and give appropriate and timely leadership. It would be useful to recount here some of the changes that had come about.

During the initial period of the Indian communist movement, M. N. Roy had played a very helpful role. Meanwhile, Roy had been expelled from the Communist International. The Trotskyite group, which was more powerful than Roy's, had also been similarly expelled from the International. So, there emerged in India certain communist groups following the views of Roy and Trotsky and working against the leadership of the International.

These organizational problems arose at a time when the contradiction between capitalism and socialism on the world scale had become acute. The capitalist world was caught in an unprecedented economic crisis, while the Soviet Union, the only socialist state then, was building up a planned economic system to the utter surprise to its enemies. This was a development which helped anti-imperialists all over the world, including those in India, to move closer towards the socialist movement. At the same time, the leaders of the capitalist world were preparing for a crusade against the Soviet Union and the communist movement. They were fostering the fascists in Italy and the Nazis in Germany and other reactionary semi-military organizations all over the world.

The leadership of the Communist International was pondering over the question of how to face the new situation. As a contribution towards this, the Communist parties in the different countries were striving to formulate the tactics to face the practical problems in their respective countries, while the leadership of the International was trying to help them to rectify the errors they were likely to commit in this process.

The internal situations in India were not at all simple. The repercusions of the economic crisis that engulfed the capitalist world was more painful to the Indian people, because the British imperialists were trying to resolve the crises the people of their own country were facing at the expense of the Indin people. Consequently, the protest and anger against the British rule became deeper and more widespread. Moreover, the political parties in India became more and more convinced of the need to seek the assistance of the Soviet Union and the revolutionary working class movement all over the world.

However, the Communist Party lacked the leadership capable of utilizing these favourable conditions to create a situation capable of challenging imperialism by joining hands with other left and anti-imperialist organizations. As we shall see later on, it was a situation favourable to social democrats and bourgeois nationalists to transform the anti-imperialist feelings of the people and the leanings of the left-wing politicians towards socialism into bourgeois-petty-bourgeois policies and organizations.

The Lahore Session of the Congress in 1929 and the year-long first civil disobedience struggle which followed it, the resultant Gandhi-Irwin Pact and the mass discontent against the Pact, the launching and the failure of the second civil disobedience caused by the pressure generated by the mass discontent together with the uncompromising attitude of the government during and after the Second Round Table Conference—all these had changed the entire course of Indian politics. This series of events was such that the people could clearly perceive the bankurptcy of the policies being pursued by the leaders of the Congress and other bourgeois political parties.

But as against the bourgeois policy which had been proved brankrupt, there was no party leadership here handling political issues with a working class revolutionary outlook. Consequently, other parties and groups were able to turn the anti-imperialist feelings of the people into bourgeois and petty-bourgeois 'socialist' trends of thought.

One of the reasons for this was the fact that all the prominent leaders of the Communist Party were in jail. In addition, the character of the communist groups that began to emerge in the 1920s and the ideological perspective basic to the efforts that were made to unify theseg roups also contributed to this situation.

We have seen earlier that an organization called the 'Communist Party of India' was formed by Indian revolutionaries in Tashkent in the Soviet Union. However laudable the intentions of these revolutionaries, the political background of its formation was not helpful for its growth in India. With the arrival in India of these revolutionaries from the Soviet Union and their subsequent arrest, the first Communist Party of India ceased to exist.

It was in 1925 at Kanpur that the Communist Party of India with a Central Committee was formed again. It played a highly significant role in creating a condition for the formation of an organized Communist Party on the Indian soil. It helped the spread of the communist ideology among the left-wing nationalists and workers and also the formation of mass revolutionary organizations under its away.

It must, however, be noted that a Communist Party with a perpetually functioning central leadership did not come into being even in 1925, as is being claimed by the leaders of the Right Communist Party. It was true that nominally there was a Communist Party. It was also true that each member of the party was engaged in political and organizational activities. But the main field of their activities was the Workers' and Peasants' Parties. Their attention was centred around building a mass revolutionary party in which even non-communists had a role to play.

However, unlike the Communist Party, this mass party was not a party of the working class; it was a party of workers and peasants. In other words, instead of organizing the workes with a working class outlook and programme as the leader of the peasants and other toiling masses, they organized a joint party of workers and peasants. The Communists of those days did not pay attention to organize a party of their own class.

The leadership of the Communist Party in the earlier period had a more serious weakness. It was not at all conscious of the fact that the Party would be subject to attack at any time, and therefore, it should be organized on illegal lines as well. Hence, when the Communits along with their colleagues in the Workers' and Peasants' Parties came under attack (in the form of the Meerut case), the party organization, in effect, ceased to exist.

Though individual communits and groups conducted their activities in many centres like Bombay and Calcutta, their activities lacked ideological and even organizational uniformity. There was no central organization capable of giving leadership to these activities. The different Communist groups remained aloof from each other and quarrelled with each other. The period of four and a half years beginning with the Meerut case was a period of difference of opinion and factional fights among the communits who remained outside the jail. This had in a way affected even the conduct of the Meerut case.

As already pointed out, there were communits and non-communits among the accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case. Therefore, the non-communits defended their case individually or in groups, while the Communits defended independently.

The Communists submitted a common statement to the court. The statement which explained the objectives of the Communists was also signed by certain accused who had not yet become members of the Party. But S. A. Dange who is known as a founder-member of the Communist Party was not a signatory to the statement. This was because Dange had been expelled from the Party unit in the jail on the ground that he was personally responsible for the factional fights in the Party oranization in Bombay. Hence, he was not allowed to sign the common statement of the Communists. He read a separate statement on his own behalf before the court.

Parallel to these developments in the jail and in the court, the different communist groups fought each other outside. In all these fights ideological and organizational issues were intertwined with issues of personality. A discussion of such matters is clearly beyond the scope of the present volume. What is relevant here to note is the fact that the 'Indian Communist Party' which the leaders of the present Communist Party of India claim to have been founded in 1925 had already crumbled and that there were acute factional fights in it. The 'Indian Communist' leadership which is claimed to have been in existence in the those days was incapable of utilizing the then existing conditions which were favourable to the Communist Party on account of the developments that had taken place at the international and national levels.

Efforts were made by the leadership of the Communist International to effect a fundamental change in this situation and for the emergence of a unified communist leadership in India capable of unifying the anti-imperialist forces in the country. Representatives of the International came to India several times, established contact with the different communist groups and gave suggestions on the basis of what they understood the situation here, to reorganize the Party. The International also published two draft documents concening "Party Programme" and "Party Constitution" with a view to their unification.

Besides, the Communist Parties of Great Britain, Germany and China jointly published an open letter addressed to Indian communists pointing to the danger of groupism and factionalism among Indian communists at a time when the enemy class was caught in a deep crisis. These were the efforts made by the Communist International to salvage the Party organisation which was existing, with weaknesses though, from 1925 to 1929 from the grip of the crisis following the develepments in 1929.

These efforts did not produce any tangible result until the accused in the Meerut case were released from prison

towards the end of 1933. Following the release of most of the accused, a central leadership in its elementary form emerged working within the framework suggested by the Communist International and assessing the changes current in the Indian political situation. This central leadership continued (with change of individuals) until the Party was split in 1964. In this sense, it can be said that in spite of the fruitless efforts made earlier, the successful formation of the Party took place only in the year 1933-34. In other words, by 1934 the Communist Party of India had come into being outliving all the repressive actions for over a decade. The rulers came to the conclusion that this challenge to the imperialist rule as well as to the bourgeois leadership in the anti-imperialist fighting front must be nipped in the bud. That was why the same government which lifted the ban on Congress which was moving from civil disobedience to the programme of participation in the legislature, had chosen to ban the Communist Party which was in a very weak state.

III. NEW VERSIONS OF LEFT-WING CONGRESS

Earlier, we have dealt with the discontent among the Congress ranks that arose out of the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement in 1922 and the emergence of the different political groups as a result of it. A somewhat similar situation arose again when the *satyagraha* movement, both mass and individual, was withdrawn in 1933.

But the political situation in India in 1933-34 was vastly different from what it was a decade ago, as evident from the absence of the 'bomb politics'. Many of those who had adopted the bomb politics earlier and consequently undergone imprisonment had realized its bankruptcy and had turned to the path of revolutionary work based on the masses of workers and peasants. In fact, a large section of the activists of the 'Terrorist Movement' came out of jails in

the early years of the 1930s imbibing the ideologies of communism and socialism.

Not only the former 'terrorists,' but a considerable section among the ordinary Congressmen also came out of prisons conscious of the bankruptcy of the Gandhian method of struggle and also of the need to reorientate the freedom struggle towards socialism or communism. Thus, it was in an atmosphere favourable for the growth of socialist and communist ideologies that the communist Party of India emerged with a perpetually functioning central leadership.

The leftist ideological trends now spread not only among the ranks of the Congress, but also found reflected on the leaders. Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose who were the leaders with leftist ideological trends among the Congress leadership towards the end of the 1920s, once again appeared as the representatives of the new left trend in the leadership. But as before, there was a basic difference—even a contradiction—between the views held by them.

The rise of the Soviet Union and the growth of fascism were the events which attracted the attention of the Congress leaders as well as the ranks and the common people. But on this issue, Nehru and Bose took mutually opposite positions. It was this difference in approach that later on took Bose to the camp of the fascist powers and Nehru to the anti-fascist camp.

In the second half of 1933, Nehru was out of prison for a few weeks. During this brief period, he wrote a series of articles, entitled "Whither India?". The ideas he presented through these articles received wide publicity. The central point he brought out in these articles as well as through press conferences was that the capitalist system on world scale was cracking up and that the forces of socialism were growing. He added that it was to meet that situation that Nazism in Germany and other forms of authoritarian tendencies were growing in a number of contries, including England. Nehru stated that the world would have to chose either some

kind of socialism or some kind of fascism and that there was nothing in between the two.

Nehru made it clear that he had fundamental disagreement on a number of things that were taking place in the Soviet Union. He sharply criticized communists and socialists in India and abroad. At the same time, he emphasized that a variety of socialism different from what was being practised in the Soviet Union and preached by communists and socialists elsewhere was the only way open before India.

Nehru had a deep aversion towards fascism and regarded that the imperialist oppression to which India was subjected was a kind of fascism. He, therefore, suggested that India's struggle for freedom from British imperialism must be linked to the world-wide struggle against fascism.

Almost during the same period, Bose wrote a book, entitled *The Indian struggle* Like Nehru, Bose also examined India's freedom struggle in the contexts of the achievements of the Socialist Soviet Uuion and the growth of fascism. But unlike Nehru, he had no particular liking for socialism or hatred towards fascism, but found in the latter a challenge to the imperialist powers. Contrary to Nehru's view of joining the camp of socialism, Bose advised his followers to adopt a policy towards imperialist domination bringing a sort of compromise between socialism and fascism.

Apart form the general international issue of communism and socialism, there was another question on which they distinguished from each other. It concerns the approach towards the Congress in general, and to its supremo, Gandhi, in particular.

Although Nehru shared the feelings of Vithalbhai Patel and Subhas Bose in regard to Gandhi's decision to withdraw the *Satyagraha* in 1933, he did not express the resentment in public. He only wrote letters to Gandhi and some of his close associates. While Nehru was out of prison for a few weeks in 1933, he met Gandhi personally and held discussions with him. These discussions were followed by

exchange of correspondence between them. These correspondence showed that there was no fundamental differences between the two.

Nehru often declared that he was a socialist and wanted the Congress to accept a programme of ending the interests of the bourgeois-landlord classes and that yet he accepted the leadership of Gandhi. Nehru interpreted the meaning of full independence as bringing the defence, foreign and economic affairs under the control of Indians. He wished the overthrow of the vested interests as "softly" and swiftly as possible. He also insisted that the Indian freedom movement should be linked with international problems.

Gandhi had no objection to all this. He had no objection to Nehru holding any opinion on anything as long as he was willing to accept his leadership and the discipline of the Congress. It was in this background that Gandhi observed: I do not think that Jawaharlal's opinions have taken a clear shape in such a way as to deviate fundamentally from the policies of the Congress. He has firm belief in socialism. But as to how the socialist ideas are to be implemented in Indian situations, his ideas are yet to get crystallized. So, his communistic trends need not frighten any one.

Nehru himself took the attitude that following his talks with Gandhi, the differences of opinion between them need not be exaggerated. Gandhi, on the other hand, stated that the differences between them were rather in the realm of personal approach and attitude than on fundamental ideology. And he authorized Nehru to make declarations in regard to the Congress policies.

Thus, Nehru continued to express publicly support to socialism and communism as before, while he tried in practice to remain loyal to the policies of Gandhi and other Congress leaders.

There was a large section among the ordinary Congress workers who, though distinct from both Nehru and Bose in thinking, were closer to Nehru than to Bose. They formed a separate organization called the Congress Socialist Party.

As the initial step in this direction, a preliminary meeting of the Congress Socialists was held at Patna in May 1934 to coincide with the AICC meeting held there. The meeting reviewed the struggles of workers and peasants which were in progress in the different parts of the country and discussed the programmes of the Congress which was contemplating to withdraw the civil disobedience movement and to enter in legislatures. At the end of the discussions, the conference came to the conclusion that it was time for the socialists inside the Congress to start functioning as a separate political party. It appointed a Drafting Committee with Jayaprakash Narain as convenor to prepare a draft programme and a draft constitution for the new party. The Patna Conference also decided to hold a broader conference at the time and place of the annual session of the Congress in order to adopt the draft documents and to elect a regular Executive Committee.

In fact, even before this conference, provincial units of the Congress Socialist Party had been formed not only in Bombay and Calcutta which were the main centres of activity of communists but also in several other provinces. In Kerala, for example, a conference was held in Calicut under the presidentship of K. Kelappan, in which a committee was formed with C. K. Govindan Nair as President and P. Krishna Pillai as secretary. The present author along with A. Madhavan represented this committee in the Patna Conference.

Although many left Congress workers like Acharya Narendra Dev, Babu Sampurnanand and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya came up as spokespersons of the new party, it was Jayaprakash Narain, M. R. Masani and others who played a vital role in building the party as an organized movement.

Many leaders of the newly reorganized Communist Party and the organization started by M. N. Roy and his followers which had been functioning in many parts of the country attended the Patna Conference and participated in

its deleberations. All of them tried to orientate the new party according to their own ideological perspectives. However, all these attempts ended in failure. Contrary to the proposals put forward by Communists and Royists, the main trend of opinion that emerged in the Conference was that since the Indian National Congress was the principal instrument of revolution in India, all socialists must become members of the Congress and strive to draw that organization to the path of revolution. At the same time, as distinct from the approach of Nehru, the Conference severely criticized the Gandhian programme and the style of work of the Congress under Gandhi's leadership.

The leaders of the party claimed that the Congress Socialist Party was striving to implement the ideas and opinions expressed by Nehru while he was out of jail for a few weeks in the second half of 1933. However, Nehru himself stated later that his approach was distinct from that of the Congress Socialist Party.

Nehru was not prepared for a clash with Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders. He chose a style of functioning of remaining in the Congress and giving its programmes a socialistic form. He wrote to many of his communist and socialists friends stating that since the Congress was the only developed revolutionary oranization despite ideological backwardness, what was needed was to provide it a new revolutionary orientation rather than keeping aloof from it. Therefore he dissented the idea of forming a Socialist Party within the Congress.

At the same time, Nehru felt angry when he learned that the Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution against the newly formed Socialist Party. In a letter he wrote to Gandhi from prison, Nehru severely criticized the resolution and commented the 'amazing ignorance" of those who wrote the resolution on subjects they were dealing with. He added that it was as if the desire to assure the different vested interests was determining the style of functioning of Working Committee.

It was a time when many other trends of thought were emerging among the left-wing Congressmen in addition to those of Nehru, Bose and the Congress Socialist Party just described. And it was the conflict among these different trends of thought and the public opinion which took shape in this conflict that determined the nature of Indian politics in the second half of the 1930s.

IV. CONGRESS NATIONALIST PARTY

The formation of Congress Nationalist Party under the leadership of Pandit Malaviya and M. S. Aney constituted another important event in Indian politics following the suppression of the civil disobedience movement. This was the manifestation of the growth of rightist and the Hindu communal trends in the Congress.

As we have noted earlier, there were reflections of Hinduism as well as that of Islam in the freedom movement right from its inception. These two communal trends fought with each other on the question of the nature of independent India. While the Hindu nationalists visualized the granduer of the ancient Hindu empires and its revival, the Muslim nationalists fought the foreign rulers with nostalgia for the grandeur of the Delhi sultanate and the Mughal empire.

These conflicting conceptions of the nature of Independent India led to the formation of Muslim political parties like the Muslim League, on the one side, and Hindu Maha Sabha, on the other. Although there were occasions of agreement between them, most often there were conflicts and contradictions between them. And, as we know, the British rulers always made clever use of these conflicts and contradictions. It may be recalled that it was mainly with the help of communal and caste politics that the rulers were able to isolate Gandhi, the sole representative of the Congress in the Second Round Table Conference. However, Gandhi's fast and the settlement reached on the question of

Harijan representation in the legislatures helped the Congress to make a small dent in the opposition combine built against the Congress.

The British scheme of representation to the different communities in the Central and provincial legislatures came into force, although with alterations in the case of the Harijans. The British rulers contemplated to introduce constitutional reforms in India by incorporating what was known as the 'Communal Award'. That is, the forthcoming constitutional reforms were fairly gratifying to all the communities except the Hindus for whom they were disappointing. Therefore the question came up before the Congress as to what should be its attitude towards the reforms and whether it should accept or reject them. This would form a major issue in the elections to the Central legislature scheduled to be held before the end of 1934. What stand the Congress should take before approaching the people in the elections?

On this issue there were differences of opinion in the Congress between Pandit Malaviya, Aney and others on the one hand, and the majority in the Congress, on the other. Malaviya and Aney argued for a total rejection of the Communal Award on the ground that it was a scheme designed by the rulers to foster communal feelings and to destroy nationalism. A majority of the Congress leaders agreed with this view. A resolution adopted by the Working Committee which met on 17th and 18th June 1934 in Bombay stated:

> The White paper in no way expresses the will of the people of India, has been more or less condemned by almost all the Indian political parties and falls far short of the Congress goal, if it does not retard the progress towards it. The only satisfactory alternative to the White Paper is a constitution drawn up by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage or as near it as possible, with the power, if necessary, to the important minorities to have their representatives elected exclusively by the electors belonging to such minorities.

Here, the Congress is not rejecting or accepting the Communal Award in isolation, but rejecting the whole scheme of constitutional reforms. With the rejection of the scheme, the Communal Award automatically stands rejected. The resolution continued:

> Among other things, it will be the duty of the Constituent Assembly to determine the method of representation of important minorities and make provisions for otherwise safeguarding their interests.

The Working Committee knew that this was not an easy task, for there were serious differences of opinion among the different communities with regard to the Communal Award. The resolution stated: "The Congress claims to represent equally all the communities composing the Indian nation and therefore, in view of the division of opinion, can neither accept nor reject the Communal Award as long as the division of opinion lasts." The resolution asserted:

> No solution that is not purely national can be propounded by the Congress. But the Congress is pledged to accept any solution falling short of the national, which is agreed to by all the parties concerned and, conversely to reject any solution which is not agreed to by any of the said parties. Judged by this national standard, the Communal Award is wholly unsatisfactory, besides being open to serious objections an other grounds.
>
> It is, however, obvious that the only way to prevent untoward consequences of the Communal Award is to explore ways and means of arriving at an agreed solution and not by any appeal on this essentially domestic question to the British Government or any other outside authority.

This resolution created discontent among the Congressmen with Hindu outlook like Malaviya and Aney. Prolonged discussions took place between them and those representing the majority of the Working Committee. Gandhi himself took the initiative to resolve the differences and put forward certain suggestions. Dissatisfied with all this, Malaviya and Aney resigned from the Congress Parliamentary Board. Aney

who was a member of the Working Committee resigned that position also.

Following, Malaviya and Aney took the initiative to convene a meeting of those Congressmen who were in disagreement with the Working Committee resolution on Communal Award. At the meeting held in Calcutta, a new party called Congress Nationalist Party was formed which decided to call for a country-wide agitation against the reforms scheme including the Communal Award. It also decided to contest the ensuing elections independently in such a way as to materialize its objective. Efforts were also made to make the Congress revise its decision by urging to call for a meeting of the AICC to decide whether to approve or reject the Working Committee resolution.

This appeal was rejected on the ground that the election to the AICC was due, since the party had regained legality and that a newly elected AICC itself was to meet shortly. It was also pointed out that members could, in accordance with the Congress constitution, call for a requisitioned meeting of the AICC in which case necessary actions would be taken to hold a meeting.

Subseqently, a Congress session was held in Bombay towards the end of october 1934, which witnessed a keen debate on the Communal Award. Malaviya and Aney vigorously argued against the Working Committee resolution, but their arguments were rejected with an overwhelming majority.

As the Working Committee resolution neither accepting nor rejecting the Communal Award was approved, the leaders of the Congress Nationalist Party decided to conduct their activities in an organized manner in protest against the decision of the Congress. The Party put up its own candidates to contest the elections to the Central Assembly held in November 1934 and won 11 seats against 44 for the Congress.

There are also certain other facts which are of equal significance. The Congress leadership decided against putting up candidates against Malaviya and Aney. The leadership also decided not to contest the elections in the province of

Sind and in Calcutta City where the Hindu Maha Sabha had considerable following. Thus the Nationalist Party candidates were elected with the indirect support of the Congress. After the election, the Nationalist Party cooperated with the Congress in the Assembly on all issues except the Communal Award.

The emergence of the Congress Nationalist Party demonstrated the weakness of the political line pursued by the bourgeois leadership of the Congress. Despite the claim made by the Congress that it was the organization which equally represented all communities, the rulers had been able to rally most of the non-Hindu communities against it. They could also carry with them for long even the Harijan community among the Hindus which could be won back only by Gandhi's fast and his Harijan upliftment programme.

Now, the Hindus other than the Harijans had raised the banner of protest against the Congress, or rather against its "policy of appeasement of the Muslims". Not only those leaders who had played significant roles in the growth of the Congress and participated in the civil disobedience movement, but also many provinces and regions had registered their protest against the Congress. It had become obvious that a fight against the Muslim League and other parties of the minority communities on the one side, and against Hindu nationalism represented by the Congress Nationalist Party on the other, was a condition for the very existence of the Congress.

The Congress, in fact, handled the different issues such as the Salt Satyagraha, Gandhi-Irwin Pact, the Second Round Table Conference, and Second civil disobedience on the premise that it represented the entire Indian people and that Gandhi was its undisputed leader. But the Second Round Table Conference revealed that the Congress did not have as much influence on the people as it had claimed. The emergence of the Congress Nationalist Party and the policy the Congress had to adopt towards it showed that a considerable

section among the Hindus was against the Congress policy of "appeasement of the Muslims."

Side by side, the position Gandhi had been enjoying in the Congress began to show erosion. The Swaraj Party formed under the leadership of Dr. Ansari and others, the Congress Socialist Party formed by leftist Congressmen, the opinion expressed independently by such outstanding individuals like Vittalbhai Patel, Subhas Bose and Jawaharlal Nehru differing from the Gandhian approach were all indications to it. In other words, different trends of thought and views and different organized political groups began to emerge within the national movement which was once represented solely by the Congress.

The last to appear on the scene was the trend of thought represented by the Congress Nationalist Party led by Malaviya and Aney, whose influence was felt right inside the Congress. This together with the activities of the leaders of the caste and communal politics were instrumental to the division of the country into Indian Union and Pakistan in the wake of the attainment of independence in 1947 and to the tragedies that took place subsequently.

V. ANTI-LEFT GANDHIAN MANIFESTO

In the middle of 1934, a rumour spread througout the country that Gandhi was going to give up even his primary membership and retire from the Congress.

The basis of the rumour was a talk Gandhi had with some of his close friends and associates. Gandhi revealed to them his desire to devote himself to the constructive programme dear to him, rather than continuing the active leadership of the Congress, and to leave the day-to-day political activities to his able and talented colleagues. Gradually the rumour reached the ears of the pressmen and consequently received wide publicity in the newspapers.

As things had become public, Gandhi thought it appropriate to issue a statement explaining the whole issue. Accordingly on 17th September Gandhi issued a lengthy statement which evoked a wide range of emotions among the people. In the statement Gandhi said that he discussed the issue with his colleagues holding different points of view when they had come to attend the Working Committee and Parliamentary Board meetings at Wardha. Some of them disagreed with him on the idea of resignation of his primary membership and some others advised him to retain the membership but keep away from the active leadership of the Congress. Yet some others expressed their opinion in favour of resignation. Gandhi stated that after considering these views he decided to postpone a final decision till after the Congress session which was scheduled to be held in October. With this introduction, Gandhi stated:

> It has appeared to me that there is a growing and vital difference of outlook between many Congressmen and myself. I seem to be going in a direction just opposite of what many of the most intellectual Congressmen would gladly and enthusiastically take if they were not hampered by their unexempled loyalty to me. No leader can expect greater loyalty and devotion than I have receied from intellectually minded Congressmen, even when they have protested and signified their disapproval of the policies I have laid for the Congress. For me any more to draw upon their loyalty and devotion is to put undue strain upon them. Their loyalty cannot blind my eyes to what appear to me to be fundamental differences between the Congress intelligentsia and me.

What were the differences? Hand-spinning and hand-weaving *Khadi* were matters of vital importance to Gandhi. It was an accepted programme of the Congress and one of the important clauses in its constitution. Hence, the Congressmen were formally implementing it. But a considerable section of them really had no faith in this programme and in this clause of the Congress constitution.

For Gandhi the *Khadi* programme could not be considered as an activity in isolation of other questions. It is a part of the constructive programme of giving a new life to the decaying and the decadent village industries, and with it, working for the upliftment of Harijans and for Hindu-Muslim unity. The *Khadi* programme occupies a central place in his political perspective of developing the organized strength of the people and making their struggles non-violent. According to Gandhi, since the Congress had accepted it as a programme, Congressmen used to implement it. But they had no full faith in it. For him, however, it is the life blood.

It is clear that this is a new version of rift between Gandhi's disciples and other Congress leaders that had developed a decade ago following the withdrawal of the civil disobedience movement of 1921-22. But there is a significant difference between the situation prevailing then and now. Then it was mainly the Swaraj Party that had come up against the Gandhian leadership. But Gandhi's outlook and programme were seemingly more revolutionary as compared to theirs. Then the clash was between Gandhi who, wiping out the earlier moderate politics, led the Congress along the path of direct action and the Swaraj Party which was trying to bring the Congress back to the moderate politics. Leftist political outlook including that of socialism and communism was very weak at that time.

By 1934, however, a solid socialist group had emerged, in the Congress itself. Also, outside this group, there was a considerable number of Congressmen with leftist outlook. Now, two principal groups had emerged, a new version of the old Swaraj Party, and a socialist group and other left-oriented individuals. Consequently, the struggle now was between these main groups among Gandhi's colleagues on the one hand, and Gandhi's disciples on the other.

Among these, Gandhi's attitude towards the socialists is meaningful. In his statement Gandhi said:

I have welcomed the formation of the socialist group. Many of them are respected and self-sacrificing workers.

With all this, I have fundamental differences with them as the programme published in their authorised pamphlets. But I would not, by reason of the moral pressure I may be able to axert, suppress the spread of ideas propounded in their literature. I may not interfere with the free expression of these ideas, however distasteful some of them may be to me. If they gain ascendancy in the Congress, as they well may, I cannot remain in the Congress. For to be in active opposition should be unthinkable. Though identified with many organizations during a long period of public service, I have never accepted that position.

Clearly, what was disturbing Gandhi mainly was the growing strength of socialist thinking and the general socialist outlook within the Congress. Besides, he also mentioned specifically certain other things in his statement. One of them concerned the princely states. Gandhi had been maintaining all along the view that the Congress should not interfere with the internal affairs of the princely states, meaning thereby that the Congress should not support the people's struggle against the autocratic rule in these states. A powerfull movement aganist this had been growing within the Congress. One of the issues raised by the Congress Socialist Party was the attitude of the Congress towards the struggles for democracy in the princely states. Gandhi said: "I have given many an anxious hour to the question but I have not been able to alter my view."

Gandhi also pointed out that there was a serious difference of opinion between him and many of his colleagues on the question of untouchability:

Even on untouchability, my method of approach is perhaps different from that of many, if not most Congressmen. For me it is a deeply religious and moral issue. Many think that it was a profound error for me to have disturbed the course of civil resistance struggle by taking up the question in the manner, and at the time, I did. I feel that I would have been untrue to myself if I had taken any other course.

On the question of the objective of 'full independence' also Gandhi's views differed from those of his colleagues. Gandhi considered full independence an idea which was not strictly definable. For him, full independence achieved by giving up the means of truth and non-violence which he held fast was no independence at all. He believed that the objective of full independence was inseparable from the means based on truth and non-violence. Many of his colleagues, on the other hand, believed that any means was acceptable to a desirable objective.

Each of these issues was raised in the Congress by Congress Socialists, Communists and other leftists. Obviously, Gandhi was disturbed at the growing trend of thought that an uncompromising struggle in which the people of the princely states should be brought in should be conducted against British imperialism, crossing the bounds of non-violence. Since it was the Congress Socialist Party as a group in the congress, which was working with such a perspective, he simply mentioned that Party in particular and said that he would not be able to continue in the Congress if the Congress Socialists gained ascendency in the Congress. What disturbed him was not the general socialist thinking, but the increasing readiness for the struggle and the programme in accordance with it.

Gandhi was unable to get along with the programme of parliamentary activities, either. His statement added:

> Though the author of Non-cooperation, I am convinced that in the present circumstances of the country and in the absence of any general scheme of civil resistance, a parliamentary Party within the Congress is a necessary part of any programme that may be framed by the Congress, but there are sharp differences of opinion among us on that point. The force with which I urged the programme at the All-India Congress Committee meeting in Patna, I know, oppressed many of our best colleagues, but they hesitated to act according to their own convinction.

Needless to say, here also Gandhi blessed the right-wing Congressmen against the liftists. The right-wing appeared on the scene with the programme of contesting the elections as part of the parliamentary work, fighting the parliamentary battle in the legislatures and utilizing that opportunity to bargain with the British for 'full independence' which "was not strictly definable". As opposed to this, the leftists were striving to put up a fight inside the Congress to rally the entire people including those in the princely states in an uncompromising struggle against the British.

Gandhi placed the resignation proposal before the people through the statement which expressed favour towards the former and opposition to the latter.

It is doubtful if the AICC would have adopted the parliamentary programme, had it not been "forcefully urged upon" by Gandhi. Gandhi's direct support was also needed to get the decision of the AICC approved by the Congress session. Also, Gandhi's leadership was essential until the next Congress session for the right-wing to gain a sure victory on the several issues powerfully raised by Communists, Socialists and other leftists.

But, once this programme was adopted and the Congress won the forthcoming elections, these two sections in the Congress could be left free to confront each other; Gandhi's intervention in it would not serve any useful purpose; so it will be better to leave them free to fight each other. This was the idea.

Even in this fight, the existing organizational form of the Congress was not favourable to the right-wing. For Gandhi who had made the moderate-led Congress to adopt the line of mass politics, had built up an organization to suit that purpose. Any Indian citizen who accepted the objectives of the Congress and paid the membership subscription of four annas was entitled to become a member of the Congress and all the Congress Committees from bottom to top were to be elected by these members. It was on these principles that Gandhi re-organized the Congress. This organizational

form was then fully suited to the Gandhian politics, the characteristic features of which were non-violent mass struggle and attempts to negotiate as an integral part of it. However, the emergence and growth of the left views among the Congress ranks and the masses of the people constituted a powerful challenge to the Gandhian ideology and style of work. Now the situation was such that the mass organization which Gandhi had utilized for over a decade was likely to cross the bounds set by his ideology and objectives. This was the apprehension that Gandhi expressed through the phrase "If they gain ascendency in the Congress, as they well may".

Therefore, in the statement of 17th September, Gandhi proposed certain resolutions to be placed before the Subject Committee in order to "test the feelings of the Congress" on the points he had touched upon in the statement. The final decision he would take on the question of resignation from the Congress would depend on the decision of the Congress session on the points he had raised.

In brief, Gandhi's statement was a manifesto, couched in the language of morality and religiocity characteristic of him, against the leftist movement which was rapidly growing inside the Congress. Consequently, the Bombay session of the Congress in October 1934 turned out to be a scene of confrontation between the left and right within the Congress.

VI. THE BOMBAY SESSION

Immediately before the commencement of the Bombay session of the Congress and in the same venue, the founding conference of the Congress Socialist Party was held. The conference approved the policy statements and constitution prepared by the Drafting Committee which was appointed at the Patna conference held in May.

Explaining the aims and objects of the Congress Socialist Party, the policy statement made it clear that it was a

Party of socialists working within the Congress and striving to draw the Congress to the path of socialism. Therefore, it was the task of the Congress Socialist to become member of the Congress and fight for socialist ideas inside the Congress, while, at the same time, working in trade unions, peasant organizations and such other class organizations and participating in the agitations and struggles being conducted by these organizations.

That is, the Congress Socialists must work keeping it in mind that, politically, Congress was their main field of activities.

There were large numbers of Congress Socialists among the delegates to the Bombay session of the Congress from most states. This was true of the members elected to the AICC also. About a half or even more of the number of delegates from Kerala, United Provinces and certain other provinces were Congress Socialists.

For this and also for the reason that intense debates were going on across the country on the 17th September statement of Gandhi, one of the important subjects discussed in the Congress Socialist conference was the attitude to be taken at the Congress session. In addition to the Congress Socialists, certain other leftist groups also discussed the attitudes the respective groups had to take in the Congress session. The leaders of some of these groups, particularly those of Communist Party and the Royist group, had participated in the Congress Socialist conference.

In addition, there were independent left-wing Congressmen raising voice against the Gandhian ideology and the right-wing leadership which was eager to enter in legislatures. Efforts were made to unify the activities of all these parties, groups and individuals and build a powerful fighting front against the rightist leadership both in the AICC and in the Congress session. And these efforts yielded considerable success.

Gandhi's statement of 17th September was a sharp weapon that the right-wing could readily use against the

left. The organizational proposals contained in Gandhi's statement came up before the Congress session in the form of amendments to the Congress constitusion. Naturally, each of these amendments was keenly debated both in the AICC and in the general session.

Since the right-wing leadership backed by Gandhi had commanded a majority, the amendments to the constitution and the resolutions embodying these ideas were adopted. However, there was a sizeable minority against these amendments and resolutions. Besides, as the debates and the voting pattern indicated, some acknowledged leaders were sympathetic to the left.

The amendments to the Congress constitution was based on Gandhi's conclusion that corruption had crept in the organizational work of the Congress and that the existing conferences and committees were not suited to the smooth functioning of the organization. It may be noted that Gandhi had pointed in the statement to "the growing corruption in our ranks."

The basis of this complaint was the widespread practice of spending money to enrol bogus members in order to capture the organization. Besides, the Congress had become a chaotic organization as a result of unrestrained enrolment of membership, and the way of selecting delegates to conferences and forming Congress committees at different levels. The aim of Gandhi and the right-wing leadership was to overcome this defects and reorganize the Congress through these amendments.

The Congress Socialists and other left-wing Congressmen forcefully opposed these moves in the AICC and in the general conference.

The leftists could not, of course, deny the existence of bogus membership and the resulting corruption in some places. They, however, pointed out that this was only a half-truth. Although it might provide opportunity for the rich to capture the organization, the prevailing organizational set up also provided opportunity to the masses of workers,

peasants and other working people to participate actively in the activities of the Congress. It also enabled the leftists who had earned the confidence of the masses through their work among the masses to occupy prominent positions in the Congress committees at various levels.

There were certain provincial committees, as that of Kerala, and district committees in which the leftists had a majority. That was why Gandhi, visualizing the possibility of the socialists gaining "ascendency in the Congress, as they may well", emphatically stated in his statement that he could not remain in the Congress. The leftist Congressmen including the Congress Socialists argued in one voice that the purpose of bringing amendments to the Congress constitution was to prevent that "danger".

The first amendment to the constitution was to substitute the phrase "truthful and non-violent" for "legitimate and peaceful" in article I of the existing constitution which read: "The objective of Indian National Congress is the attainment of Poorna Swaraj (comple independence) by all legitimate and peaceful means."

On the surface ,it may appear that Gandhi's aim was to make the Congress accept his spiritual-religious outlook. But the leftists regarded that the targets of Gandhi's attack were, in reality, the method of agitations and struggles of workers, peasants and other toiling masses and the outlook of the leftist parties which were leading these agitations and struggles. According to Gandhi, in the mass struggles of 1921-22 and 1932-33, there were many incidents which went against the principle of non-violence. Gandhi had often complained that the congress leaders did not stand by him in opposing such acts.

Gandhi had stated that non-violence that ought to be a "creed" was only a "policy" for "the majority of Congressmen". The left wing Congressmen argued that Gandhi and the right-wing leadership led by him were striving to change the situation by making the Congress organization adopt non-violence as a creed applicable to all Congressmen

and that if this were adopted by the organization, the Congress would lose the status of a political organization based on mass struggles.

The second and third amendments were of similar nature. According to the constitution in force, any adult who accepted the object of the Congress and paid four annas was entitled to become a member of the Congress. It was these "four anna members" who elected the Congress committees at all levels and also the delegates to the provincial and all- India conferences. In its place, Gandhi suggested certain amendments incorporating qualifications restraining the rights of members to vote and get elected, as follows:

> The second amendment would be to replace the four annas franchise by the delivery by every member to a Congress depot of 2,000 rounds (one round equals to four feet) per month of well twisted even yarn of not less than 15 counts spun by himself or herself...The third amendment I should propose would be that no one shall be entitled to vote at any Congress election whose name has not been on the Congress register continuously for six months without default, and who has not been a habitual wearer wholly of khadar for that period."

These proposals also came up in the form of amendments to the constitution in the AICC and the general session. Naturally, they also came under attack form the left. They argued that it was wrong to prescribe the Gandhian code of behaviour as qualification for the members of an organization conducting agitations and struggles against the British rule and the vested interests of landlords and others who support the rule, rather than the courage and the sense of self-sacrifice they exhibit while participating in the struggles. However, as in the case of other amendments, these were also adopted with Gandhi's support.

But the most important amendment which effected distortion in the nature of the Congress as a mass organization was one which was intended to reduce the number of members in the Congress Committees at different levels and also

in the number of delegates attending the Congress session. This amendment, if adopted, would help only to extinguish the spirit and enthusiasm of the masses and tens of thousands of Congress workers who were entering the organization, to the advantage of the right-wing leadership. So, the left-wing fought a fierce battle against this amendment, too.

Although the AICC and the Congress session adopted all these amendments, Gandhi stood firm on his decision to resign form the Congress. Hence, the Congress session passed the following resolution.

> This Congress reiterates its confidence in the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and is emphatically of the opinian that he should reconsider his decision to retire from the Congress. But inasmuch as all efforts to persuade him in that behalf have failed, this Congress, while reluctantly accepting his decision places on record its deep sense of gratitude for the unique service rendered by him to the Nation and notes with satisfaction his assurance that his advice and guidance will be available to the Congress whenever necessary.

This was an unprecedented event in the history of the Congress. Gandhi who gave leadership to the Congress for about a decade and a half would cease to be formally associated with it. But the Congress leadership could approach him whenever they felt that his advice and leadership were needed. He would gladly accept such a request. And the leaders would certainly seek his advice and leadership whenever a serious problem arose before them, for they were the kind of people who had got all the amendments proposed by Gandhi in his statement adopted by the AICC and the Congress session.

Why did Gandhi decide finally to resign and retire from the Congress even after the Congress accepted all the proposals put forward by him? Why did the right-wing leadership accept, reluctantly though, his resignation?

In order to find an answer to these questions, it is necessary to consider two other resolutions adopted by the Bombay session of the Congress.

One of these resolutions relates to the decision to form All-India Village Industries Association (Gramodyog Sangh) in addition to the existing Spinners' Association (Charkha Sangh) and the Harijan Seva Sangh.

The second resolution was intended to give permanency to the Congress Parliamentary Board which was originally instituted as an emergancy measure, and to make it an integral part of the Congress organization. These resolutions together would effect a division of labour between Gandhi and his disciples on the one hand, and those right-wing Congress leaders who wanted to engage themselves fully in parliamentary activities on the other. That is, the 'constructive activities' through Gramodyog Sangh, Charkha Sangh and Harijan Seva Sangh would go on under the dircet leadership of Gandhi, while the other leaders would be free to carry on with the political-organizational activities, including parliamentary activities. Whenever need arises for coducting *satyagraha* or other forms of direct actions, Gandhi would appear on the scene.

There is yet another question. What was the need for such a division of labour between Gandhi and the right-wing Congressmen? In order to find an answer to this question, it is necessary to keep in mind the truth that the left forces in the Congress was growing and had started posing danger to the right-wing leadership.

The right-wing leadership had already gained the necessary strength to "keep the leftists at their proper place" even without the direct leadership of Gandhi and the Bombay session had done the job of reorganizing the Congress in such a way as to make use of this position against the left. If the leftists continue to gain strength despite all this, then Gandhi would appear on the scene. We shall see later on that this was exactly what had happened when Subhas Bose was elected president of the congress in 1939 as the candidate of the leftists.

Thus, the Bombay session entrusted the rightist leadership with the day-to-day activities and leadership providing it an opportunity to confront the left without the direct intervension of Gandhi. The right-wing leaders including Gandhi were convinced that these were the effective ways of facing the leftists.

VII. ELECTIONS TO CENTRAL ASSEMBLY

Immediately after the Bombay session, leaders and the delegates to the session had to face elections to the Central Assembly. The entire organization had to be geared up by drawing into the field tens of thousands of workers who had faced imprisonment and police repression for having waged a struggle for over two and a half years to show that their acts of self-sacrifice did not go in vain.

Not only the Congress but other parties and the government looked upon the elections as an opportunity to convince the people of the correctness of the respective positions taken by them and to win people's support. The Hindu nationalists led by Malaviya and Anney who had left the Congress and founded the Nationalist Party, and the Muslim nationalists led by Jinnah were in agreement with the Congress on all issues except the government's decision on communal representation.

On the contrary, the Justice Party in South India and similar parties in other provinces, which were opposed to the mass struggles led by the Congress and supported by the British, were determined to defeat the Congress in the elections. They were rendered all assistance at the official level. For example, the election in the constituency reserved for merchants of South India represented an officially supported challenge to the Congress. Shanmugom Chetty was the merchants candidate who had close links with British capitalists sacrificing the interests of even the Indian bourgeoisie. Therefore it was essential for the Congress to defeat him. The Congress nominated Swami Venkatachalam Chetty as its

official candidate. The nationalists threw the entire weight behind him and the supporters of the British behind Shanmugom Chetty. In the fierce election battle, the Congress candidate was elected.

Similarly, the candidates nominated by the Congress and those of the supporters of the British confronted each other all over the country. Although the Congress registered great success, in Bengal the candidates of the Congress Nationalist Party were returned in large numbers. Similarly, in Panjab and in the constituencies reserved for Muslims in other provinces, independent candidates led by Jinnah won a majority of seats. Thus, the combined strength of the Congress, the Congress Nationalist Party and the independents under Jinnah constituted a majority of elected members in the Central Assembly. They won 44, 11 and 19 seats, respectively, while three seats were won by independents who were not attached to any of the three groups. In addition, there were 11 members representing the Europeans and 13 nominated official members, in the Assembly. Thus, against 53 European, nominated official and non-official members, there were 74 members belonging to the Congress, the Nationalist Party and the independent group led by Jinnah which differed with each other only on the question of communal representation. That is, in the Central Assembly which was constituted after the elections, those forces which were determined to defeat the anti-Indian policies of the British had a formal majority.

Since the only thing which prevented these forces from joining hands aganist the policies of the British rulers was the difference over communal representation. efforts were made to resolve this issue. On 23rd January 1935, Congress President Rajendra Prasad and the Muslim League President Jinnah met and discussed the subject. These talks, however, did not bring any positive result. Therefore, the three groups which took a unified attitude on many issues and cast vote in unison aganist the government, took mutually opposing attitudes on many other issues.

A very important issue had come up in the mean time, which made the mutually opposing positions of the three groups pertinent. We have referred earlier to the constitutional reforms Bill introduced in the British Parliament incorporating certain proposals put forward by the government, which was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee. The report of the Committee was published a few days after the elections to the Center Assembly. Since this report was to determine the final shape of the Bill, it became incumbent on each party and group to explain its position in relation to the report.

The Congress Working Committee which met in December 1934 examined the report and decided to reject it. The Committee was of the opinion that in several respects the report was worse than the draft proposals put forward by the government earlier. Therefore, the Working Committee demanded formation of a Constituent Assembly to draw up a constitution for India in place of the constitutional reforms proposals designed to perpetuate the exploitation of India by the British through their continued domination. Consequently, the Working Committee directed that it was the responsibility of the newly elected Congress members in the Assembly to get the Joint Parliamentary Committee report rejected by the Assembly and to raise the demand for the formation of a new Constituent Assembly.

The Nationalist Party and the Jinnah group were in agreement with the Congress on one important aspect of this issue. But, as stated earlier, both were oppossed to the Congress, though from different angles, on the question of communal representation. Besides, Jinnah was not prepared to join hands with the Congress in demanding a constituent assembly. The results of these divergent stands found expression in the proceedings of the Central Assembly.

Bhulabhai Desai, leader of the Congress members in the Assembly introduced a resolution in the Assembly rejecting the Joint Parliamentary Committee's report. This resolution was rejected only because the nominated official

and non-official members voted against it. Excluding the European members, Congressmen constituted a majority (44 out of 77) among the elected members. The government had given direction to the nominated members to vote against the resolution sponsored by the Congress members.

Jinnah also had introduced a separate resolution on this subject. The opening section of the resolution sought the approval of the Assembly to the scheme of communal representation despite the inadequacies, until an alternative scheme was proposed in agreement with the different communities concerned. Although the Congress and the Congress Nationalist members opposed the resolution, it was adopted by Assembly with the support of nominated members.

Jinnah's resolution contained two more sections. With the support of the Congress and Nationalist Party, these sections were adopted by the Assembly with 74 votes aganist 53.

One of these sections was concerned with provisions relating to provincial administration contained in the reforms proposal. The resolution characterized these provisions most unsatisfactory and disappointing. The resolution also pointed out that the proposal contained several objectionable provisions such as the institution of Upper House in the provinces, special emergancy powers to the Governor and those with regard to the police and intelligence department, as a result of which the control of the legislature on the executive would be ineffective. The resolution emphatically stated that unless these provisions were removed from the proposals, it would not satisfy any section of Indian public opinion.

The other section in the resolution relates to the administration at the Centre or the All-India Federation. Characterizing the provisions relating to this as "fundamentally bad" the resolution recommended to the Indian Government not to proceed with legislation based on the proposal. It also recommended to examine the ways of establishing a really and fully responsible government exclusive to British India (i. e.,

excluding the princely states) and to take all necessary steps without delay to "review the whole position in consultation with Indian opinion".

With this it became clear that, although there were differences of opinion on the question of communal representation, the entire India bourgeoisie was standing unitedly behind the struggle against the constitutional reforms proposed by the British government. The government spokesmen themselves were convinced of the fact that the main thrust of Jinnah's resolution was against the British rule.

Thus, the floor of the Assembly became a scene of clash between the government an the one hand, and the opposition comprising the Congress, Congress Nationalist Party and the Jinnah group on the other. However, communal representation remained as an issue which was helpful for the rulers to divide the opposition.

The united action of the opposition was not confined to the question of constitutional reforms, it also defeated the government on a number of other issues in the first session of the new Assembly. The debate and voting on the railway budget deserve special mention here in this connection. Bhulabhai Desai moved a resolution rejecting the railway budget presented by the government. The Nationalist Party and the Jinnah group voted for the resolution which was adopted with 74 votes aganist 47. In another voting on the railway budget, the opposition mustered as many as 81 votes against 44 in favour of the government.

A number of other issues in which the bourgeoisie was interested also came up before the Assembly and on all such issues the opposition stood united. This shattered the hopes of the rulers to keep the Assembly subservient to them by utilizing the differences that existed among the bourgeois leadership on the question of communal representation. It became clear that despite the differences, the bourgeois leadership would remain united and fight to protect its class interests and that the legislature would be utilized fully for that purpose.

At the same time, it also became clear that the claim made by Gandhi at the time of Salt Satyagraha and in the Second Round Table Conference that Congress was the sole representative of the Indian people was false. The elections and the work in the Assembly showed that the differences on the question of communal representation not only continued to persist in the bourgeois ledership but had spread to the masses. Further, as evident from the results of the elections, both the Hindus and the Muslims in the Muslim majority provinces were against the Congress. As shown by the proceedings of the Assembly, the Hindu-Muslim communal outlook represented by the Nationalist Party and the Jinnah group had become a challenge which the Congress had to face both inside and outside the legislature.

It must be stated spicifically here that there was another aspect of the growing co-operation among the Congress, the Nationalist Party and the Jinnah group. This was the fact that the politics they were handling was not one of mass struggle but of consultations and compromises at the level of legislature and in the areas related to it.

The Jinnah group had no tradition of participation even in the people's struggles started by Gandhi in the 1920-21 period, leave alone the tradition of the new leftist political tendencies. The leaders of the Nationalist Party, on the other hand, had never identified themselves with Gandhian programmes of struggle. They were handling politics with the outlook of the old 'moderatism'. What is more, even the Congress members in the legislature were those who had been striving to strengthen the right-wing forces against the leftist political outlook that had began to emerge within their own organization. That is, what was found in the new Assembly was a united opposition bloc of the bourgeois leadership working in the legislature and in other related areas in order to protect its own class interests.

A confrontation between these forces and the left forces which were steadily growing in the Congress became inevitable. And what was witnessed in the period between 1939 and

the outbreak of the Second World War was this confrontation. As we are going to see, this assumed at a certain stage in 1939 as an internal crisis in the Congress.

The elections in November 1934 and the subsequent events eluded this confrontation at least for the time being. The tactics of inflicting defeats one after another on the rulers in the legislature inspired the people. For the Congress workers and the people at large who had been facing repressions continuously for more than a couple of years, the struggle inside the legislature lent happiness and satisfaction. At the same time, as we are going to see in the following chapter, the left forces were also growing.

17

TOWARDS THE LEFT AGAIN

I. TOWARDS ANTI-IMPERIALIST UNITY

As evident in the decisions taken by the Working Committee meeting held in the middle of 1935, a vast change had come about in the policies of the Congress leadership following the adoption of electoral programme by the Congress. One of the resolutions adopted by the Committee concerned the directive as to how the Independence Day should be observed in the new situation.

Earlier, the Independence Day was being observed in an atmosphere charged with intense anti-imperialist feelings. For instance, it was first observed in 1930 as a preparation for the coming Salt Satyagraha and in the subsequent years it was observed as part of the ongoing civil disobedience struggle. In constrast to this, it is now going to be observed for the first in a manner unrelated to any such struggle. Thus, the Working Committee appealed to the Congress

workers not to violate any of the existing laws and not to observe *hartal* as part of the observance of the Independence Day.

The Working Committee, however, did not stop at that. It may be recalled that in December 1934, the Committee had directed the Congress members in the Central Assembly to argue vigorously against the reforms proposals of the British government and also to act unitedly, to the extent possible, with the Nationalist Party and the Jinnah group for that purpose. Now the Working Committee was asking the Congressmen to utilize the Full Independence Day observance to get the people adopt a resolution containg not a bit of this politics.

In place of the earlier practice of inspiring the people to take the Full Independence Day pledge by exposing the British rule and exploitation and calling upon the people to rise against them, the Working Committee this time asked the people to take a pledge to implement the Gandhian constructive programme of communal unity, prohibition of liquor, hand-spinning and promotion of village industries and using exclusively *Khadi* and other products of village industries, ending untouchability, helping the poor, etc. These were considered as a means to show the essential qualities of truth and non-violence.

While directing the people to implement this typical Gandhian programme, the resolution included in a formal way the preliminary: "We remind ourself on this, the solemn national day, that Complete Independence is our birthright and we shall not rest till we have achieved it."

There was another equally important resolution. There was an official announcement that the year 1935 was to be celebrated as the Silver Jubilee of "His Brittanic Majesty's reign" in India as elsewhere in the empire. Therefore, the question whether Congressmen should take part in these celebrations came up before the Working Committee. A resolution adopted in this connection stated: "The Congress has and can have nothing but good wishes for the personal well-

being of His Majesty, but the Congress cannot ignore the fact that the rule in India with which His Majesty is naturally identified has been a positive hindrance to the political, moral and material growth of the nation. It now threatens to culminate in a constitution which, if enforced, promises to exploit the nation, to drain her of what she still possesses of wealth and to harden her political subjection as has perhaps never been attempted before. It is, therefore, impossible for the Working Committee to advise any participation in the forthcoming celebration." The resolution added: "At the same time the Working Committee has no desire, by hostile demonstrations, to wound the susceptibilities of Englishmen and others who will want to take part in the celebrations." That is, the people concerned should remain "satisfied with mere abstention from events" connected with the celebration.

The resolution urged upon the authorities and responsible Englishmen to "recognise and appreciate the honest and inevitable attitude of the Working Committee" and to "refraim from unnecessarily wounding national self-respect by compelling, directly or indirectly, participation in the forthcoming celebrations".

Considering the political background in which the Working Committee took these dicisions, it is not difficult to discern that the leadership was acting against the intense feelings of the masses and the ordinary Congressmen. Many prominent Congressmen including Nehru, Bose and Gaffar Khan were in prison. Thousands of Congress Workers were similarly in prisons in Bengal and the Frontier Province. The law muzzling the press and other emergency laws were being effectively enforced.

The Congress leadership was being compelled to adopt resolutions protesting against these repressive actions and to call upon the people to observe a protest day. The observance of the Protest Day in accordance with its call in the different parts of the country came under the heavy attack of the government. The authorities were, on the other hand,

imposing the reforms proposal which was unacceptable even to those sections of the Congressmen working in accordance with the parliamentary programme and, on the other, unleashing repression on tens of thousands of ordinary Congress workers and leaders who were not prepared to lower the banner of the anti-British struggle.

In this atmosphere, popular feelings against the right-wing Congress leadership began to grow both inside and outside the Congress and the socialists, Communists and other leftists tried to give these feelings an organized form. We have already seen that these groups came together against the policies of Gandhi and other right-wing leaders in the Bombay session. But they knew that uniting the left-wing Congressmen against the rightist tendency in the Congress alone was not sufficient to solve the problem. It may be noted that the confrontation between the left-wing and right-wing in the Congress was taking place at a time when the tide of new struggles was rising high in the country. The leftist groups also participated actively in these struggles and gave them a unified leadership.

At the time when the Congress leadership decided to withdraw the civil disobedience movement and adopt the electoral programme, the working class movement in the country was preparing for action. The beginning of 1934 witnessed a new movement among the workers of textile mills in Bombay and several other places. In April and May, more than 100,000 workers went on strike in many places like Bombay, Kanpur, Delhi and Nagpur. After holding out for two months they were forced to return to work without getting any of their demands conceded on account of a number of factors like government repression, split in the trade union movement and the acute unemployment prevailing in the country.

Although the strike ended in failure, it was of historical importance to the Indian working class movement. The AITUC and the National Trade Union Federation which was broken away from the former a few years back

came together to conduct the strike. Besides, the Red Trade Union Federation (another break away group of AITUC) led by Communists, the Royist group which was opposed to the Communists at the national and international levels, the Congress socialists who were just entering the trade union movement in an organized manner and other leftist Congressmen rallied together behind the strike movement. Thus, all the political groups inside and outsids the Congress came together above party rivalries and conflicts to organize the struggle based on the day-to-day demands of the workers.

This unity was not, however, confiend to organizing the struggle. Towards the end of 1934, the AITUC, the Red TUC, the National Trade Union Federation and the Congress Socialist Party reached an agreement to conduct anti-imperialist demonstrations throughout the country. It was an attempt made to transform the working class which was launching strikes and other forms of struggles for their economic demands into an organized mass force based on anti-imperialist politics and also to bring other anti-imperialists outside the working class into the movement. Needless to say, this was also an attempt to draw those Congressmen who were moving towards the left against the policies of their right-wing leadership, into the trade union movement.

It must be stated specifically that, thanks to these efforts, in April 1935 the Red TUC again merged with the AITUC which became an organization in which the Communists, the Royist groups and the Congress socialists worked shoulder to shoulder, leaving only the National Trade Union Federation founded by the moderates like N. M Joshi and V. V. Giri outside the AITUC.

Though not as organized as the working class movement, a new upsurge was discernible among the peasants also. Among those who organized this movement, there was a large number of Congressmen.

Peasants' agitations were getting strong in certain provinces like the United Provinces from as early as 1922, in which prominent Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru

had played important roles. From 1939 peasant agitations had spread to many more provinces as part of the civil disobedience movement. The ordinary Congress workers who had imbibed experience of these struggles continued to work in the peasant movement even after the withdrawal of the civil disobedience. A section of them turned Congress Socialists and others remained as Congressmen but worked in cooperation with Communists and Socialists. As a result, peasant movements became strong in U.P., Bihar, Bengal, Andhra and other provinces in which the *zamindari* system was prevalent and in regions like Malabar in which the *Janmi* system was in vogue.

While these developments were taking place in the peasant front, a conferance of the re-united AITUC was held. In the midst of this conference, an agreement was reached between the AITUC and the Congress Socialist Party, according to which the letter would strive to make the Congress accept the demands of workers. Further, the AITUC conference decided to organize peasant unions and to render assistance to workers in the princely states.

Thus, a base was laid in 1934-35 for the different politically oriented groups to work together for a common cause. The Communists, Socialists and other leftists in the Congress not only opposed the anti-struggle policy of the right-wing leadership of the Congress on its own platform, they also identified themselves fully with workers, peasants and the people of the princely states in their struggles in such a way as to give substance to this opposition.

There were, of course, differences on many fundamental issues among the different political groups striving to build an anti-imperialist front, which were, in fact, reflected in their practical activities. But on many other issues there was unity among them. On all such issues they stood united against the right-wing leadership of the Congress. For instance, the Congress leadership claimed that it was the only organization which represented the anti-imperialist movement in the country, and as such, argued that the workers and

peasants must join the Congress to strengthen it. They strongly contended that even if trade unions and peasant unions were to be formed to take care of their economic problems, these organization should be subservient to the Congress. Communists, Socialists and other leftists did not agree to this.

The leftists, on the other hand, held the view that if the workers and peasants were to be able to defend their interests, they should form their own class organizations independent of the Congress in which capitalists and landlords could gain ascendancy. They were led by the perspective of fostering class organizations independent of the Congress and independently building an anti-imperialist front by coordinating their activities. They realized that if this had to be successfully carried out, a party based on socialism or Communism had to be founded and strengthened. But the Congress was hostile towards to the ideologies of socialism and communism. The position taken by Gandhi that he would leave the Congress if the Socialists gained ascendancy in it was not his own, but it was the position of all the disciples of Gandhi and of the Congress leadership including those who were upholding parliamentary programme. Therefore, they naturally felt anxious at the trade union movement passing into the hands of the leftists and at the growth of a left-oriented peasant movement. They looked upon the anti-imperialist unity of these different mass organizations and the left political groups as the unity of the political forces which, in the final analysis, were against the right-wing leadership of the Congress.

This evaluation was correct, because the efforts being made by the leftist to build an anti-imperialist united front was a challenge to the policies of the Congress which decided to drop the programme of anti-imperialist demonstrations from the Independend Day observance in 1935 and to simply abstain from the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the rein of the British Emperor without

wounding "the susceptibilities of Englishmen and others who will want to take part in the celebrations".

II. PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT IN PRINCELY STATES

As we have referred to earlier, one of the problems that led to the confrontation between the right-wing Congress leadership and the leftists inside and outside the Congress relates to the establishment of democracy in the princely states. This problem came to be hotly debated in the AICC meetings. The Working Committee which met towards the end of July 1935 issued a statement on this problem which was raised in the AICC meeting held earlier in April.

The statement began with a declaration that the Congress recognized the inherent right of the people in the princely states to Swaraj no less than the people in British India. It pointed out that the Congress was in favour of establishment of responsible government in the states and had appealed to the princes to establish such governments in their states and to guarantee fundamental rights of citizens, like freedom of speech and press. The statement also declared sympathy and support in their legitimate and peaceful struggle for the attainment of full responsible government and that it stood by that declaration.

However, the statement continued:

> It should be understood however that the responsibility and burden of carrying on that struggle within the states must necessarily fall on the States people themselves. The Congress can exercise moral and friendly influence upon the States and this it is bound to do wherever possible. The Congress has no other power under existing circumstances although the people of India whether under the British, the princes or any other power are geographically and historically one and indivisible.

Indisputably, whether it is in the princely states or in the British provinces, the responsibility and burden of carrying on the struggle for democracy rest with the people of the respective states or provinces. In the case of British provinces, no one considers the leadership and assistance given by the Congress to the people in their struggles as "interference in the internal affairs of the provinces". The left parties pointed out that the struggle being conducted by the people of the princely states which the Congress described as "geographically and historically one and indivisible" was the anti-imperialist struggle of the entire people of India.

In fact, democratic movements in the princely states were growing without "interference" form the Congress. Though the Congress had excluded the princely states from the Salt Satyagrha of 1930 and the civil disobedience of 1932, the waves of anti-imperialist movement were rising there also. In states like Kashmir and Alwar, for example, struggles against the autocratic rule had started emerging. A new generation of political workers who had been thrown up in these movement had started entering in Indian politics co-operating with Congress and but expressing disagreement on the policies pursued by the Congress with regard to the princely states. The Communists, Congress Socialists and other leftists not only expressed their sympathy for these people but also the willingness to render them all help and co-operation.

Before going into the details of this new upsurge, it is necessary to describe briefly the general political situation that led to it. The scheme of All-India federation consisting of the British Indian provinces and princely states, which was devised by the British to oppose the national demand of full independence was accepted by the Princes and they expressed their readiness to join the federation.

Realizing that this was a dangerous scheme, the nationalists in British India demanded responsible government separately for British India. We have referred to earlier a resolution to this effect adopted by the Central Assembly

with the combined strength of the Congress, the Nationalist Party and the Jinnah group.

However, the reaction of the people of princely states was different. They began to demand establishment of democracy in the princely states thereby making the entire Federation democratic, ending the disparity between the British provinces and the princely states. Efforts were made in many states to convene people's conferences to build public opinion behind this demand.

As a reflection of this development, demands had been raised by some quarters to introduce amendments to the constitutional reforms proposal relating to the relation of the princely states to the Federation. On this demand, the July statement of the Working Committee which has been referred to above pointed out that since the Congress had totally rejected the reforms proposal, it could not demand amandment to a part of it. In any case, the statement added that "the Congress will never be guilty of sacrificing their interests in order to buy the support of the Princes".

These developments show that, as was the case with the British India half a century ago, a bourgeois democratic movement had started developing in the princely states with a leadership to lead the movement in a bourgeois way.

The Congress leadership had been ignoring the democratic issue of the princely states maintaining that the conflicts and contradictions between the people and Princes were the "internal problems" of the states. There was an economic reason behind it. Despite the slow pace, capitalism was developing throughout India. In this phenomena, the princely states were comparatively behind the British provinces. For example, while the number of joint-stook companies in British India increased from 8,346 to 10,070 in the 1930s, the increase in the princely state was from 894 to 1044 during the same period. The total paid up capital of these companies in the British India increased from 2685.1 million rupees to 2754.2 million rupees during the same period, while the

increase in the princely states was from 125.6 million rupees to 149.7 million rupees.

The new (bourgeois) class was facing innumerable obstructions from the feudal domination in the princely states as it was from the British rule at the all-India level. For the developing bourgeoisie in these states, a fight against the feudal forces was inevitable. They knew that the federal system that the British rulers were planning to impose would only further strengthen the feudal rule in the states and that they had to merge themselves in the struggle that was going on in British India against this system.

But, now in the princely states, the development of the democratic movement under the leadership of the bourgeoisie had stirred the worker and peasant masses and brought them to the arena of struggle as it had happened earlier in British India. In many places "acts of violence" took place as it offen happens when the masses go into action and make the bourgeois leadership feel disturbed.

Besides, due to the peculiarity of the situations existing in many states, the contradiction between the majority and minority communities cast its shadow on the democratic movement, enabling the opponents of the struggle to characterize it as a reflection of the rivalries between the different communities.

Despite the complexity in form, these struggles helped to give a form to the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist feelings of the people in the princely states.

In this context, the state of Jammu and Kashmir deserves special mention. As compared to the British provinces as well as the states of Mysore and Travancore, Jammu and Kashmir was capitalistically less advanced. The feudal exploitation and landlordism were particularly notorious there. Besides, the Kashmir region of the state was a Muslim majority area, whereas in the Jammu region Hindus constituted a majority. The ruler of the state was a Hindu. Therefore, the anti-feudal struggle of the

Kashmiris was characterized by the enemies of the democratic movement as a muslim rebellion against the Hindus.

The case with Alwar in Rajasthan was more or less the same. There the king and a large number of big landlords as well as a majority of the people in South Alwar were Hindus, while the people of northern Alwar were mostly Muslims. Here too, the anti-feudal struggle of the people was characterized by its enemies as a anti-Hindu rebellion of the Muslims.

Despite the communal colour, the mass movement that developed in Kashmir and Alwar reached a new height. The people of these two states not only demanded establishment of democracy in place of the autocratic rule, but they also took the struggle against big landlords to the form of armed struggle in some places. The people fighting with arms clashed with the armed forces of the rulers. The British army was deployed to these states to quell the "rebellion". The slogan of democracy raised by the bourgeois national movement went deep into the worker and peasant masses and transformed itself into a wide-spread mass movement.

The Kashmir National Conference which grew under the leadership of its foremost leader Sheik Abdulla had been influenced by the social background of that state. It was the later form of two separate organizations called the Akhtar Party and the Muslim National Conference which did contain elements of the contradiction between the Hindu king and the Muslim masses.

But, objectively, it was as well a movement for the liberation of the Hindus in the Jammu region from the autocratic rule.

Right in the early 1930s one could see the early image Sheik Abdulla who became a historic personality by integrating Kashmir with India opposing the 'Two Nations Theory' of Jannah and the partition of India based on that theory.

This was by no means a peculiarity of Kashmir ; movements for establisting democracy in many other princely

states possessed a similar communal colour. For example, the erstwhile states of Travancore and Cochin of the present-day Kerala were theoretically theocratic states where only caste Hindus had any role in the armed forces and in civil administration with an upper hand for Brahmins. Consequently, for a majority of the population in these states, the terms 'responsible government' and 'democracy' meant liberation of non-caste Hindus and non-Hindus from the theocratic high caste rule. In Travancore, the agitation against high caste domination had reached a high stage by 1934-35 during which many important events took place such as the historic 'Kozhanchery speech' of C. Kesavan and his consequent imprisonment. It was only in 1937-38, that the *Samyukta Prasthanam*, a joint movement of various communities, transformed itself into the Travancore State Congress.

Though we have referred to only the movements in Kashmir, Alwar and Travancore in some details, democratic movements with and without communal colour were spreading in many other princely states. However, these movements were not as powerful and wide-spread as they were in the British Indian provinces. The main reason for this was the policy being pursued by the right-wing Congress leadership. The same leadership which made every effert to rally the people in the British provinces behind the anti-imperialist struggle, completely neglected the democratic movements in the princely states. The leadership only expressed sympathy with the movements in the states leaving them to be settled between the people and their rulers.

The anti-imperialist front which the Communists, Congress Socialists and other leftist groups were striving at constituted a challenge to the policy of the right-wing leadership of the Congress. And in this, the left forces were being supported by the people's movements and the desire of the burgeoisie in general to establish democracy in the princely states.

III. NEW CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS: TWO VIEWS

On 2nd August 1935 the British Parliament passed the Government of India Bill,1935, for constitutional reforms, which remained, with certain changes, in force until India became a republic on 26th January 1950.

It was a reforms measure which was more advanced than all the previous reforms introduced by Britain. It contained, for the first time, a step to bring the administration of the provinces under the control of the elected representatives of the people.

According to the earlier reforms (of 1919), a part of the provincial government was under the control of the ministers responsible to the elected representatives, while the rest was under the control of government officials. The new reforms act ended this and brought the entire provincial administration under the control of elected ministers. Official members almost ceased to exist in the legislatures. The system of nomination by the Government of members to represent the Depressed Castes and other special interests also ended. Above all, the right to vote was more liberalized.

Along with this, certain other important problems which led to people's agitation for some time were also solved. Burma which was till then a province of India was separated from India. Orissa which was part of Bihar and Sind a part of Bombay were made separate provinces.

The system of communal representation proposed by the British government amended to include the provisions of the Poona Pact was introduced. So also the system of separate electoral constituencies to the satisfaction of the elites of many communities including the Muslims. It became clear that a system more or less satisfactory to the non-Hindu communities was coming into being regardless of the opposition from the Nationalist Party and other Hindu organizations.

To the bourgeoisie, this was an important step forward. However, the new constitutional act also contained certain provisions which were disappointing to this class which was steadily growing in strength.

First, there were "special powers" vested in the Governor restricting the control of the elected members in the provincial administration. Governors had been vested with powers authorizing them to work against the administrative actions taken by ministers and against the bills passed by the legislature on this or that pretext.

Besides, the administration at the Centre was not at all flexible. The Dyarchy which was introduced in the provinces earlier was absent in the Centre. It was provided that for any such change in that direction in the Centre, at least one-half of the number of rulers of the princely states must be ready to join the Federation comprising the British Indian provinces. In other words, with regard to Central Government, the existing system (as laid down in the 1919 reform) would continue.

The problem came up before the bourgeois-landlord classes as to what attitude should be taken on the new reforms Act. Two mutually incompatible opinions emerged and found reflected in the Congress. Before entering into the details of this, however, it is necessary to look into certain changes that had come about in the bourgeois-landlord classes.

Although the economic crisis which lasted for about three years from 1929 had pauperized the Indian people including small and medium businessmen and industrialists, capitalist development went on during this period. During the years 1934-1939, the number of factories with 20 and more workers increased from 8,658 to 10,466. The number of workers also increased from 14,87,000 to 17,51,000. Besides the cotton textile industry which had already gained considerable growth, many more industries appeared in the areas of sugar, cement and so on. The production of steel increased from 4,83,000 tons to 7,82,000 tons and its import fell

from 3,28,000 to 2,80,000 tons. The bourgeoisie was able to surge ahead covercoming the obstruction placed by the government before it. Two characteristic features of this surge of capitalism in India need special mention.

First, within the capitalist circle itself, a narrow section of monopolists had started appearing in its primary form in this period. These monopoly concerns were the Indian Sugar Syndicate and the Associated Cement Company which were established to protect the interests of the capitalists invested in the sugar and cement industries.

Second, those who had begun to grow as monopoly capitalists had started to get integrated with foreign capitalists, and with the feudal elements like Indian princes, big landlords and moneylenders.

For example, in the Associated Cement Company, British finance capitalists and Indian princes were share holders. Killick Industries, a British monopoly enterprise, had on its director board the Indian capitalist giant Tata and about eight others representing Indian princes. This is important as the primary form of the the alliance of the ruling classes in the post-independent India.

On the other hand, the nature of capitalist development in India and the policies being pursued by the government were detrimental to the interests of the Indian bourgeoisie, including the big capitalists. The "agreement" reached between the direct representatives of the British government and the British officers who were ruling here in the name of "Government of India" had been crushing the entire cotton textile industry in India, On the top of it, the capitalists in this industry had to face the stiff competition from the Japanese textiles.

The condition of small scale industries was still worse. The handloom industry had to face the attacks of both foreign and Indian millowners in order for it to exist. The small and medium capitalists who had invested in this industry as well as hundreds of thousands of workers employed in it were getting pauperized.

In order to escape from the crisis, a section of medium handloom factory owners was introducing modern machinery and modern methods of production. But they had to face competition from the rapidly developing Indian monopolists and foreign capitalists. They were also being harassed by the government policy favouring the monopolies.

The change which had come about in the class relations had its impact on bourgeois politics. Two mutually incompatible views emerged on the way to get richer and to win controlling power in the administration utilizing the provisions of the reforms Act. Similarly, the contradiction between the right-wing leadership of the Congress and leftists inside and outside the Congress also got sharpened.

The right-wing leadership looked upon the provision in the reforms Act with regard to provincial administration as the rights they had obtained as a result of their continous struggles and agitations. They were not blind to the limitations of the Act, such as the special powers vested in the Governor. With regard to the Central administration, not only the Congress leadership but also the Congress Nationalist Party, the Jinnah group as well as the moderates who had been esteemed in the official circle despite the defeat in the election, complained that the scheme was unacceptable. These sections, however, regarded that utilizing the rights granted at the provincial level, they would be able to get their demands accepted with regard to the administration at the Centre.

They thought that by fighting elections under the new system and forming ministries wherever they got a majority in the legislatures, they would be able to get the special powers vested in the Governors and British officials reduced and also to rally more and more people behind them. They expected that the Congress which would be strengthened by utilizing control in the provincial administration would be able to fight more effectively to win the demands with regard to the administration at the Centre.

This was not agreeable to the leftists who argued that this policy would lead to gradual surrender to the British or to compromise with them. They feared that the Congress leaders who had hitherto been conducting struggles would turn against struggles and convert the Congress into an anti-struggle organization if they were to accept power even if it was at the provincial level. So, the question whether the Congress should enter the ministries or not after elections came to be keenly debated in the Congress.

Two slogans raised in accordance with the leftist approach towards the new constitution need to be mentioned here. These slogans were "Wreck the Constitution" and "The British has no right to frame a constitution for India, it is the right of Indian people". The content of both the slogans is the same. The strategy of the struggle evolved by the right-wing Congress leadership and the moderates outside the Congress was to secure a share in power by bargaining with the British government. An essential means for this was to exert pressure by organizing mass struggles.

On the contrary, the approach of the leftists was to establish an independent State by the Indian people themselves by conducting an uncompromising struggle and capturing power through revolutionary means, rather than winning the national demand with the approval of the British. It was as a practical form of this outlook that the leftists raised the slogan for a constituent assembly.

The right-wing leadership of the Congress and the moderates outside the Congress were opposed to this revolutionary perspective. But the right-wing Congress leadership adopted many of the suggestions and slogans of the leftists. They had no doubt that the "constitution should be wrecked". They had no dispute over the point that it was the Indian people and not the British who should frame India's future constitution. They had no hesitation to take up as their own the slogan of constituent assembly in accordance with these ideas. And this was what distinguished the right-wing

Congress leadership from the moderates outside the Congress.

But, as the events in the next decade had shown, these slogans which the right leadership borrowed from the leftists were utilized to gain further mass support in order to bargain with the British. The general strategy of struggle acceptable to the bourgeoisie consists of the following: Rally the people behind themselves with the aid of attractive leftist slogans and bargain with the British authorities utilizing the organized strength of the masses; when the British becomes obstinate in the process of the bargain, release the organized popular force against them; compromise with them when the British become compelled to change their position.

A condition indispensible for the success of this strategy is that the right-wing Congress leadership must adopt a style of work capable of giving satisfaction and inspiration to the left at least to a limited extent. Just as the resolution of "Full Independence" was adopted in 1929 as part of unleashing the people aganist the British, so now, the Congress had to raise the anti-imperialist leftist slogan of "constituent assembly" and install the leftist Jawaharlal Nehru as the president of the organization as was done earlier. At the same time, the organization should be safely in the hands of people like Sardar Patel, the savior of the capitalist interests and the steel man of the organization. This would facilitate the Congress to interpret the slogan of "constituent assembly" in any manner and enter into bargain with the British as in the case of the "Purna Swaraj" resolution earlier.

IV. INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

In the preceding chapter we have described at length he division of the main political forces in India in two camps with the leftists inside and outside the Congress including the Communists and Congress Socialists on the one side, and right-wing Congress leadership and the moderates outside

the Congress, on the other. The slogan of "anti-imperialist front" raised in the Lucknow session of the Congress in April 1936 was a manifestation of this division in the national movement. The presidential speech delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru was, in fact, a call for an anti-imperialist front.

These developments that took place in India had an international background. Calls had started coming at the international level for the unity of partymen and non-party democrats and freedom lovers throughout the world against the danger raised by fascism and against imperialist domination. Actions in response to this call were going on in different countries in different forms. Efforts were also being made for the formation of a joint front against imperialism and fascism by coordinating such activities in the different countries.

We have referred earlier to the economic crisis that engulfed the capitalist world beginning with 1929. Mention was also made of the progress being achieved by the Soviet Union without being affected by the economic crisis. We also know that these parallel developments had helped the growth of left-wing politics in India.

However, this was not a mere economic crisis. It had transformed itself into a general crisis affecting political, ideological and other sectors and got intensified creating repercussions and movements in different forms in different countries.

In the beginning, only the working class was interested in the movement for the fight for socialism. But its first victory—the October Socialist Revolution in Russia—inspired not only the working class all over the world, but also the peoples groaning under the yoke of imperialism. In October Revolution they discerned the future of those fighting for national independence.

Mao Zedong once said that the Chinese people received the message of communism through the salvoes of the October Revolution. This was also true of people of the backward, colonial and semi-colonial countries, called the 'Third World'.

The Communist International led by Lenin strove to sow the seed of the communist movement in the predominently agrarian countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. We have seen in the previous chapters how this affected India. The same happened in many other countries like China, Indo-China and Indonesia in Asia and Mexico and other countries in America. These efforts were far more successful in certain countries like China and Indo-China.

It became widely known that the progress of the Soviet Union and the political liberation of colonial and semi-colonial countries were interlinked. The slogan of "Workers of the word, Unite" raised by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels became a broader concept. Along with it a new slogan also came to be raised: "Workers and oppressed peoples of the world, unite".

As a result of the world economic crisis that began in 1929, a new section, in addition to workers and the peoples exploited by imperialism, of the ruling classes in the capitalist countries also became interested in the progress of the Soviet Union, because they felt disturbed at the emergence of fascist dictatorship which was a creation of leaders of world capitalism as an instrument of war, a device they found to get out of the economic crisis. Fascism was instrumental for the suppression of a section of the ruling classes and for bringing to power a more reactionary section among them. Since it was by destroying all the democratic values which the bourgeosie had upheld in the early stage of the development of capitalism that the fascism was advancing menacingly and preparing for a war, the bourgeois intelligentsia and politicians were opposed to the butchery of democracy by fascism.

In this background, all sections realized that all those who believed in bourgeois democracy and those working with working class outlook must work together to prevent the growth of fascism and avoid a war. It was also realized that communists and socialists fighting each other must join hands together and with other peace loving and anti-fascist sections of the bourgeois politicians. In accordance

with it, anti-fascist fronts emerged secretly in the fascist regimes of Italy and Germany and openly in countries like France where fascist organizations were growing.

In order to assimilate the experience of these activities and to find ways to march forward more effectively, a World Congress of the Communist International was held in August 1935. In the report presented to the Seventh Congress of the International, Georgi Dimitrov attributed the growth of fascism to the weakness of the working class as well as the weakness of capitalism arising out of the economic crisis The resolution based on the report of Dimitrov adopted by the Seventh Congress of the International stated:

> The growth of fascism and its victory attest not only to the weakness of the working class, disorganized as the result of Social Democracy's disruptive policy of class collobor-ation with the bourgeoisie, but also due to the *weakness of the bourgeoisie itself* which is stricken with fear at the realisation of unity in the struggle of the working class, is in fear of revolution, and is no longer able to maintain dictatorship by the old methods of bourgeois democracy.

In the light of this explanation, Dimitrov suggested and the International approved a new tactics of uniting and rallying under the leadership of the working class all the anti-fascist forces. This common tactics had to be implemented taking into consideration of the concrete conditions existing in each country. The resolution of the International also pointed out that the task of the people in the backward colonial and semicolonial countries was to form "anti-imperialist people's fronts". The resolution stated:

> In the *colonial and semi-colonial countries*, the most important task facing the Communists consists in working to establish an *anti-imperialist people's front*. For this purpose it is necessary to draw the widest masses into the national liberation movement against growing imperialist, exploitation, against cruel enslavement, for the driving out of the imperialists, for independence of the country.

The essence of the analysis of the International was that the imperialist countries as well as the ruling classes in the capitalist countries had been split into two camps, fascist and non-fascist. Accordingly, the International formulated the tactics of utilizing the contradictions between the imperialist countries and a section of the ruling classes in the capitalist countries by building a broad united front of all anti-imperialist forces and, at the same time, building unity of the working class engaged in a consistent and unwavering fight against monopoly capitalism which gives rise to fascism and consolidating its own organizations.

This tactics was born out of the experience of practical activities being carried out in a number of countries in the world. In his report Dimitrov evaluated the experience of those who stood in the forefront of organizing the anti-fascist struggle in many countries including Germany. In France where this factics was put into practice, within a few months a united front, called the "popular front" came into being, comprising communists, socialists, the trade union movement and many other mass movements. The front was even able to win election and form an anti-facist government in France. Similar anti-fascist people's fronts were formed in many other countries in Europe.

The impact of this new anti-fascist anti-imperialist movement helped anti-imperialists and democrats all over the world to establish contact and render assistance to each other. The Japanese aggression against China, that of Italy against Abyssinia, and the rebellion organized by Gen. Franco against the elected government in Spain made people all over the world indignant. Voices of protest rose high against these attacks and against the man-hunt that was going on in the fascist countries. These voices reverberated in India also.

We have referred earlier to the reactions of Indian nationalists to the international development at the differ ent stages of Indian freedom struggle. We have mentioned specifically that in the 1920s the Congress had formally joined the League Against Imperialism and had sent delegates

to its world conference. The same happened now in a higher form. The happenings in China, Abyssinia and Spain roused intense feelings among the ranks of the Indian freedom movement. Like the communists and socialists, the Congressmen began the practice of expressing fraternity to the revolutionaries of those countries and greeting them. In other words, an awareness spread in the Indian freedom movement that the struggle for independence in India was not an isolated one, but that it was, rather, an integral part of the organized struggles being carried out by the peoples of different countries for national independence, democracy and socialism. As in the case of many other issues, this also was a subject of acute controversy between the right-wing leadership and the left-wing in the Congress.

For the left-wing, our international relation was symbolic of the relation between the Indian people fighting an uncompromising battle and advancing to a successful national revolution, and similar mass movements of other countries moving along a revolutionary path. The left-wing regarded that the achievements of the Soviet Union, the anti-fascist united fronts of the working class and other revolutionary forces in the capitalist countries, the underground activities of the working class and other left forces challenging the facist terror in Germany and Italy, the victorious advance of the Red Army in China and the growth of the revolutionary movements in other countries in Asia were enriching and strengthening the anti-imperialist struggle of the Indian people. Briefly, they regarded that their relationship with these elements of world revolutionary movement was part of their revolutionary perspective of India's future.

This was distinct from the position of the right-wing leadership. They were not enthusiastic to the achievents of the Soviet Union. Nor did they feel attached to the revolutionary movements in China and other countries. They were, in fact, hostile to communist ideology and the political outlook associated with it. The general political line of the right-

wing leadership was a reflection of the desire of bourgeois-landlord classes to utilize the pressure of popular struggles to bargain and win their own political demands.

But, as long as the British rulers were not prepared to concede their demands, the right-wing leadership could not but fight against the rulers. In order to create a favourable situations in these struggles, they had to pretent that they were with the revolutionary struggles across the world. Thus the right-wing leadership took over the international slogans raised by the leftists with utmost honesty. Consequently, the Congress began to acquire the position as one of the elements of the world-wide anti-fascist front. It appeared as though the Congress had an intimate relation with the world movement against imperialism.

18

FOR A MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

I. EVALUATION OF INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

The Indian National Congress as an organization had a not insignificant place in the emergent anti-imperialist front comprising the left-wing Congressmen and the revolutionary organizations including the Communist Party. But in evaluating the exact place of the Congress, two distinct approaches surfaced in the anti-imperialist front. The Communist Party was the most important organization which represented one of these approaches, while the other approach was represented by the Congress Socialist Party.

Each of these thinkings had its own part to play in determining the direction of the anti-imperialist movement which had developed in strength both before and during the Second World War. Even inside the Communist Party, there were reflections of these two mutually conflicting

trends of opinion and it was, in fact, the clash between these two trends within the Communist Party which led to the split in the Party about three decades later.

It may be noted that in the early years of the Communist International, there were similarly two approaches on the question of building the working class revolutiarary movement in the colonial countries, including India. M. N. Roy argued that since capitalism was doveloping in the colonial countries and since the classes representing capitalism were striving to further develop by bringing a rapprochement with colonialism, the task of the communists in the colonial countries was to fight against the indigenous bourgeoisie. Opposing Roy's arguments, Lenin asserted in the colonial commission of the Second Congress of the International that although capitalism was developing in the colonial countries and the task of communists in these countries was to organize the working class on a revolutionary basis, colonialism was a burden which had to be borne by all sections of the people including the bourgeoisie. Therefore, the working class as an independent political force should organize the majority of the people, especially the peasants, on a revolutionary basis and, at the same time, make maximum use of the anti-imperialist mentality being expressed by the bourgeoisie.

The peasantry has a vital role to play in bringing this Leninist tactics into practice. Looking from the class point of view, the peasantry is a part of the bourgeoisie, although they are subject to opression and exploitation by indigenous feudalism and foreign imperialist domination. As the slogan "Land to the Tiller" indicates, they desire to abolish the feudal property rights on land (instrument of production) and to establish the property rights of the peasantry.This desire draws them to the struggle against feudalism and imperialism. Although this struggle is not for socialism, alliance with peasantry would help the working class to earn a powerful ally in its fights against its class enemy. Therefore, communists in the colonial countries should take upon to

themselves the task of organizing the rural poor yearning to own piece of land, under the leadership of the working class.

If the communists were able to accomplish this task, the working class would be able to rise as a class capable of strengthening the anti-imperialist movement making use of the contradiction between the colonialists and the indigenous bourgeoisie and, at the same time, of exposing effectively and opposing the waverings and treacheries of the bourgeoisie in the anti-imperialist struggle. In other words, the working class, standing independent of and working against the bourgeoisie must rise to the leadership of the poor including the peasantry and join hands with the bourgeoisie in the fight against imperialist domination.

From the very outset, the Communists had been working in accordance with this tactics. As part of this, they had succeeded to a great extent in exposing the bourgeois leaders, including Gandhi, and others holding social democratic views.

However, the communists committed certain grave errors in the process of putting into practice this tactics which was formulated by the Communist International under the personal leadership of Lenin. The organ of the International, *Inprecor*, wrote in its issue of 3rd March 1935 that Indian communists committed a number of errors on the question of participation in the anti-imperialist struggle and that they took a number of wrong actions. The article pointed out that these were particularly manifest during the struggle of 1930 when new sections of the people were entering in it with petty bourgeois notions, with a tendency to blindly trusting the bourgeoisie. In this situation, Communists should not confine only to giving a call for an anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. Rather, they should enter among the masses waging the struggle and try to draw them to their side. They should bring into practice the revolutionary tactics of united front giving importance to the needs of the anti-imperialist struggle and to its concrete slogans. As a result of the failure in this task, the struggle against national

moderatism remained separated from the struggle against imperialism and for the realization of the immediate demands of the peasantry. Thus, the activities Communists should have conducted among the workers who were coming under the influence of national moderatism were obstructed and remained weakened. It also weakened the work they should have undertaken inside the trade unions organized by the moderate leadership. The inability to link the task of standing in the forefront of the people engaged actively in the anti-imperialist struggle with the struggle against national moderatism facilitated the growth of sectarian views and tendenices which were yet to defeated.

What has been stated above relates to the views and tendencies which had gained strength not only in the Communist Party of India, but in the world communist movement as well. The Seventh Congress of the Communist International gave a powerful call for a struggle against these views and tendencies. Georgi Dimitrov stated in his historic report to the Seventh Congress of the International:

> Sectarianism finds expression *particulary* in overestimating the revolutionization of the masses, in overestimating the speed at which they are abandoning the positions of reformism, in attempts to leap over difficult stages and overcomplicated tasks of the movement. Methods of leading the masses have in practice been frequently replaced by the methods of leading a narrow party group. The power of the traditional contacts between the masses and their organizations and leaders has been underestimated, and when the masses did not break off these contacts immediately, the attitudes taken towards them was just as harsh as that adopted towards their reactionary leaders. Tactics and slogans have tended to become stereotyped for all countries, and the special features of the specific conditions in each individual country have been left out of account. The necessity of stubborn struggle in the very midst of the masses themselves to win their confidence has tended to be ignored...."

Although the Salt Satyagraha and other struggles that followed it were devised under the leadership of the bourgeoisie with a feudal-mediaeval outlook, millions of people came forward to participate in these struggles and challenge the imperialist domination. The Communists in those days were engaged themselves in merely exposing the policies and programmes of the bourgeois leaders including Gandhi without participating in these struggles and sharing their bitter experience. The result was that the bourgeois leadership and the people were getting closer to each other. The same *Inprecor* article referred to above pointed out that unless strong actions were taken to wipe out this sectarian disease, Communists would not be able to strengthen their influence on the people and to lead the workers, peasants and the urban poor who were turning rapidly towards revolutionary attitude to the path of the revolutionary organizations of a higher form.

Rectifying this error, the Communists were formulating in 1935 the policy of effectively participating in the anti-imperialist struggles led by the Congress. However, with the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party, a non-sectarian, apparently anti-sectarian trend of thought developed in the anti-imperialist camp. The opinion that the Communists had started rectifying the errors they had been committing hitherto had begun to emerge in the leadership of the Congress Socialists. To an extent, this created an atmosphere for Communists and Congress Socialists to work together. But, in the midst of these joint activities also surfaced differences in approach between them.

We have noted that it was the Communists who had consistently and uncompromisingly opposed the policies of the bourgeois national leadership including Gandhi and exposed their class character. The emergence of the Congress Socialist Party was an open recognition of the correctness of these criticisms and exposures. Among the Congressmen who effectively opposed the Gandhian leadership in the 1934 Bombay session of the Congress and in the AICC meeting

that preceded it, the Congress Socialist played a highly significant role. In these meetings, Jayaprakash Narayan and other Congress Socialists strongly protested against both the bourgeois parliamentarism and Gandhism. That was why the Congress leadership looked upon the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party with suspecion and animosity.

As pointed out in the document of the Communist International, a considerable section of the people who entered the movement through the struggles of 1930s came with petty-bourgeois ideas and confidence in the bourgeois leadership. This was true of the Congress Socialists also. In the voice of protest they raised against bourgeois parliamentarism and Gandhism also contained a tendency of compromise with bourgeois parliamentarism and Gandhism as well as confidence in the bourgeois leadership. This was evident in the records of the proceedings of the Bombay Conference (October 1934) of the Congress Socialist Party as well as in the very condition set up by the Party that every Congress Socialist must be a Congressman.

The main document adopted by the Conference declared that the aim of the Congress Socialist Party was to get the Indian National Congress adopt socialism as its objective and to transform it into a socialist organization. Basic to the declaration of this objective was the hope that the Congress could be converted into an organization fighting for socialism, just as the Congress had adopted the objective of Full Independence in 1925 after changing the leadership earlier from Tilak to Gandhi. Thus, they thought that with the strength of the "class struggle" through trade unions, peasant unions and other mass organizations, the Congress could be used as the platform for the struggle for national independence. It was a part of this strategy that the constitution of the Party made membership in the Congress a condition for eligibility of membership in the Congress Socialist Party.

It can be seen that this is totally devoid of any concept of class struggle. For them class struggle is an economic struggle conducted through trade unions and other mass

organizations. Behind this lay hidden the thinking that class relations have no relevance in the struggle for independence. The Congress Socialists refused to perceive the fact that the bourgeoisie and the working class were in conflict with each other even in the freedom struggle, that the bourgeois political leadership exerted influence not only on the peasantry and other sections of petty bourgeois elements, but also on the rear section of the working class and that the task of the communists and socialists was to rally the masses in the anti-imperialist revolutionary camp through struggles against the influence of the bourgeoisie. They expected that the Indian National Congress, the instrument of struggle of the bourgeoisie and which emerged out the development of the bourgeoisie, would turn itself into an instrument for socialism.

The Communist could not but oppose these views. Exposing the approach of the Congress Socialists of transforming the Congress into a socialist organization, the Communists said that the Congress was the political party of the bourgeoisie and it would be a self-deception and a betreyal of the people to attempt to make it accept socialism. They further pointed out that the task of communists and socialists was to effectively oppose the vacillations and deceptiveness of the Congress by organizing the ranks as well as the anti-imperialist elements in its leadership.

In other words, both the policy being pursued by the Communists since 1930 of merely exposing orally the bourgeoisie without joining the struggles led by the bourgeoisie and the policy of the Congress Socialists working with the illusion of turning the Congress into a socialist organization without perceiving the class character of that organization had to be rectified. The concept of anti-imperialist front was, in fact, a result of the process of this rectification and the Lucknow session of the Congress held in April 1936 was the culmination of this process.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE LUCKNOW SESSION

Like the Lahore session held in 1929, the Lucknow session of the Congress was a turning point in the history of Indian Freedom movement. While the Lahore session adopted the objective of Full Independence under the pressure of leftists inside and outside the Congress, the Lucknow session adopted a clear anti-imperialist programme to achieve that objective. Significantly, Jawaharlal Nehru who was the president of the Congress at the time of the Lahore session, presided over the Lucknow session. Again, as in the case of his Lahore presidential speech which gave expression to the feelings of the supporters of Full Independence, the presidential speech of Nehru at the Lucknow session gave expression to the feelings of the anti-imperialist revolutionaries, including the Communists and Congress Socialists.

We have noted earlier that, although Nehru was elected president of the Congress for the Lahore session and the period following it, his leftist followers found no place in the Working Committee. But as compared with the Lahore session, the influence of the leftists was demonstrated more strongly in the Lucknow session and this was reflected in the composition of the Working Committee. Thus, out of 15 members elected to the Committee, only 10 belonged to the right-wing. Of the remaining five, three were prominent Congress Socialists, viz., Jayaprakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev and Achyut Patwardhan. In addition, Subhas Bose who was in prison was also elected to the Working Committee. These four and Jawaharlal Nehru had one way or the other held leftist outlook. Thus for the first time the voice of the leftists began to be heard right inside the leadership ofthe Congress.

Efforts have been made consciously by some to attribute these political changes to Nehru's personality and to his personal leadership. If one studies only his speeches and articles, it is natural that one may get this impression. No

one can deny the personal contributions he has made for the emergence and growth of the anti-imperialist front. However, it would be absurd to maintain that it was because of his contribution alone that the front had emerged. The truth is that even in his absence, the front had begun to emerge, and that it had considerably helped for the development of Nehru's personality.

We have made reference in some details to the reorganization of the Communist Party, the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party and their mutual criticisms with regard to their policies and approaches to different political issues. Here we shall mention specifically certain significant changes that had come about in the policies of these parties in 1935 as a result of these developments.

As we have noted in the previous section, the Communist Party had been in effect taking the sectarian attitude of opposing the entire Congress without making a discrimination between the bourgeois leadership of the Congress and its ranks. The Communist Party decided to put an end to this and to become the activists of the Congress in order to draw the ranks of the Congress as well as the common people behind it into the anti-imperialist front.

Almost in the same period, the Congress Socialist Party also made changes in its basic outlook and policies. The Party gave up the objective of transforming the Congress into a socialist organization and adopted the outlook of converting it into an anti-imperialist organization. The process of this change in outlook started in the begining of 1935 (about six months after its first all-India conference) and ended with its Meerut conference in the beginning of 1936.

Even before the Meerut conference of the Congress Socialist Party, the relationship between the Socialists and Communists had become one of cooperation which was extended from the work of organizing the left inside the Congress against its right-wing leadership to areas of workers, peasants and students organizations. The political rethinking that took place in the Communist Party before and

after the Seventh Congress of the Communist International helped this process. As a result of all this, the second all-India conference of the Congress Socialist Party adopted a new "thesis" setting certain urgent tasks before the Party, such as unification of all the anti-imperialist forces, joining hands with other leftist forces which stood in the forefront of this work and strengthening the organization of workers, peasants and other sections of the people. These programmes represented the attempt being made to rectify the errors contained in the programmes formulated in the Party's first conference. In addition, the thesis also contained an outlook based on Marxism-Leninism in place of the vague idea of socialism contained in the earlier programme.

However, many socialist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan were inwardly in disagreement with the general perspective and approach contained in the Meerut Thesis. This disagreement, in fact, led later to intra-party struggles among the Congress Socialists on the one hand and to fierce conflicts between the Party and the Communist Party. Nevertheless, the Meerut Thesis was a clear indication to the fact that the Congress Socialist leadership did recognize at least to an extent the changes that were taking place in the international and national politics. Besides, these developments prepared the ground for cooperation between the Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party at least for the time being. Immediately before and after the Meerut conference, the General Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party, Jayaprakash Narayan and the Communist Party General Secretary, P. C. Joshi, held talks with each other and arrived at an understanding on the question of "transforming the Congress into a national united front".

It must be noted that while these developments were taking place, Nehru was either in prison or he was in Europe in connection with the medical treatment of his ailing wife Kamala Nehru, preventing him from taking part in active politics. However, these developments did effect certain changes in him. We have already referred earlier to the articles

he had written during the short period he was out of the prison in 1933. Nehru said: "I do believe that fundamentally the choice before the world today is between some form of Communism and some form of Fascism...one has to choose between the two and I choose the Communist ideal."[1]

Nehru expressed the same opinion in his presidential address in the Lucknow session of the Congress. Earlier, he formed his opinion on the basis of information collected through newspapers and journals. But his stay in Europe in 1935 provided him opportunities to study these problems rather closely. There he also got an opportunity to meet and discuss with Ben Bradley who had spent some years in the Indian prison in connection with the Meerut Conspiracy Case and with another British Communist R Palme Dutt. S. Gopal, the biographer of Nehru, stated:

> He (Nehru) agreed that the Congress was, on the whole, moving towards the right, but was himself willing to work in close collaboration with communists. He was not well read in Marxism but was persuaded of its vitality and emotionally inclines toward it. He also had a deep admiration for the achievements of the Soviet Union. Russia was the land of future....Civil liberties to Jawaharlal was of absolute value, and the communists had to reckon with this.[2]

In other words, Nehru desired the kind of economic and social transformations that the Soviet Union was undergoing to take place in India and other countries in the world 'without the use of force'. He did not accept class struggle, the basic principle of Marxism-Leninism, its logical conclusions of dictatorship of the proletariat, etc.

Here one can perceive both the agreement and disagreement between a top ranking Congress leader like Nehru and the Communists. As compared to 1929, Nehru came

1 Quoted in R. C. Majumdar (ed), *The History and Culture Indian People*, vol 11, Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969.p 558.

2 Sarvapalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography*, vol I,Bombay,Oxford University Press. 1976, p 202.

closer to the Communists. The rise of fascism and the role played by Communists in the fight against it brought him to take this position. At the same time, he believed that the Congress led by Gandhi was the only organization capable of carrying forward successfully the struggle for India's national independence. Nehru assured Bradley and Dutt that he was prepared to cooperate with the Communist Party, provided the Communists realized this fact and worked accordingly.

Following these talks, an article entitled "The anti-imperialist People's Front in India" under the joint authorship of Dutt and Bradely appeared in *Labour Monthly* in March 1936. In the article they stated that although the Congress was the main mass organization of the different sections of people striving for national liberation, it had not yet risen as the united front of the Indian people. The article pointed out that if it had to rise to that position, the constitution, programme and the leadership of the Congress had to change. The article further suggested that the organizations of the workers and peasants and other mass organizations must either be brought into a fighting front associated with the Congress or they must be affiliated to the Congress. At the local, district, provincial and all-India levels, these organizations must be given collective membership and a united fighting organization formed immediately with their participation.

Further, the article also suggested an organizatinal form in which the ranks would be able to take better initiative in place of the centralized organization with the domination of the Working Committee. That is, there must be democratic centralization, instead of a leadership of the individual.

In sum, the Congress as a whole must be reformed making its function more democratic with better position for the labouring masses. The Dutt-Bradley article also contained suggestions with regard to the Gandhian non-violence and the approach the Congress must take towards the constitutional reforms enacted by the British government.

These were the suggestions acceptable not only to the Communists but also to other leftists. Nehru had indicated in his *Autobiography* that the contents of this article were acceptable to him. In any case, he had included the objectives and slogans contanied in the Dutt-Bradley article in his presidential address at the Lucknow session.

But many of these suggestions turned out to be the target of attack from the right-wing leadership of the Congress and certain others were accepted by them. The spokesmen of the left-wing forcefully argued for those suggestions which were rejected by the right-wing, for which they had the backing of a considerable section of the delegates. However, those suggestions which were opposed by the right-wing were rejected by the session.

There was a significant difference between the situation now and that prevailed in the Bombay session held a year and a half ago. There was not one leftist leader in the Congress with Nehru's stature in the Bombay session, whereas now the voices of the left were heard right through the presidential address.

One of the reasons for this situation was, of course, the personal contribution made by Nehru. But it would have been impossible for Nehru to take such a clear stand, nor would have been the right-wing leadership compelled to listen to him, had there not been the kind of changes in the international and national politics we have described above.

III. NEHRU'S MARXISM AND INDIAN BOURGEOISIE

As we have seen in the preceding section, many thought that Jawaharlal Nehru had been showing leanings towards communism in the early 1930s. In particular, basing on the articles Nehru had written in this period and on his speeches and press interviews, Bipan Chandra stated that the years

1933-36 constituted the period in which he was in "his most 'Marxist' phase".[3]

Bipan Chandra tried to establish that rather than talking vaguely about socialism, Nehru expressed faith in class struggle, the corner stone of Marxism, and emphasized that it was a fact of life and not the creation of some agitators and philosophers. Bipan Chadra also pointed out that Nehru accepted the Marxist theory of state as well as the necessity of revolutionary struggle against this oppressive instrument of the exploiting classes. This was also the period, according to him, in which Nehru's estrangement with the bourgeois ideologies and policies including Gandhism, reached its peak, as evidenced by his presidential address at the Lucknow session of the Congress.

We have noted that Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders had been endeavouring to negotiate and arrive at a compromise with the Viceroy following the failure of the 1932 struggle. Bipan Chandra has pointed out that in parallel to and as part of these attempts, the Indian industrialist G. D. Birla had conducted negotiations with the rulers with the blessings of Gandhi. Birla directly and Gandhi indirectly through Birla had assured the British that Congress, regardless of objections, was prepared to bring into force the constitutional reforms in India. But Nehru and the left-wing Congressmen led by him were opposed to this, Bipan Chandra pointed out.

The main political problem which came up before the Lucknow session was the attitude of Congress towards the constitutional reforms. Although the Congress was opposed to the reforms, it did not formulate a progamme of boycott of the legislature as it did in the case of the 1919 reforms. The futility of the boycott programme and the subsequent formation of the Swaraj Party earlier had tought the Congressmen including Gandhi a lesson.

3 Bipan Chandra, Jawaharlal Nehru and the capitalist class, 1936, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Number, 1975, pp. 1307-1324.

Even the left-wing Congressmen who expressed emotional opposition to the adoption of the parliamentary programme by the leadership in 1934 did not demand boycott of elections that were going to be held in accordance with the provisions of the new constitution. Instead, they suggested adopting a policy of obstructionist tactics inside the legislature and organizing agitations outside it.

The question arose if the Congress would go in for forming ministries in the provinces in the event it obtained majority in the legislatures after the elections. The right-wing Congressmen argued that the formation of ministries was the logical extension of participation in the elections. They thought that accepting office would further strengthen the Congress, which would enable them to bargain with the authorities in a better way. However, this policy was forcefully opposed by the left-wing. They feared that if the Congress accepted office, it would lose the character of a fighting organization it had acquired. They also feared that instead of fighting against the British imperialism, the Congress ministers, as part of the British administrative machinery, would be compelled to take actions against the people. This opinion was in fact expressed by Nehru in his Lucknow presidential address. Nehru stated:

> Behind it (acceptance of office) lies, somewhat hidden, the question of independence and whether we seek revolutionary changes in India or are working for part reforms under the aegis of British imperialism...To accept office and ministry, under the conditions of the Act, is to negative our rejection of it, and to stand self-condemned. National honour and self-respect cannot accept this position, for it would inevitably mean our cooperation, in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism, and we would become partners in this repression and in the exploation of our people. [4]

4 A. M. Zaidi and S. G. Zaidi (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Indian National Congress*, Vol. 11, New Delhi, Chand Co.,pp. 100-101.

There was a related organizational problem. Nehru supported in his presidential address the leftist proposal to democratize the Congress by giving collective affiliation to the workers' and peasants' and other mass organizations and by assigning active roles to the Congress units at the lowest level and to the ordinary Congressmen. The opposition to the acceptance of office and the proposals for democratization of the Congress constituted a political and organizational challenge to the right-wing leadership. Bipan Chandra points out that Nehru's merit in the period 1933-36 consisted in that he acted as the spokesman of Communists, Socialists and other leftist Congressmen in raising this challenge.

According to Bipan Chandra, it was not an expression of the contradiction between bourgeois ideology and socialism, but a conflict between two approaches in regard to the freedom struggle. He says: "...he (Nehru) challenged the basic nationalist political strategy followed by the Congress leadership since the 1880s—i.e, the strategy of advancing towards political power and independance by stages arrived at through a series of compromises to be forced on the colonial power through the application of ever-increasing political pressure. ...I have described this strategy as that of Pressure —Compromise—Pressure...."[5]

Bipan Chandra's analysis was as follows: "In the concrete Indian political situation of 1934-36, the dominant congress leadership and the leadership of the Indian capitalist class felt that the stage of pressure or active struggle was over and the stage of compromise, co-operation, and 'goodwill' had to be ushered in. They had been quitely working towards a political compromise, in fact, since the end of 1933, for the civil disobedience movement had definitely petered out by that time....Gandhi and dominant right-wing leadership of the Congress strained all their nerves to prevent the Congress form adopting a policy of office-rejection... This was very clearly brought out by the encouragement

5 Bipan Chandra, *op cit.* p. 1309

that Gandhi gave to G. D. Birla to bring about a spirit of mutual trust and 'personal touch' between the rulers and the Congress leadership in general and Gandhi in particular".[6]

Bipan Chandra tries to make it appear that the approach of the spokesman of the leftists, Nehru, was a counter to this tactics of the bourgeoisie. The opposition to the acceptance of office, according to Bipan Chandra, was in fact an opposition to the tactics of compromise. The indication here is that Nehru and his associates were trying to adopt a tactics of "pressure-victory" (i.e, uncompromising struggles till the victory is achieved) in place of the 'pressure—compromise—pressure' tactics adopted by Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders.

The facts we have presented so far would show that this analysis is basically erroneous. The constantly developing bourgeoisie had been striving to exert more and more pressure on imperialism and to acquire more and more powers making use of this pressure. The adoption of the "extremist" programme under the leadership of Tilak and later of the "non-voilent non-cooperation programme" under Gandhi's leadership by the Congress originally started as a moderate organization were developments that revealed this truth. As indicated in the preceding chapters, it was as part of implementing this same programme that the Congress proceeded along the line of the formation of the Swaraj Party, the initiative taken by the left-wing Congressmen for the adoption of Purna Swaraj and the consequent Lahore session, the civil disobedience movement that followed and so on.

It was as part of the same strategy that Nehru's name was proposed by Gandhi himself as the president of the Lahore session. And he was again made the president at the Lucknow session by Gandhi and the right-wing leadership. As we are going to see in the following pages, the same right-wing leadership extended the presidentship of Nehru for another year and appointed another leader of the left-wing, Subhas

6 *Ibid.*

Bose to succeed Nehru. It must be mentioned specifically that it was not on account of the pressue from the left wing that the right-wing leadership appointed leftists consecutively for three years; it was on its own free will. Why did the leadership make such a choice? In order to find an answer to this question, we would have to establish that the very basis of Bipan Chandra's analyses was wrong.

First, it is not consistent with facts to maintain that the right-wing Congress leadership gave up the strategy of "pressure-compromise-pressure" and adopted exclusively the approch of compromise. It is true that both Gandhi and Birla were moving with an intention of reaching a final compromise. But the bourgeois leadership knew that this was not easy to bring about. They were convinced that a final compromise would be possible only through increasing the pressure.

Second, it is equally wrong to state that the strategy adopted by Nehru was one of "pressure-victory" in place of the strategy of "pressure-compromise-pressure". Although Nehru had often pursued policies which were for the time being opposed to that of the right-wing leadership, his fundamental political outlook (even during 1933-36) was that of the Congress. While opposing the opinions of Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders on various political issues in words, he had always submitted himself in action to the Congress discipline. This was the main factor which motivated the right-wing Congress leaders to nominate Nehru to the presidentship of the Congress now at the Lucknow session as it was in the case of the Lahore session. Bipan Chandra himself has cited certain statements made by Gandhi and Birla which would lend support to this. Let us also note in passing that even during the 1933-36 period in which, according to Bipan Chandra, Nehru had accepted the Marxist theory of class struggle, he looked at the Congress under the bourgeois leadership as the only platform for the struggle against imperialism.

Third, it is advantageous for the pressure tactics of the bourgeoisie to install the leftist Nehru whom they were confident of "taming" as the president of the Congress and thereby to create the impression that leftist outlook was growing in the organization. In order for the acceptance of office and the subsequent efforts to become effective, there must have a leadership capable of inspiring and unleashing the left forces in the country. The person best suited for that purpose was Jawaharlal Nehru. The bourgeois leadership was in need of a president with leaning towards Marxism and outwardly opposed to right-wing ideologies including Gandhism. In the absence of such a leftist backing, it would have been impossible for them even to make an attempt for compromise with the rulers.

In his article, Bipan Chandra cites an incident which clearly reveals this fact. A group of Bombay capitalists who were angered at the Lucknow presidential address of Nehru issued a statement sharply condemning him and also criticizing the Congress leadership which made him the president of the Congress. Another prominent capitalist of Bombay, Purushottamdas Thakurdas, who did not quite agree with this approach exchanged a number of letters with G.D. Birla on this subject.

The Birla-Thakurdas correspondence revealed what that section of the Indian capitalists who are described as "the more far-sighted" had in mind. It revealed their confidence that no matter what game Nehru played with words, there was no ground for them to get frightened, became Gandhi and other right-wing leaders of the Congress would be able to contain him. The exchange of correspondence also revealed that Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders had assured these leading capitalists that the final decision of the Congress with regard to the acceptance of office would go in favour of it regardless of the opposition of Nehru and other left-wing leaders towards it.

In any case, subsequent events have demonstrated the materialization of the optimism displayed by Gandhi,

Birla and Thakurdas that the bourgeoisie would be able to "tame" Nehru who had been making leftist speeches, and the falsity of the analysis of Bipan Chandra made on the basis of Nehru's speeches and articles that in the years 1933-36 Nehru had reached "his most 'Marxist' phase". Nehru was a tool of the bourgeois tactics of pressure-compromise-pressure. It was a period in which the Indian bourgeoisie was in need of a leader verbally favouring Marxism and opposing Gandhism in order for their pressure tactics to succeed.

IV. THE LUCKNOW SESSION: AN EVALUATION

Two principal issues raised by the Congress President Nehru and other leftist Congressmen at the Lucknow session, namely, opposition to the acceptance of office, and actions for democratizing Congress oranization including collective affiliation to trade unions and other mass organizations, were not accepted by the Congress.

The issue of acceptance of office was deferred by the session. A resolution adopted by the Congress to this effect stated: "The question of acceptance or non-acceptance of office by Congress members elected to the legislatures under the constitution having been agitated in the country the Congress, in view of the uncertainties of the situation as it may develop, considers it advisable to commit itself to any decision at this stage on the question and leaves it to be decided *at the proper time* by the AICC after consulting the Provincial Congress Committees."[7]

In deferring a decision on this matter, the Congress was, in effect, rejecting the arguments of the leftists. The issue of acceptance or non-acceptance of office was a fundamental problem relating to the approach towards the British rulers. What lay behind the debate on the acceptance of office was

7. Zaidi and Zaidi (eds) *op. cit*, p. 33. (Italics added)

the question whether the Congress would adopt the method of compromise with the British rulers on the basis of the reforms that were being introduced step by step or it would organize the people on a revolutionary basis and establish a free democratic state by the people themselves after victoriously destroying the foundations of the British rule. If it accepted the latter, for which Nehru and other leftist leaders were arguing in the Lucknow session, then the question of taking a decision "at the proper time" as stated in the resolution did not arise. Deferring the decision meant that Congress might take a decision in favour of acceptance of office some time in future(that is, when the situation became favourable).

The Congress, on the other hand, outrightly rejected the issue of democratization of the Congress by giving collective affiliation to trade unions and other mass organizations. The leadership was not prepared to consider this issue. It maintained that the Congress was not against the trade unions and other mass organizations growing in strength and that it was even prepared to take an attitude fovourable to their growth. But it insisted that these organizations should be made to accept the leadership of the Congress. For this purpose the Congress would form a workers subcommtttee to give guidance and leadership to those Congressmen working in trade unions.

This was not merely an organizational problem; behind it lay the differences of opinion between the left-wing and right-wing on the question of building the anti-imperialist front. By the anti-imperialist front the leftists meant creating a great mass upsurge aganist the imperialist forces by rallying the masses jointly by the Congress, Congress Socialist and Communist parties, the trade unions and other mass organizations. On the other hand, the right-wing interpreted the front as the Socialist and Communist parties and the mass organizations like the trade unions strengthening the Congress by accepting its political leadership, thereby regarding the Congress as the anti-imperialist front. Rejecting

the proposal put forward by the leftists meant acceptance of the latter interpretation by the Congress.

In sum, although the leftists made a good performance with many major and minor speeches, including the presidential address, all the proposals put forward by them were rejected at the Lucknow session. Some historians have tried to characterize this as a defeat for the leftists. Bipan Chandra, for instance, says: "From now on, the chief role of the masses was to listen to his speeches. In ideology, not Marxism but a mild form of Fabianism become the norm though once in a while there came flashes of his old Marxism."[8]

Whether this was true or false of Nehru is not relevant now. But what is relevant is the question how did the leftists in general react to these developments. Did they feel that they were defeated? Did they consider, as Nehru is reported to have felt, that it was futile to fight against the right-wing leadership and hence need not continue?

The leftists, except a few like Nehru, did not have any illusion that they would succeed in getting all their proposals accepted by the Congress, that too, in a single conference.

The Communists who regarded that the Congress was the political party of Indian bourgeoisie viewed the fight between the left and right sections in the Congress as an important form of class struggle. They never had the illusion which Nehru and the Congress Socialists had with regard to the political character of the Congress. They knew that the anti-imperialist front would emerge only out of the clashes between the compromising policy of the bourgeois politicians dominating the Congress and the uncompromising attitude of the masses rallied behind them. Even the Congress Socialists were working with the understanding that the struggle against the right-wing leadership inside the Congress would be an intense one.

A majority of left-wing Congressmen who belonged to neither of these groups, on the other hand, examined the whole developments form the point of view of whether or

8. Bipan Chandra, *op cit.* p 1321

not the Lucknow session gave a new impetus to the struggle they had started and not whether or not the struggle they put up on the platform of the session turned out to be effective for the time being. And looked from this angle, they had sufficient reason to remain contented. Whatever the decisions of the Congress session, the proceedings of the session turned out to be useful in taking the issue they had raised jointly with Communists and Socialists to the delegates and the common people. They were able to bring about a change in the thinking of a considerable section of the people who had not yet taken part in the activities of the Communist and Socialist parties or in the left movements. The Lucknow session also helped them to extend to a large section of the people the revolutionary perspective with regard to the constitutional reforms and the practical problems relating to them which had hitherto been confined to narrow groups. In other words, in the Lucknow session they were able to organize to a great extent the leftist forces for the coming struggles between the left and the right.

In order to make use of these favourable situations effectively, certain other activities were also organized outside the conference, which brought far-reaching effects. The "anti-imperialist rally" held during the interval in the conference venue deserves particular mention. The rally which was organized on the initiative of Communists and Socialists attracted a large section of the delegates. The orgaizers of the rally tried to examine the problems of Indian freedom struggle in the background of international developments, the danger of war that rose in the wake of the rise of fascism and the role of British imperialism in it. Disucssions were held which inspired the ordinary Congressmen to wage a more effective struggle against the right-wing leadership with a clear idea of how to conduct the mass struggles against the Government of India Act which was fabricated by the imperialist rulers and of the weakness of the Congress in conducting such struggles. This helped to lay a strong ideological

and political foundation to the anti-imperialist front that the Communists,Socialists and other leftists were striving to build.

The Communist Party also distributed a leaflet in the venue of the conference explaining its stand on various issues. It may be noted that since the party had been banned since 1934, this could not be done openly and legally. Despite this, many Socialist activists and Congress volunteers helped the Communits in distributing the leaflet extensively in the delegate camps and in the conference *Pantal*. A number of leaders in the Reception Committee and AICC also extended cooperation to the Communists in the distribution of the leaflets. The successful anti-imperialist rally and the distribution of the communist leaflet were indications to the fact that not only certain top Congress leaders like Nehru but a considerable section of the ordinary Congressmen and delegates had started getting attracted to the ideologies of communism and socialism. The ordinary Congressmen who had been fed up with Gandhism, parliamentarism and the waverings and pusillanimity displayed by Nehru who had been indulging in leftist rhetorics were yearning for a new programme and were eagerly looking upon the Communist and Socialist parties which had been giving leadership for taking the national movement in a new direction. Opportunities were opening up for a fruitful exchange of views among ordinary Congressmen and the representatives of the Communist and Socialist parties as well as for practical cooperation among them.

The emergence of All-India Kisan Sabha was another important event that took place in the venue of the Lucknow session. The grounds for this had, in fact, been cleared earlier. Peasant agitations had been going on for quite some time in the different provinces in different forms according to the specific characteristics of each province. In many of these agitations the leadership was with the Congress. Consequently they did not assume the form of a regular peasant organization. These were, in fact, attempts to bring the peasant under the Congress.

It was in the early 1930s that peasant organizations began to emerge at local and provincial levels. Even at this stage the leadership of a major section was with the Congress. With the expansion of the activities of the Communist and Socialist parties, the activists of the leftist parties began to take part in the activities among the peasants. For example, it was the left Congressmen who were also the Congress-Socialists who laid the foundation for the peasant movement in the Malabar region. With this, workers functioning in the peasant movements began to feel the need of a central organization for the peasant movement like the AITUC for the trade unions. Accordingly, a preparatory conference of the workers in the peasant movements was held in January 1936 at Meerut while the Congress Socialist Party was holding its Second All-India Conference there. The Meerut Conference formed an organizing committee with N. G. Ranga and Jayaprakash Narayan as joint convenors to organize an All-India Kisan Conference. The Lucknow conference was a result of the activities of this committee.

The Lucknow conference was attended by Swami Sahajanand Saraswati and Indulal Yagnik who later became prominent leaders of Indian peasant movement, and N. G. Ranga, a leftist leader who later turned to the rightist camp.The name of the organization formed in that conference was All-India Kisan Congress, also called the All-India Kisan Sangh by some, which was further changed to All-India Kisan Sabha. The Lucknow conference is regarded as the founding conference of the Sabha.

It may be noted that the All-India Kisan Sabha was formed 16 years after the formation of All-Indian Trade Union Congress. The peasants had hitherto been depending on the Congress not only for the solution of political problems including that of national freedom but also for getting their immediate demands conceded. (This was also the position with workers till the formation of the AITUC.) But the growth of the left parties, the emergence of the anti-imperialist front and the influence it was able to gain even within the

Congress exerted considerable influence among the peasants. They began to work with the perspective of forming an independent class organization of their own and fighting against British imperialism by joining hands with all other mass organizations and political parties including the Congress. The All-India Kisan Conference held in Lucknow provided leadership for these activities.

The main resolution adopted by the conference set the objective of the Kisan Congress as complete liberation of peasants from economic exploitation and achievement of economic and political power to peasants, workers and other exploited sections of the people. The resolution stated that the task of the Kisan Congress was to organize peasants to fight for their immediate political and economic demands and to obtain liberation from exploitation. The resolution called upon the peasants to actively participate in the struggles for complete independence for India so as to enable the producing masses to obtain ultimate economic and political power.

The conference adopted two more resolutions which were of considerable importance. One of them demanded abolition of landlordism which had been existing in different forms such as Zemindari, Talukdari, Malguzari, Estemardari, Khot, Janmi, Inamdari, etc., and conferring landownership on the cultivating peasants. The other resolution demanded radical change in the land tax system in the Ryotwari regions and the introduction of a graduated system of tax, exempting peasants with income less than Rs 500 from payment of land tax.

These resolutions constituted an outline of the policies of the Kisan Sabha. The conference elected a Central Kisan Committee with Swami Sahajanand as president and N G Ranga as secretary and also an A I K C with larger membership.

Yet another event that took place in the venue of the Congress session was the formation of All-India Progressive Writers' Association for which the inspiration came from the organization of anti-fascist writers led by Maxim Gorki and

other progressive writers in Europe. Formed on the initiative of the communists, it had the blessings of Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Munshi Premchand and other top-ranking writers in the country. The Lucknow conference of Indian writers which was presided over by Premchand was an indication to suggest that the messages of the anti-imperialist front and the anti-fascist international front had started making impacts on the intelligentsia in India.

All in all, although the Lucknow session of the Congress rejected the resolutions introduced by the left-wing, the event that took place inside and outside the conference *Pantal* demonstrated that the ideas propagated by them had started spreading far and wide. It had also become obvious that communists and socialists were leading these movements.

19

TACTICS OF BOURGEOIS LEADERSHIP

I. AFTER THE LUCKNOW SESSION

Although there was a similarity between the Lahore and Lucknow sessions of the Congress in that the right-wing leadership decided to install a known leftist as president for both these sessions, the political backgrounds of these decisions were different. The Lahore session was held at a time when even the right-wing leadership had taken a position in which it was impossible to avoid country-wide mass agitation against the British rulers. In order for them to make this agitation country-wide, they had to secure the whole-hearted cooperation of the liftists. Therefore, not only did they install Nehru as the president of the session, they also took over the slogan of Full Independence raised by leftists represented by him. Thus, both the president of the Lahore session and the

decisions taken in that session helped create the impression that politically the Congress was moving towards the left.

The background of the Lucknow session was completely different. It had become certain that the immediate objective of the right-wing Congress leadership was to arrive at a compromise with the British rulers and not a struggle aganist them. For that purpose, they had to have inspiring policy declarations and a suitable president. However, the leadership could not afford to accept the suggestion of the president and the left-wing to reject office, for they would achieve their objective of compromise with the rulers only by making use of favourable situations emerging out of office acceptance. Besides, the proposals put forward by the left-wing (collective affiliation to mass organizations, etc.) for democratizing the Congress organization were regarded extremely dangerous by the right-wing leadership. Consequently, they could not but defeat right in the Conferance the proposals put forward by the left-wing president. Thus, the right-wing leadership adopted the policy of rejecting all the proposals put forward by Nehru, while keeping him in the presidentship. The state of affairs that prevailed within the Congress leadership as a consequence of these developments has been described by Pattabhi Sitaramayya as follows:

> The President was out of tune with the majority of the Working Committee. The three new friends (Congress Socialists) taken into it would, with him make a good *four* or more than a fourth of the Committee but generally speaking the deliberations and decisions were not conditioned or conducted by majorities and minorities. Jawaharlal had offered his resignation at the very outset but he was persuaded to remain and continue. Continue he did but qualms of conscience which created uneasy feelings in his presidential address which was not meant to be a mere thesis but a programme of action. On the other, there was Gandhi with his following of ten members in the Working Committee thinking and acting as a solid block. [1]

1. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of Indian National Congress*, vol II, Bombay, Padma Publications, 1947, p. 13.

What motivated Nehru to remain a prisoner of the majority in the Working Committee while occupying the presidentship of the Congress? What motivated the right-wing Congress leaders to keep him in the presidentship in such a condition? According to his biographer, Sarvapally Gopal:

> By now Jawaharlal was as indispensible to the Congress as the party was to him. He commanded, even before his election tours gave him a wide popular appeal, the support of large sections of radical youth who, but for him, would have left the Congress for left-wing parties. Even the Congress Socialist Party might have broken away from the parent body...He was, too, the only Indian politician who had an international audience, and it was he who secured for the party recognition on the world stage. Had Jawaharlal, therefore, insisted in the summer of 1936 on resigning the presidency, it is difficult to believe that Gandhi and his followers would have been shortsighted enough to let him do so.[2]

Why did then Nehru submit himself to this situation? His biographer adds:

> The psychological hankering to follow Gandhi and the ingrained loyalty to the party were only part of the explanation. Jawaharlal Nehru knew that there was no working-class leadership or even an alternative elite leadership available; and as long as this was the case, it would ed disastrous to weaken the Congress. And, as ever, his colleagues took advantage of this.[3]

Our discussions in the preceding chapter show that this analysis is incorrect. An alternate leadership in which the working class had active roles had been emerging and getting strong day by day. The Lucknow session had shown that the influence of this emergent alternate leadership was by no means small. The truth was that other than making policy statements like the Lucknow presidential speech Nehru was not prepared to put up an uncompromising fight

2. S. Gopal, *op cit* p. 214.
3. *Ibid.*

against the views of the right-wing in accordance with the contents of his declarations.

As S. Gopal has pointed out, Nehru's views were full of contradictions and his political outlook weak. His seemingly Marxist philosophical outlook and his leanings towards the political slogans of the anti-imperialist front that included communists and socialists were found reflected throughout in his speeches and writings. However, his actions were limited within the ambit of discipline of the Congress led by the bourgeoisie.

As we are going to see in the following pages, whenever the contradiction between the left-wing and the right-wing became acute, Nehru either gave up his own position and surrendered to the right-wing leadership, or remained neutral. Never did he stand firm with the left-wing to effectively challenge the right-wing. However, a few weeks after the Lucknow session Nehru came in clash with the right-wing leadership of the Congress. Although the proposals he had put forward in his presidential address had been rejected by the Congress, he continued to make speeches and write articles which resembled in content his presidential address.

Not only the capitalists of Bombay as we have noted earlier, but many right-wing Congress leaders like Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari severely criticized him for the opinions he expressed. Following, Nehru offered his resignation, an action which was disapproved by Gandhi who advised him to submit to the majority of the Working Committee and work without creating problems. The right-wing leadership in the Congress and the moderates outside it stood witness to Nehru's acceptance of Gandhi's advice and to the disappearance from his speeches and writings of the "triumphant freshness" which had been found expressed in them earlier.

This process of change in Nehru reached the zenith as preparations began for contesting the elections scheduled to be held in early 1937. We shall return to it in the following chapters. Before that we shall refer to certain activities of Nehru to which the right-wing leadership had no objection.

By 1936 the world political atmosphere was becoming dark. Abyssinia became the victim of aggression of fascits Italy. In Spain, rebellion broke out under the leadership of Franco against the elected government. Added to these were the inhuman regime of Hitler who had already come to power in Germany and Japan's war of aggression against China, which together gave rise to peoples' ire against imperialist powers which were rendering assistance to the facist forces around the world.

This had its reflection in India also. The Congress Working Committee decided to observe 9th May as "Abyssinia Day". The Working Committee also deputed V. K. Krishna Menon to represent the Congress in the World Peace Conference which was scheduled to be held in Brussels in September 1936, and in the World Peace Congress which were organized jointly by the socialists, communists and certain sections of bourgeois political parties in Europe. And it was a part of these activities that Nehru visited Spain and sent aids to the spanish democrats.

Nehru considered that this was the symbol of the leftist views he was representing. The right-wing leadership thought this would help, like many other things, to create popular pressure which was needed to achieve the objective of compromise with the British rulers, because any move against fascism would also turn against the British rulers. The message sent by Nehru to the World Peace Congress stated:

... I should like to emphasize that peace in colonial countries can only be established with the removal of imperialist domination for imperialism is itself a negation of peace. Therefore, for us in India, as well as for other countries, situated like us, the first step must be political freedom, to be followed, I hope, by social freedom. Thus we shall be able to build up our country, in common with the rest of the world, an enduring foundation for peace and freedom and human progress.[4]

4. *Collected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, vol: 7, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1975, P. 577.

In order to rouse world public opinion and fight for civil liberties in India, a Civil Liberties Union was formed on Nehru's initiative. The Union endeavoured to collect information on the violation of civil liberties in foreign countries and also to provide similar information on the violation of civil liberties in India to foreigners. According to the official historian of the Congress, Pattabhi Sitaramayya:

In India...where no rights exist for the people, when the so-called constitution itself is undemocratic and is a standing negation of civil rights and popular liberties, a Union such as the one contemplated would be more or less an imitation unless it super-arrogated itself the whole range of stupendous task undertaken and carried on with success by Indian National Congress for over half a century. For the Civil Liberties Union that is contemplated should in any case of India strive to *establish* civil liberties in the first place, not merley *preserve* them as in the case of France, America and England. But one justification we can sense instantly and instinctively. The Union that was being established in 1936 might form the nucleus of that larger union which must necessarily function even after India shall have established a full democratic constitution.[5]

We have referred earlier to Nehru's opinion on the communist approach to civil liberties. Nehru considered civil liberties as a set of values which had to be unconditionally preserved always and everywhere and declared that he was opposed to violation of civil liberties to introduce revolutionary change in the economic and social life as in the Soviet Union. Therefore, the Civil Liberties Union formed under the leadership of Nehru was meant to serve the dual purpose of opposing the repressive actions of the British rulers in India and laying the foundation of furture Indian democracy.

Thus, the right-wing Congress leaders left Nehru free to work in the areas of fascist aggression and preparation

5. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op cit*, p. 21.

for war at the international level and against the violation of civil liberties at the national level with which they had no quarrel, while preserving their domination over the Congress organization.

II. PREPARATIONS FOR ELECTIONS

For those who retain in memory the fact that it was on the slogan of boycott of legislatures and other institutions that Gandhi brought the masses to the battle ground, it may appear surprising to see the Congress making preparations for elections without ruling out the probability of accepting office after winning the elections. But no one who examines objectively the growth of the bourgeoisie which controlled the Congress politically and organizationally would find anything surprising in it.

The bourgeois political leadership came to the fore with a programme of agitations and struggles first under Tilak's leadership and later under Gandhi's when it was felt necessary to mobilize the people discarding the style of work of the earlier generation of moderates. And it was the same leadership which gained self-confidence through the struggles for over a decade came to the conclusion that it was possible to negotiate and reach compromise with the rulers without giving up the programme of rallying the masses behind itself.

While this was the position with the right-wing leadership, the leftists did not favour the approach of boycotting elections either. They understood that elections and battles in the legislature had an important place in organizing the people against imperialism and its Indian agents. As Lenin pointed out in the midst of a controversy in the world communist movement on the same issue, the argument against parliamentary activities was an "infantile disorder" that had affected the revolutionary movement. The world revolutionary working class movement rejected both the right opportunist view of the possibility of bringing revolution by

contesting elections and using parliamentary majority and the left opportunism of keeping aloof from class struggles on the scene of parliamentary activities. The Communist Party which had been organized on the basis of this ideological position, and the Congress Socialist Party viewed the electoral activities as an important means to strengthen the anti-imperialist struggle. However, the Communists, Congress Socialists and other leftists differed from the right-wing leadership, including Gandhi, on the question of why and how to participate in the elections. The leftists were opposed to the right-wing approach of entering the legislatures and forming ministries wherever there was a majority strictly in conformity with the provisions of the constitution and using the authority and power thus acquired to bargain with the imperialist rulers. They, on the other hand, tried to create a revolutionary mass movement by combining the majority in the legislatures with people's force outside the legislatures. They adopted the approach of "wrecking the constitution" with popular force and framing a constitution for India by a constituent assembly which would be constituted by the people in the process of this struggle.

On that basis and as an integral part of the process of "wrecking the constitution", the Communist and Socialist parties were pondering independently and collectively how best the election propaganda could be used, what were the policies and programmes needed for building the anti-imperialist front and now to propagate the programmes of these parties independently while propagating the common programes of the front and so on. The right-wing Congress leadership, the leftist Congress president and his socialist colleagues in the Working Committee also paid attention to these problems.

As a result of the discussions that took place at different levels, the Communist Party, the Congress Socialist Party and other leftist parties adopted their respective programmes which, however, failed to create any impact on the masses. The election manifesto of the Congress, on the other

hand, attracted the people. The election propaganda conducted by the Congress leaders in general and Nehru in particular based on the manifesto, despite the constraints placed by the right-wing leadership, helped the spread of the anti-imperialist views represented by Nehru among the people.

The nature and character of the Congress leadership was, in fact, reflected in its election manifesto. For instance, although the right-wing leaders had already decided to form ministries wherever the Congress won a majority in the elections, the manifesto remained silent on the subject. On the other hand, it contained an inspiring call for anti-imperialist struggles.

The Congress election manifesto was written by Nehru as it was the case with many other documents which had become beneficial to the right-wing in the Congress. Therefore it would sound to the people under the influence of the leftists that it embodied their hopes and aspirations. Moreover, Nehru conducted the election propaganda in such a way as to strengthen this impression. But the question of forming ministries was left open in the manifesto.

The manifesto began with a description of the deepening economic crisis and the problems of increasing unemployment and poverty. It reiterated that the only condition for the solution of these problems is the attainment of independence. It emphasized the fact that the struggle for independence had ended up in the suppression of civil liberties. The manifesto specifically stated that the Congress had rejected the constitution prepared in these backgrounds and that the activities inside the legislature was one of the facets of the struggle to get it rescinded.

What was the nature of activities contemplated in the legislature? Were they intended to "wreck the constitution" as proposed by the lift-wing or to prepare the ground for a compromise with the British rulers? These questions were not answered in the manifesto. The contents of the manifesto were so vague that they could be interpreted in either way.

At the same time, it repeated the contents of the resolution on civil rights adopted by the Karachi session of the Congress. Besides, an appendix containing certain proposals for the solution of the agrarian problems raised following the emergence of the Kisan Sabha was added to the manifesto.

In short, the Congress election manifesto contained an approach which, while providing facilites to the leftists to conduct propaganda in accordance with their own views, was helpful to the right-wing to take an "appropriate decision" after the elections with the support of the people attracted by the leftist countenance of the manifesto.

Based on the manifesto, Jawaharlal Nehru conducted a country-wide propaganda campaign in the capacity of President of the Congress. The campaign was organized on the model of the country-wide tours conducted by Gandhi in 1921-22 and in the subsequent years. But unlike Gandhi, Nehru endeavoured to spread the message of the left-oriented anti-imperialist front throughout the country. In the tour Nehru proved that he was as good a crowd collector as Gandhi was.

The election campaign tours also showed that in popularity Nehru was next only to Gandhi. However, more important was the change that had come about in the nature of the Congress and the anti-imperialist movement. The idea of uncompromising struggles against imperialism as demanded by Communists, Socialists and other leftists, the organizations of workers, peasants and other working masses as an integral part of these struggles, the communist and socialist ideologies that helped and strengthened those who were working in these organizations, and above all, the close link between the Indian freedom struggle and the revolutionary movements all over the world—all these were brought closer to the masses by Nehru through his election campaign.

In the background, however; certain other developments were taking place. The right-wing leadership which assigned Nehru the work of writing an election manifesto capable of inspiring millions of left minded youth and the working

masses as well as the task of conducting a country-wide election campaign basing on the manifesto was striving to win the elections by all means by reaching an electoral understanding with the moderate sections outside the Congress.

This was the approach which Nehru had sharply criticized earlier. He accused the majority of Congress leaders of moving in the direction of aligning with anyone and adopting any method with the sole objective of winning the elections. However, Nehru himself played later in the hands of the right-wing in creating situations for gaining majority and forming ministries at least in the non-Muslim majority provinces. For instance, his biographer points out that "within a few days he (Nehru) began negotiations with Pandit Malaviya, whose outlook in politics was frankly communal, for an electoral alliance with his Nationalist Party."[6]

However compromising Nehru might have been with the right-wing leaders at the high level, ordinary Congressmen, Congress Socialists, Communists and other leftists were striving at strengthening the left-oriented anti-imperialist front which found expression in the Lucknow session and in the subsequent election campaign. The Kisan Sabha had been gaining strength day by day. In accordance with the decision of the Lucknow Conference, Ist September was observed as All-India Kisan Day and a charter of demands was adopted incorporating the immediate demands of the peasantry. Many *Kisan jathas* were led from different parts of Maharashtra to Faizpur where the Congress was holding its fiftieth session, demanding correction in the programme of the Congress in the light of the charter of demands. Partly on account of this, the Faizpur session adopted an agrarian progamme to be added to the election manifesto as an appendix.

Besides working in trade unions and the Kisan Sabha, efforts were also made by the leftists to organize a student

6. S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru, A Biography*, vol I, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1976,pp. 208-209.

movement. It may be noted that the All-India Students Federation was founded in the intervening period between the Lucknow and Faizpur sessions of the Congress. It was also in the same period that people's struggles started to emerge in the princely states against autocratic rule and for responsible governments.

The Students Federation was founded on the initiative taken by the leftist parties. Therefore, in the outlook as well as in the policies and programmes of that organization could be found the general anti-imperialist views and also the influence socialist and communist ideologies. The situation in the people's movements in the princely states was, however, different. Along with Communists and Socialists, Congress sympathizers and bourgeois nationalists were also taking part in these movements. However, like the mass movements and organizations led by the leftists, this turned out to be a challenge to the right-wing leaders including Gandhi.

As we have seen earlier, because of the policy of "non-interference in the internal affairs of the princely states" pursued by Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders, the Congress had never come forward to actively support the democratic struggles of the people in these states. The leftists in the Congress were too weak to get this policy reversed. However, in response to the developments that began with the Round Table Conferences and the reforms proposals that emerged in the Conferences, a section of non-leftist bourgeois nationalists emerged in the princely states. Agitations for responsible governmet were organized under their leadership compelling even the rightist Congressmen to take part in them. These agitations gave rise to political organizations of the subject people in the various princely states.

The leftists made significant contributions to the growth of these new movements. The influence of the leftists in Travancore, Cochin, Hyderabad and several other states was undeniable. The political experience of many non-left

democrats in the course of the movements turned them to the left. Even a large section of bourgeois democrats who thus turned to the left had to clash with the right-wing Congress leadership at least on questions relating to the movements in the princely states.

Thus, it can be seen that while the right-wing Congress leadership was engaged in the selection of candiates and in other activities for winning the elections, the leftists were utilizing the election campaign politically and organizationaly to further strengthen the anti-imperialist mass movement.

III. THE FAIZPUR SESSION

In less than a year after the Lucknow session the next session of the Congress was held in December 1936 in Faizpur, an obscure village in Maharashtra.

Holding a Congress session in a rural area was contrary to the tradition of the Congress since 1885 when it started holding annual sessions regularly. The sessions held during the past 16 years during which the Congress led directly by Gandhi was considered an organization identified with the peasant masses were no exception. For the first time the Congress was now holding its session in a backward village with entirely rural aminities.

The Faizpur session was noteworthy in another respect also. For the first time, again, a person, particularly one who was known to hold differences with the majority in the leadership, was presiding over the session for a second time in succession. Jawaharlal Nehru who had declared himself in the previous Lucknow presidential address to be holding views that were different from those of Gandhi and other right-wing leaders presided over the Faizpur session.

In a sense this was an indication to the growing influence of the left forces in the Congress. But the election of Nehru to the presidentship was not the result of a leftist

victory over the right-wing; rather, the election took place in a manner which showed that the differences between the two wings in the organization were becoming sharper. As with the earlier Lahore and Lucknow sessions, Nehru's name was proposed for the presidenship for the Faizpur session by Gandhi and other right-wing leaders. As soon as the decision of the leadership was announced, Nehru issued a statement saying, "I shall welcome the election of any of my colleagues and co-operate with him in another capacity in the great enterprise we have undertaken. Should, however, the choice of my countrymen fall on me, I dare not say 'no' to it. I shall submit to their pleasure. But before they so decide they must realise fully what I stand for, what thoughts move me, what the springs of actions are for me in speech and writing. I have given enough indication of this and from this I wanted to be judged."[7]

Vallabhbhai Patel was nominated to the presidentship as the representative of the right-wing. Withdrawing from the contest Patel said in a statement:

> My withdrawal should not be taken to mean that I endorse all the views Jawaharlalji stands for. Indeed Congressmen know that on some vital matters my views are in conflict with those held by Jawaharlalji.[8]

The statement added:

> The question of 'holding office' is not a live issue today. But I can visualise an occasion when acceptance of office may be desirable to achieve the common purpose. There may then be a sharp division of opinion between Jawaharlalji and myself or rather among Congressmen. We know Jawaharlalji to be too loyal to the Congress to disregard the decision of the majority, assuming that the latter lays down a policy repugnant to him...The Congress President has no dictatoiral powers. He is the chairman of our well-built organization. He regulates the proceedings and carries out the decisions of the Congress as they

7. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op. cit* pp. 31-32.
8. *Ibid*, p. 32

may be arrived from time to time. The Congress does not part with its ample powers by electing any individual no matter who he is.[9]

That is, Patel's statement withdrawing his own candidature was a clear indication to the fact that the right-wing leadership had already gained enough confidence of "taming" Nehru. As we have shown earlier, Nehru acted after the Lucknow session in a manner helpful to this. Rajagopalachari in a letter to Gandhi stated that he was "charmed" by this change in Nehru. Patel also spoke highly of Nehru in a letter to Gandhi. He stated: "We found not the slightest difficulty in cooperating with him and adjusting ourselves to his views on certain points. I have an impression that he is also satisfied." Quoting these two letters, Nehru's biographer states:

Whether, as claimed, Jawaharlal was equally satisfied is doubtful. But he made no public grievance of the clipping of his wings. If he realized that, though he was president, he was being steadily forced to continue the retreat which had begun at Lucknow, he did not disclose it even to his closest friends and threw all his energies into the winning of the elections.[10]

In any case, in Nehru's rejointer to Patel's statement he had assured that he would strive to loyally implement the Congress decisions whatever his own opinion on them. He agreed that his re-nomination to the Congress presidentship was not a recognition to his ideologies, but that it was a general recognition to his actions as president of the Congress for the past eight months. He reiterated that irrespective of whether he was elected to the presidentship or not, he would loyally abide by the decisions of the Congress.

In short, the strategy of the right-wing to "tame" him to the presidency had been successful. As desired by Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders as well as by Birla

9. *Ibid*, p. 32.
10. S. Gopal, *op cit* p. 215.

and other capitalists, they had got a Congress president now who would be ready to loyally implement even a decision to accept office that the Congress might take in future. On the other side, his presidency would attract the left-minded youth and the labouring masses to the Congress. What we find in the statement of Patel is the self-confidence arising out of this calculation. In other words, what was indicated at the Faizpur session was not merely the surge of the left forces. as thought of by many, but also the skillful tactics of the right-wing leadership of maximally utilizing the advancing left forces to serve its own class interests.

It must be noted that all these developments took place at a time when the left movement in general and the socialist-communist forces in particular were able to make significant advances. Explaining the background of the Faizpur session, the official historian of the Congress, Pattabhi Sitaramayya, has dealt at length with the new constitution adopted by the Soviet Union a month before the Faizpur session.

> It was on the 25th November, 1936 just a month prior to the Faizpur session of the Congress that in the great Kremlin Palace 2040 delegates gathered to discuss and adopt the New Constitution of the U. S. S. R. It was the embodiment of, even as it was the testimony to, the economic and political, the cultural and social progress achieved, particularly during the previous twelve years. In one bound, what was purely an agricultural State in the world was transformed into one of the most advanced powers of the world where industries flourished commensurately with agriculture, organized according to modern technique. The New Constitution introduced a new era and a new organisation of the State."[11]

Sitaramayya added that it was no wonder that at Faizpur the atmosphere was surcharged with socialist slogans, emphasizing the rights of workers and peasants on the one hand and declaiming against the forces of imperialism and fascism on the other. As an evidence to this he cites the resolution

11. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op. cit*, p. 29

introduced by the Congress Socialist Party at the Subjects Committee which stated that "the Congress declares the solidarity of Indian people with the enslaved peoples of the world,whether the colonial or the socalled 'Sovereign' States and with the people of U. S. S. R."

Apart from introducing this resolution, the socialists, communists and other left-wing sections also used the conference venue for free political activities. The organization of the *Kisan jatha* which was mentioned earlier was part of these activities. The *jatha* was received by the Congress president Nehru and the Chairman of the Reception Committee, Shankar Rao Deo when it reached the conference venue. Greeting the members of the *jatha* on behalf of the Congress, Nehru congratulated them for the work they did in the villages along their way.

Presiding over the Kisan Conference, N. G. Ranga felicitated Nehru on behalf of the Kisan Congress and on his own behalf for his election to the Congress presidentship for a second term. Expressing satisfaction on the performance of Nehru, Ranga hoped that he would introduce the necessary provisions to give representation to the *kisans* in all the elected bodies of the Congress.

Conferences and committee meetings of the Congress Socialist Party and many other anti-imperialist organizations were also held in the venue of the Faizpur session. The conference provided opportunities for the different groups and organizations of leftists to exchange views among themselves and to propagate the views of these groups and organization among the Congress delegates. As was the case with the Lucknow session, the activities carried out outside the Congress session were broader and more successful than the resolutions adopted formally in the Congress session. However, what attracted the attention of the people inside and outside the session was the spirited debates that took place on the platform of the session. And these debates were centred round the questions of election and the future course of action.

As was the case in the Lucknow session, the right-wing Congress leaders were not prepared to take a clear and final decision on the question of office acceptance. In view of their objectives, taking a decision in favour of office acceptance in the prevailing situation was inopportune. If they took a decision against office acceptance as demanded by the leftists, it would be impossible for them to change the decision later. Besides, at a time when it was necessary to earn the support of a majority of the voters by inspiring the entire people through a massive propaganda against the constitution, it would be unwise to divide the Congress by taking a decision either in favour of or against office acceptance. A decision on the question of office acceptance at that stage would create problems in starting negotiations with the British authorities even after securing a majority in the elections on the same question. These were the considerations that motivated the leadership to defer the decision once again.

As noted earlier, the demand for constituting a Constituent Assembly by Indians themselves was part of the agitations against the constitutional reforms proposed by the British. How such a Constituent Assembly would be formed, what were the conditions necessary for its formation and how these conditions would be brought into force—these questions came up for lively discussions in which the right and left wings came to clash with each other. Finally the conference decided under the pressure of the right-wing leadership to hold a convension comprising the members elected to the Central and provincial legislatures, members of the A I C C and others who might be invited by the Congress Working Committee and constitute a constitution making body.

This was a move made by the right-wing leadership to get their policy relating to the Constituent Assembly accepted by the Congress as was the case with the question of acceptance of office. It was their intention to reduce the Constituent Assembly into a convention and destroy its revolutionary character.

In sum, as in the case of the Lucknow session, the Faizpur session ended in a manner in which the right-wing leadership could claim victory. However, the activities conducted by the leftists outside the conference *pantal* and the propaganda carried out inside the *pantal* stood witness to the advance and the organized character of the leftists. The Kisan rally organized by the re-organized Communist Party which had been in a state of disorganization until the last three years, the Congress Socialist Party which was formed just two years ago and other left forces was an indication to the growing strength of the left. Although Nehru had been "tamed" according to the deliberate plans of the right-wing leadership, the leftist movement claimed to be represented by Nehru was surging ahead without being amenable to be tamed or destroyed.

A related event was the appearnce of M.N. Roy in public. Roy who had reached India through illegal means after being expelled from the Communist International and formed what was called the "Royist Group" was subsequently arrested and had been released just before the Faizpur session after a long period of imprisonment. He was naturally recognized as one of the leaders of the left. Nehru in his presidential adderss had extended welcome to Roy. He was one of the leaders who were present to receive the *Kisan jatha.*

However, right in the Faizpur session Roy had started taking an attitude of leaving the left camp and helping the right-wing leadership directly or indirectly. It may be recalled that Roy had argued that the Indian bourgeoisie had completely fallen in line with the reactionary forces in contradistinction to the Marxist analysis made by Lenin in the Communist International. As a result of the re-thinking he had done after reaching India following his expulsion from the Communist International, Roy had begun to transform himself as the founder leader of a new "radical movement" within the framework of the bourgeois leadership, giving up the idea of independent leadership of the working class. Although this change in him had not taken its full form in

the Faizpur session, its beginning could have been discerned at that stage.

IV. THE ELECTIONS AND AFTER

In accordance with the provisions of the Reforms Act of 1935, elections to the provincial legislatures were held a few weeks after the Faizpur session. The elections were politically significant in many respects. It was for the first time in the political history of India that such a massive electorate was participating in an election. Any one who paid a certain minimum amount to the government as tax or one who was a literate had now the right to vote. The names of about 35 million voters satisfying these qualifications would appear on the electoral list.

Besides, any party winning a majority of seats could form a government at the provincial level and carry on administration on a wide range of subjects. In other words, an unprecedentedly large section of the population had now obtained the right and opportunity to decide who or which party should handle the administrative machinery in the near future, although the administration was confined to the province. Both the right and the left-wings in the Congress had been striving, from their respective stand-points, to strengthen the anti-imperialist movement making use of this right and opportunity.

At the same time, the new constitution was one of placing obstructions before the anti-imperialists striving to win the objective of expelling the British from power and establishing people's governments at all levels. Even in the provincial sector in which powers had been transferred to people's representatives, special powers were vested in the Governor. At the Centre, the hold of the British authorities remained as before and provisions had been made in the new constitution which were suited to serve this purpose.

In the circumstances, the Congress and other anti-imperialist organizations were participating in the elections

to the provincial legislatures not to "bring into force creatively" the provisions of provincial autonomy contained in the constitution, but to "combat" and destroy the whole constitution, particulary the federal system contained in it. That is, the anti-imperialists including the Congress were conducting the election campaign as part of the activities to rally the masses on a wide scale in the struggle to reject the very constitution based on which the elections were being held.

As distinct from this, certain parties and organizations adopting a "creative" approach towards at least the provisions of provincial autonomy in the constitution appeared on the election scene. The Justice Party in the province of Madras, the Independent Labour Party led by B. R. Ambedkar in Bombay and Central Provinces, the National Agricultural Party of Zamindars and landlords in U. P., its counterpart in Punjab, called the Unionist Party and the Krishak Praja Party led by Fazlul Huq in Bengal were prominent among such parties. These were in addition to the communal parties like the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League.

The British rulers came forward to encourage and assist each of these parties and individuals not affiliated to any of them. Thus, the candidates of these and similar other parties and groups as well as independents entered the election field opposing the candidates of the anti-imperialist front represented by the Congress and other anti-imperialist organizations, although the latter were not contesting the elections under a unified leadership or based on a common programme acceptable to them.

The question of the approach towards the constitution prepared by the British government became a lively issue before the 35 million strong electorate. The election became a platform of conflict between two large camps: one comprising all the anti-imperialist forces which, though divided between the left and the right-wings, were fighting against the constitution and striving to draw the entire people in that fight, and the other made up of the different political groups

which, though based on different programmes, were opposed to the anti-imperialist front and for that reason receiving the overt and covert assistance from the British rulers. In the election battle between these two camps the British authorities took certain actions against the anti-imperialist camp and in favour of the camp which was opposed to it. Even while the election campaigns were in progress thousands of prisoners, including the Congress Working Committee member, Subhas Bose, were languishing in the prisons all over the country. Although Abdul Gaffar Khan was set free, he was externed from his home province. The anti-imperialist camp had to face all these obstructions and other kinds of repressive actions by the government in conducting the election campaign.

Nevertheless, the Congress secured an absolute majority in five provinces, Madras, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar and Orissa. In Bombay it reached very close to a majority and in Bengal, Assam and NWF Province it became the biggest single party in the legislatures. Only in Punjab and Sind did the Congress turn up as a minority party. The total number of seats in all the 11 provinces was 1585 out of which the Congress won 715 seats. It must be specifically stated that the Congress contested mainly in the general seats. The total number of seats reserved for Muslims in the assemblies was 482. The Congress contested 58 seats and won 26. Similarly, the Congress contested 20 seats out of a total number of 38 reserved for labour and won 18 seats. The total number of seats reserved for landholders was 37 out of which it contested 8 seats and won 4. Of the total number of 56 seats reserved for industries and commerce, the Congress contested 8 seats and won 3.

It can be seen that the Congress victory was confined largely to the general constituencies and that its performance in the reserved constituencies was rather poor. It contested only a few seats in the reserved constituencies and won still a lesser number of seats. But, it is worth noticing that among the reserved constituencies, only in the constituencies reserved

for labour the Congress was able to contest and win a comparatively higher number of seats.

It is also significant to note that there was not one single political party to contest seats reserved for Muslims comparable in proportion to the number of seats the Congress had contested in the general constituencies. The Muslim League contested only 123 seats out of a total number of 482 seats reserved for Muslims. A majority of Muslim seats were shared by the Unionist Party in Punjab and the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal and by unattached independents.

The elections to the provincial legislatures in 1937 in a way reflected, in general, the political situation prevailing then in India. The victory of the Congress in the general constituencies on one side and its defeat in the constituencies reserved for religious minorities, including the Muslims, the depressed and backward communities and for other special interests, but a stronger support in the seats reserved for labour on the other —this was the picture that emerged. At the same time, there was no political organization to challenge the Congress at the all-India level.

As soon as the elections were over, the question on the future course of action arose before the Congress. An important aspect of this question was office acceptance. Questions also arose as to what the elected Congress members should do inside and outside the legislatures and how should they behave and with what perspective. These and several other problems of similar nature had to be resolved. Needless to say, on each such problem the left and the right clashed with each other. Finally, the Congress Working Committee held at Wardha in February-March 1937 adopted a resolution, the major features of which are as follows.

1. The Congress has entered the legislatures not to cooperate with the new constitution or the government but to combat the Act and the policy underlying it. The Congress adheres to its general and basic policy of non-cooperation with the apparatus of British imperialism except insofar as circumstances may require a variation.

2. The objective of the Congress is *Purna Swaraj* and to that end all its activities are directed. The Congress stands for a genuine democratic state and such a state can only be created by the Indian people themselves through a constituent assembly elected by adult franchise, which can only come into existence when the Indian people have developed sufficient power and sanctions to shape their destiny without external interference.

3. The immmediate objective of the Congress in the legislatures is to fight the new consitution—particularly the federal part of it—and to lay stress on the nations demand for a constituent assembly. Congress members have been dirceted to take the earliest opportunity to put forward in the new Assemblies this demand for a Contituent Assembly, and to support it by mass agitation outside.

4. The Congress policy is not of assisting or cooperating with any function or activity, calculated to enhance the power or prestige of British imperialism in India. Ceremonial, official or social functions of this kind must therefore be avoided and no Congress member should take part in them.

5. No Congress member of the legislatures may accept a title given by the British Government.

6. The Congress Party in each provincial Assembly must act as a disciplined body. Individual members shall have no official contacts with Government other than those resulting from their duties as members, and such as may be expressely authorized by the Party.

7. Congress members should press for the carrying out of the Congress programme as enunciated in the election manifesto and the Congress agrarian resolution. In particular, they should work for

i) A substantial reduction in rent and revenue.

ii) Assessment of income-tax, on a progressive scale, on agricultural incomes, subject to a prescribed minimum.

iii) Fixity of tenure.
iv) Relief from the burden of rural debt and arrears of rent and revenue.
v) Repeal of all repressive laws.
vi) Release of political prisoners, internees and detenues.
vii) Restoration of lands and property confiscated or sold by government during civil disobedience movements.
viii) Eight hours day for industrial workers, without reduction of pay, living wage.
ix) Prohibition of intoxicating liquor and drugs.
x) Unemployment relief.
xi) Reduction of high salaries, allowances, and cost of administration of government.

Congress members elected to the provincial legislature were also directed to give expression to certain important demands of all India application, such as substantial reduction of the military expenditure as well as of the higher civil services, complete national control over trade and tariffs and currency, repeal of all repressive legislation, freedom of speech, press and association, and opposition to war preparations, credit and loans.[12]

Doubts arose regarding the propriety of taking the Oath of Alligiance to the British rulers by members elected to the legislatures before assuming office. It was feared that taking such an oath would go counter to the objective of *Purna Swaraj*. The working committee declared that "the taking of that oath, in order to enable participation in the work of the legislatures, in no way lessens or varies the demand for independence". However, it was also decided that before taking that oath, the members elected should take a pledge declaring alligiance to the Indian people. The all-India convention held on 19th and 20th March 1937 was utilized to take the pledge which stated as follows.

I, a member of this All India Convention convened by the Indian National Congress, pledge myself to the service of

12. Zaidi and Zaidi, *op cit*, pp. 265-268.

India and to work in the legislatures and outside for the Independence of India and the ending of the exploitation and poverty of our people. I pledge myself to work under the discipline of the Congress for the furtherance of Congress ideals and objectives to the end that India may be free and independent and her millions freed from the heavy burdens they suffer from.[13]

V. CONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE OF MINISTRIES

The Congress Working Committee which met on 17th-18th March 1937, immediately before the Convention referred to above, finally took a decision on the controversial question of office acceptance.

The Working Committee decided not reject office as demanded by the left-wing. The Committee was also against acceptance of office just because the Congress commanded a majority in a number of provinces, as argued by the right-wing leaders. It wanted to be satisfied that "the Governor would not use his special powers of interference or set aside the advice of ministers in regard to constitutional activities". In the absence of such an assurance from the rulers, the Congress would not accept office and if it obtained the assurance, it would accept office. The justification for this policy, in the words of the official historian of the Cangress, is as follows.

In six out of eleven provinces, the party that came in a majority would not touch office with a pair of tongs nor would it keep its hands wholly off the business. If the Congress annihilated itself as a parliamentary limb of the nation, the Government knew what to do. If the Congress on the contrary assumed office, the Government would soon adjust themselves to their new environment, for the beauro-cracy is an expert in the art of adjusting itself to the

13. *Ibid*, p. 515.

changing conditions and biding its time for an opportunity to overthrow them. The Congress would not let Government play their game according to their wonted lines.[14]

Earlier, we had dealt at length with the attitude of the Congress, the moderates and the caste-communal politicians towards the new constitution. The federal system with regard to the central government was equally unacceptable to all of them. As with the provincial administration, the constitutional provisions might be acceptable to them, provided the special powers vested in the Governor were removed.

The Congress was now trying to get the special powers vested in the Governor freezed at the provincial level, while rejecting the federal system at the Centre. Such a policy was well suited to the needs of the bourgeois politicians outside the Congress. However, the bourgeois parties were not prepared to organize struggles against the Federation at the Centre and to refuse to form ministries at least temporarily in the provinces in order to get the special powers of the Governor freezed. The Congress was ready to rally the people against the Federation and to keep away from forming ministries at the provincial level until a clear assurance was obtained from the British with regard to the special powers vested in the Governor. The Congress, in fact, maintained that position for three months even in the provinces in which it commanded a majority in the legislature. Such a situation never existed before or after it in Indian politics.

It was relatively easy to take this decision rather than implementing it. None of the Governors, nor the Viceroy nor the British Government was prepared to give such an assurance as demanded by the Congress. They maintained that giving an assurance against the exercise of powers vested in accordance with the provisions of the constitution was "unconstitutional". Not only the British authorities, but even the moderates like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru took this attitude. On the contrary, many Indians who were known to be constitutional experts maintained that the attitude of the Congress

14. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op cit*, p. 45.

was correct both politically and consititutionally. A.B Kieths, the top constitutional expert in England, concurred with this view.

However, rather than remaining confined within the narrow circles of constitutional experts and politicians as a point of debate, it became a live political issue with the people. A country-wide *hartal* was observed on 1st April, the day on which the provisions with regard to provincial autonomy in the new constitution came into force. On that day millions of people were rallied behind the proposal put forward by the Congress to reject the British made constitution and to constitute a constituent assembly to frame a constitution of the Indian people. Not only the Congress committees and activists, but also trade unions and other mass organizations and the Communist and Socialist parties actively participated in the *hartal* and demonstrations. These demonstrations naturally provided support to the Congress stipulation for forming ministries.

But both the British authorities and the right-wing Congress leadership equally dreaded the continuance of this struggle with the direct participation of the people. Although 'interim' minority governments were formed by other parties where the Congress had kept itself away, the British rulers knew that these governments had no popular backing. Those who joined these 'governments' were known imperialist agants and were hated by a vast majority of the people. From the past experience the authorities had learnt that if such a situation was allowed to continue, people would resort to fierce struggles which they would not be able to put down even by repressive measures.

The right-wing Congress leaders, on the other hand, could not even think of overthrowing the British rule through a mass revolution and establishing a state of the Indian people. Whenever mass struggles broke out, they stood in the forefront claiming themselves to be the leaders of these struggles and utilizing that position to bargain with the rulers. This had been their tactics. Precisely for the same reason,

they could accept neither the anti-struggle approach of the moderates nor the leftist approach of leading militant mass struggles along revolutionary paths. They wanted to strive for a compromise with the rulers by standing in the forefront of the struggles. This was what happened, in fact, in 1920-21 and 1930-31 and the same was being repeated in 1937. Unlike the moderates and the caste-communal politicians, the right-wing Congress leaders were not ready to form ministries "strictly in accordance with the constitution" as soon as they obtained a majority in the legislatures. At the same time, they were frightened by the waves of people's struggles that might naturally arise out of the political uncertainty following the refusal to form the ministries. They indisputably wanted to avoid such a situation.

It was in this circumstance that Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders together with the legal experts supporting their views entered into a controversy with the British authorities and their legal experts on the "legal validity of demanding assurance" with regard to the excercise of special powers vested in Governor. Athough in form the controversy was legal as it related to the interpretation of the constitution, in content it was political. The crux of the issue was whether the people's representatives (the bourgeoisie and its companions) should be able to run the administration, though within the framework of limited provincial autonomy, without interference from the Governor. Although both sides displayed extreme rigidity in presenting their arguments, they had a desire to reach a settlement. Both adopted a tone, language and arguments which were helpful to avoid a clash and to facilitate a settlement.

Since neither side was in a position to backslide, the resulting deadlock continued for three months. During this period "interim" governments were in power in the Congress majority provinces. The popular feelings rose high agaist them and their British supporters, and the Communists, Socialists and other leftists tried to give these feelings an organized form of anti-imperialist struggle. In the 'war of statements'

between the British and the Congress in this period, each stage turned out to be a step towards a compromise. Finally, on 21st June the Viceroy made a statement which helped to end the deadlock.

The Viceroy's statement may be summurized as follows. There need be no fear that the Governors would take steps over the heads of the popular ministers, whatever be the wordings in the constitution. The experience of the non-Congress ministries, majority as well as minority, bears witness to this. Even assuming that doubts and distrust expressed by the Congress are honest, it can feel assured that the Governors will not unnecessarily interefere in the day-to-day functioning of the ministers and that there will be no hindrance to their carrying on the rule in accordance with their policies.

Did this constitute the assurance the Congress had sought? The right-wing leadership (Working Committe) said it did. Because, the Viceroy, while admitting the probability of the Governor dismissing the ministry in extraordinary circumstances or the ministry resigning, had clarified that the Governor would not interfere in the day to-day functioning of the ministry. Once this approach was adopted, its practice depended mainly on the personal relation between the Governor and the ministers. The moment this relation was vitiated, the ministry could resign. If there was a difference of opinion between the Governor and the ministry which might not be too crucial to warrent its resignation, the ministers had the right to place it before the people. Therefore, the Working Committee which met in the first week of July 1937 resolved that "Congressmen be permitted to accept office where they may be invited thereto. But it desires to make it clear that office is to be accepted and utilised for the purpose of working in accordance with lines laid down in the Congress election manifesto and to further in every possible way the Congress policy of combating the new Act on the one hand and of prosecuting the constructive programmes on the other."

The Working Committee was of the view that though the assurance demanded by the AICC in March was not there in the literal sense, its essence was contained in the official statement. So, the Committee took the decision without calling another meeting of the AICC to ratify it, since it considered that any further delay in taking a decision would be detrimental to the interests of the nation.

It may be recalled that Nehru who was the president of the Congress when the Working Committee took this decision had been opposed to the approach contained in the resolution of the Committee. Besides him, there were many others among the leaders and ordinary Congressmen who were similarly opposed to office acceptance. Yet they were prepared to implement the decision, since the minority had to abide by the majority decision. Accordingly, Congress ministries were formed not only in five provinces where it had cammanded a majority but also in Bombay and the NWF Province with the help of certain others. After a few months Congress ministries were formed in Sind and Assam also with the help of certain other groups. Thus the Congress transformed itself into a ruling party at the provincial level.

20

AFTER OFFICE ACCEPTANCE

I. THE CONGRESS-LEAGUE RELATION

We have noted earlier that the Muslims were not represented in the election by a single political party, but by a number of organizations, parties and individuals. The general picture of Muslim politics that presented itself during the elections consisted of several organizations and individuals among whom some were close to the Congress and others opposed to it and receiving assistance from the British government for that reason. This situation continued even when the formation of ministries became a live issue. In the Muslim majority provinces where the Congress met with a number of electoral reverses, there was no single political party of the Muslims capable of forming ministries. It was not the Muslim League but the Krishak Praja Party and the Unionist Party that formed ministries in Bengal and Punjab, respectively, with support of other groups in the

legislatures. The League had contested only a few seats because it lacked the confidence of winning the elections. So, the question of leaders of the Muslim League forming ministries did not arise.

However, the attitude of the Congress towards forming ministries and the discussions held between the Congress and certain Muslim organizations which were regarded nationalist brought about a change in this situation. A sitution began to develop in which the Muslim League which was only one of the parties of the Muslims claimed itself to be the sole representative of the Muslims. It was later alleged and repeated in the posthumously published memoirs of Maulana Azad that what led to the growth of the Muslim League was the "rigid attitude" adopted by the Congress in general and its president Nehru in particular in regard to the formation of ministries.

In order to understand the truth of the matter, it is necessary to look back to the Muslim politics at the time of the elections. The capacity of the Congress to approach the Muslim voters was limited. Among the Muslim majority provinces, the Congress was strong only in the NWF Province. In many areas there were a number of Muslim leaders who wanted to maintain good relations with the Congress. Jamiat-ul-Ulema was the powerful organization of such leaders. Besides, the leaders of the Muslim organizations including the Muslim league were formerly the active workers of the Congress. Like Jinnah, these leaders also were organizing Muslims on the basis of moderate politics and were in agreement with the Congress on all issues except on the question of Muslim representation in the new consititution.

There were also certain other Muslim parties almost in all provinces representing the big landlords among the Muslims. With the assistance of the British they were striving to mobilize the Muslim masses against the Congress as well as against the Muslim parties like the League, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, etc. Consequenty, many Muslim parties including the League had reached some kind of informal understanding

with the Congress. It was partly as a result of this that the Congress decided to contest only a few seats reserved for the Muslims. This was mainly in the NWF Province.

Even at this stage there were frictions between the moderate Muslim leaders like Jinnah and the Congress leaders like Nehru. It was but natural that the general Congress policy of fighting against the landlords and other reactionary forces in order to wipe out hunger and poverty and the Congress election manifesto were allergic to the moderate Muslim politicians. Moreover, Nehru had repeatedly stated during the election campaign that the caste-communal politics was a product of the reactionary social forces and that the demand of communal representation in which the common people of all castes and religions had no interest at all was of benefit to a handful of bigwigs among them. Jinnah could not but contest these argements.

Thus, even Jinnah who, as compared to many other Muslim leaders, had been able to reconcile with Congress raised voice aganist the approach of the anti-imperialist front represented by Nehru in his election campaign.

The situation became more complicated after the elections. In the United Provinces where the Muslims constituted a considerable force, the Muslim League was led by a former Congress worker, Choudhury Khaliquzzmam who held political negotiations with the Congress leaders Govind Ballabh Pant and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. As a result of these negotiations, Khaliquzzman rejected the offer of joining the minority "interim" government of the loyalists in the province. The informal understanding reached between the Congress and the Muslim League was that the League would be a partner in the government when the Congress formed its ministry after ending the deadlock in connection with office acceptance.

However, this raised a controversy in the Congress leadership. Many prominent Congress leaders including Nehru and Azad were opposed to the understanding with the League. Following discussions held within the Congress leadership, it was finally decided to take ministers from the

league under certain conditions. These conditions were as follows.

1. The Muslim League in the U. P. Assembly should not function as a separate group. Their members should join the Congress Parliamentary Party. Like other members of the Congress Parliamentary Party, they should function subjcet of the discipline of the Congress.

2. The Parliamentary Board of the League in U. P. should be dissolved and the League members should work for the success of the Congress candidates in the future by-elections.

3. In case the Congress decided to resign form the ministry or legislature,the League members should follow suit.

These conditions were not acceptable to the League. They meant that the members of the League should become Congressmen. Not only did the attempts to form a coalition government in U. P. fail, but the League leaders charged the Congress leaders with trying to foist Congress domination over the Muslims.

Its repercussions were not confined to U. P. alone. A Country-wide campaign was conducted that the "Hindu Congress" was trying to thrust its dominatation on Muslims and other minorities. The case of U. P. was cited as an example to show that the Congress was trying to establish its single party rule without allowing the true representatives of the Muslim community to participate in the ministry, even after it had become clear that the Congress lacked the support of the Muslims. The Muslims leaders, including Jinnah, created the feeling among the Muslim community that its political organizations should unite to defeat the Congress design to establish Hindu domination.

As a direct consequence of this, the Muslim leaders belonging to different organizations till then decided to join the League. The Unionist Party leader Sikander Hayat Khan, the Krishak Praja Party leader Fazlul Huq, Muhammad Saadulla of Assam and others called upon their partymen to join the League. All these were done in deference to the

call given by Jinnah to the Muslisms to organize themselves against the Hindu domination of the Congress and to regard the League the organization of their own. They resisted what they considered to be "anti-Muslim" actions taken by the Congress ministries in the different provinces and organized the Muslim masses against them.

These activities that continued for three years from 1937 raised the Muslim League to a new status. Like the Congress which entered into negotiations with the government and other political parties claiming itself to be the sole representative of the Indian people, the League now started negotiating with the Congress as the party representing the Indian Muslims. In order to bring pressure to bear on these negotiations, the League also organized various struggles. This ultimately led the League in 1940 to adopt the 'Pakistan resolution' at Lahore.

There are some who hold that this situation could have been avoided, had the Congress not taken such an adamant attitude with regard to the formation of the ministry in U.P. and evaluate the subsequent events accordingly. The developments with regard to the origin and growth of the Congress and the Muslim League, and the conflicts and compromises between them as explained in the earlier chapters would show that this is incorrect. It may be recalled that the bourgeois section among the Muslims formed its own political organization (the Muslim League) when the Congress (bourgeois) leadership gathered enough strength to demand Swaraj as its political objective. Then the question was what share the Muslim bourgeoisie would get in the Swaraj. When the Indian bourgeoisie began to fight adopting different means to achieve its objective, the Muslim bourgeoisie began to do the same. This was basic to the Congress-League relations which took different forms at different stages.

The Congress-League conflicts in the initial period (1906-1916); the Lucknow Pact between them in 1916; the Khilafat movement which grew as part of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement; the conflict between them following

the failure of the movement; the cooperation among the Jinnah group, the moderates and the Congress in the Central legislature; the Congress-League split on the question of Gandhi's civil disobedience movement and the Round Table Conferences; cooperation between the Congress and the League once again, to a lesser extent though, following the adoption of parliamentary programme by the Congress—these constitute the genaral picture of the Congress-League relation.

In other words, a particular section of the bourgeoisie belonging to the Muslim community was getting strengthened as part of the Indian burgeoisie politically as well as socially and economically. This was a conflict between two sections of the bourgeoisie wich were equally interested in acquiring power from the British, a conflict on the question of sharing political power.

The elections to the provincial legislatures held in 1937 constitute an evidence to show the extent to which the Indian burgeoisie in general and its component Muslim burgeoisie in particular had been able to make progress. The Indian burgeoisie as a whole had been engaged in the task of deriving maximum benefit out of the provincial autonomy incorperated in the new constitution and also of gaining political power at the Centre. The Muslim bourgeoisie, on the other hand, had been trying to maximize their share of power. It was this effort that appeared in the form of the urgent demand of forming a Congress-Legue coalition government in 1937. It was the same that led the Muslim League to raise the slogan of Pakistan in the sense of dividing India into "Hindu India" and "Muslim India" and dividing power between the bourgeoisie in the respective sectors.

It is meaningful that the need for a unified all-India leadership for the Muslims was felt when it became clear that the majority everywhere except in the Muslim majority regions and consequently the political power in the provinces passed into the Congress. The proposal for a Congress-League coalition was an expression of this desire. Just as the Congress asked the British to accept its claim to represent

the Indian people, so the Muslim League demanded the Congress and the government to accept its claim to represent the Muslim community.

This was a challenge to the claim made by the Congress that it represented the entire Indian people. Similarly, the support received by the Congress in regions like the NWF Province and the programme of "mass contact" adopted by the Congress to extend this support to other regions constituted a challenge to the claim made by the League.

The stand taken by the League leaders was that the Congress and the League were the organizations of the Hindus and Muslims, respectively, and that they together should settle accounts with the British and acquire the rights of the Indian bourgeoise. If this were conceded, then Congress would cease to exist politically. That was why the Congress demanded dissolution of the League Parliamentary Party in return to the induction of League members in the ministry. If this was accepted, then the League would cease to exist. That was why the League leaders rejected this proposal. Inother words, basic to the rise of the Muslim League during 1937-1940 was the division and in-fighting within the Indian bourgeoisie.

II. THE NEW POPULAR UPSURGE

The formation of Congress ministries in seven provinces first and coalition ministries with Congress partnership later in Assam and NWF Province gave rise to optimism among the people throughout the country. People believed that the new governments would bring measures against the vested interests as envisaged in the Karachi-Faizpur Congress resolutions and the Congress election manifesto. However, the ministers and the Congress leaders did not act in accordance with the aspirations of the people and even went against them. They, in fact, took a number of actions against ordinary Congressmen and other political workers as well as

their supporters. Most ministries functioned in a manner in which the ministers came to terms with the Governors, British civilian officials and the vested interests.

Nehru expressed his protest and opposition to this state of affairs, but with no effect. Gandhi who had ceased to be even a four-anna member of the Congress was standing firmly behind the ministers and other right-wing Congress leaders. Nehru was not prepared to raise his voice against Gandhi. Nehru's biographer stated:

> ...On the whole, the record of the Congress ministries was, as Jawaharlal Nehru realized soon enough, static if not counter-revolutionary. The worst cases were Bombay and Madras. There was no quesion now of taking office to combat the new Act; the ministers worked in close cooperation with the Governors, and in carrying out minor reforms forgot the major issues.Soon after they took office, Jawaharlal, as Congress president, directed them to release all political prisoners. Govind Ballabh Pant's first act on taking charge in the U. P. was to sit down at his office table to write the order for their discharge. But K. M. Munshi, the Home Minister of Bombay, 'if anything more royalist than the king', ignored his directive. Keen to detain communist and left-wing leaders, he asked a surprised Viceroy to put the C. I. D. of Bengal in touch with his own C. I. D. to deal with communists in and around Bombay. When Jawaharlal rebuked Munshi for his zeal in this matter—'you have already become a police officer' —Munshi appealed to the higher authority of Gandhi and continued as before. Jawaharlal protested in the Working Committee that the Congress ministers appeared more concerned about the effect their actions would have upon the British Government than upon their own people; but his arguments had no effect.[1]

1. Sarvapally Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—A Biography*, vol. I, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1976, pp 229-230.

S. Gopal also refers to B. G. Kher and C. Rajagopalachari, the Chief Ministers of Bomabay and Madras, respectively. Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, had advised the Bombay Governor Lord Brabourne in a letter: 'My advice to you, for what it is worth, would be, here and elsewhere, to play for time and to miss no chance of impressing Kher and his colleagues with a sense of their own importance and of the necessity for standing on their own legs." Dr. Gopal further quotes what Lord Erskine, the Governor of Madras, "a diehard Tory himself", recorded about Rajagopalachari: "In fact, he is even too much of a Tory for me, for though I may not go back twenty years, he wishes to go back two thousand and to run India as it was run in the time of King Asoka." [2]

The first issue on which the Congress ministries and the left movement clashed was the release of political prisoners and keeping in abeyance the repressive laws. In many provinces, including Bombay and Madras, repressive actions against political workers were revived. Without inhibition the Congress governments resorted to such measures as suppression of leftist newspapers and printing presses which was the order of the day under the British. Instead of releasing political prisoners, the Congress governments put more inside jails.

Not only the activists of the left parties and the Congress but also Congress committees (including leaders like Nehru and Bose) raised their voice against these actions. But that did not make any effect. The Congress ministers continued to act according to their whims with the open support of Gandhi. Nehru acquiesced in it in the name of 'Congress discipline'. "We cannot agitate against ourselves", he said.

But facing these and other repressive actions, the agitations and struggles of workers, peasants and students were advancing. Communists and socialists were ceaselessly working to give these struggles an organized form, thereby

2. *Ibid*, pp. 230-231.

strengthening the anti-imperialist front. Many Congress committees too participated in these activities.

The strike launched by the workers of a British-owned textile mill in Kanpur in July 1937 for increased wages and for recognition of their union was a brilliant example of such struggles. Although the Communists and Socialists were in the forefront organizing and guiding the strike, the local Congress Committee played an active role in it. Consequently, it developed into a general strike of all workers in and around Kanpur. Under its pressure, the U. P. Government appointed an enquiry committee with Rajendra Prasad as chairman to go into the demands of the workers. The report it submitted conceded many demands of the workers.

The Kanpur strike became a model for worker's actions throughout the country. It also helped to make anti-imperialists all over India aware of the outcome if communists, socialists and ordinary Congressmen stood united in serving and helping the workers. Following this, there was a wave of strike struggles all over the country under the pressure of which Congress governments in many states appointed committees to enquire into workers problems and demands. Feeling the wind of change many capitalists conceded the demands of the workers to avoid strikes. There were others who were not prepared to follow this path. In those industries workers struck work which was supported by all political parties including the Congress, compelling the Congress governments to take action to make the capitalists concede the workers' demands. More than 50 percent of the strikes in 1937-39 was partly or fully successful.

These strikes were reflected in the number as well as in the membership of trade unions which showed a big increase. The number of unions went up from 241 in 1936 to 562 in 1939 and the membership from 268,000 to 390,000. The increase was mainly in Bengal, Madras, Punjab and U. P. Among the trade unions it was the AITUC under the leftist leadership that took great strides. Its 71 affiliated unions with 51,600 members in May 1936 rose to 193 unions with

348,000 members by February 1940. On the other hand, the National Trade Union Federation and its affiliated unions led by the moderates were weakened. Fearing isolation from the working class its leadership decided in January 1938 to merge their organization with the AITUC.

This advance of the working class flabbergasted the Congress ministers and other right-wing leaders. In order to stop this advance, they started taking repressive actions, which was at its worst in Bombay. Apart from lathi-charges and other acts of repression, they prepared a bill incorporating most undemocratic provisions with regard to recognition of trade unions. Strikes against this "black Act" and in defence of the immediate demands of the workers became widespread. The impact of these actions was felt in the Congress as well. Not only the ordinary Congress workers and the local Congress committees but also the provincial committees came out against the approach of the Congress ministers.

This was also a period of peasant agitations and struggles. The elections to the provincial legislatures were held within a year of the formation of All-India Kisan Sabha. As a result of the activities of the Kisan Sabha and also because of the declarations made by the Congress, thousands of activists had entered in the midst of the peasants. Even from among the ranks of the peasantry thousands of militant workers had started rising. Mass meetings, demonstrations and marches were held all over the country demanding the Congress ministries to reduce rent, scale down bebt burdens and stop evictions as assured in the Congerss election mainfesto and in the Faizpur resolution. The Kisan Sabha membership rose from 600,000 in May 1938 to 800,000 in 1939.

It must be noted that there was a fundamental difference between this new peasant upsurge and the one witnessed earlier under Gandhi's leadership. It was as part of the national movement under the baurgeois leadership that peasant went into action when Gandhi gave a call. It was true that

there were tens of thousands of militant workers among them. But Gandhi was not prepared to fan their fighting spirit into a revolutionary fire. On the contrary, the Gandhian method of struggle in those days which was anchored on "non-violence", was an attempt to tie down the peasantry to the confines of bourgeois nationalism. In contrast to this, an independent organization (the Kisan Sabha) of a revolutionary class had emerged now,which, though cooperating with the bourgeois national movement, was functioning indepenent of it and making its own contributions to the anti-imperialist movement. Like the working class, the peasantry had adopted as their own the red flag, May Day, etc., which are the symbols of socialist revolution. On such matters they showed no hesitation in coming into a clash with the bourgeois leadership of the Congress. As a matter of fact, the growth of the Kisan Sabha in the provinces where the Congress ministries were in office and the role played by ordinary Congressmen and the Congress committees at the lower level in its growth had disturbed the Congress ministers and the right-wing Congress leaders. So, the higher Congress committees mounted a political attack on the Kisan Sabha. They directed that Congressmen should not participate in the activities of the Kisan Sabha. They asserted that the leadership being given by the Kisan Sabha and its activists in organizing resistence to the violence let loose by the Zemindars or the big landlords was "against the creed of non-violence of the Congress". Not satisfied with this political attack, they unhesitatingly took actions against the activists of the Kisan Sabha using the provisions of the existing repressive laws.

However, they realized that this alone could not contain the peasant movement. Therefore they tried to placate the peasants by conceding some of their demands and making preparations for legislations to this effect, which went in parallel to the repressive actions. Thus in many provinces the Congress governments appointed committees to enquire and report on legislative measures to be introduced

with a view to ending Zamindari and other landownership systems.

The reports of most of these committees were extremely moderate in content. Moreover, the Second World War broke out and the Congress ministries resigned before initiating legislative work based on these reports. Thus, these reports did not benefit the peasantry in any way. However, it became clear that the peasants, like the working class, could form their own organizations and agitate and fight under the banner of these organizations compelling the Congress ministries to take actions favourable to them. This brought out another important face of the anti-imperialist front.

The All-India Students Federation which was founded in 1936 under the leadership of Communists and Congress Socialists also made similar progress in the years following the formation of Congress ministries in the provinces. For examples its membership increased from 40,000 in 1938 to 100,000 in 1939. This progress of the students movement—yet another face of the anti-imperialist front—was achieved against the wishes of the right-wing Congress leadership and in spite of its opposition.

III. MINISTRIES AND THE PEOPLE

The existence of the Congress ministries which took office in July 1937 and the non-Congress ministries in the Congress minority provinces and also the 'interim' ministries which were in power in the Congress majority provinces before the Congress decided to accept office enabled the people to compare the Congress and non-Congress ministries. These non-Congress ministries functioned more or less the same way in which the Congress ministers functioned as in charge of certain departments allocated to them in the provinces in accordance with the 1919 reforms Act. Therefore the coming into power of the Congress ministries had been considered as the beginning of a new stage in the history of Indian politics.

For about 18 years after Gandhi took over the leadership, the Congress had been functioning as an organized opposition to the British government. With the emergence of the Swaraj Party, the Congress decided to extend its role of opposition to the legislature. In 1930 it gave up the parliamentary programme and became an opposition party functioning only outside the legislature. A party which had been thus functioning continuously as an opposition now in the legislature, now outside the legislature, had taken office in some provinces.

On a number of counts there were differences between the Congress ministers and other ministers who had taken office now. Some of these differences were conspicuous. For example, the Congress decided that its ministers should not draw a salary exceeding Rs 500 in deference to the resolution adopted at the Karachi session. This was less than the amount drawn by the non-Congress ministers in other provinces and the 'interim' ministers in the Congress majority provinces. Further, the Congress ministers had followed the Congress discipline and Gandhian way of life including habitually wearing *khadi*. This made them distinct from other ministers and created the impression that they took office representing the *daridra narayans* (poor).

A more basic change that had come about was that it was made clear that though each ministry was functioning in a particular province, it had to function as part of an all-India organization and subject to its leadership and direction. The Congress ministries had a common perspective and a common programme giving clear and concrete directions in their day-to-day functioning. There was a central organizational leadership to supervise their functioning and to rectify the mistake they committed in their functioning. This central organizational leadership had the authority and capability to reprimand and even to dismiss any ministry or minister who disobeyed its directives. No non-Congress ministry now in power or an earlier ministry was subject to such a control.

Parties opposed to the Congress as well as the British newspapers strongly criticized the fnctioning of the provincial ministries under such a centralized political leadership. They contended that it was undemocratic for an individual or organization outside a province to be vested with powers to interefere in the affairs of a ministry in that province. The Congress leaders replied that the main political question before India was that of the administration of the whole country and not that how each province had to be administered. The real question was how the administration of the whole country including that at the Centre should be transferred from the British to the Indians and how to effectively carry on the struggle for the transfer of administration. The Congress had taken over power in those provinces where it had commanded a majority in the legislature only as part of the process of oranizing the people as a whole for the purpose.

The non-Congress ministries in other provinces had no such perspectives and no such central leadership to control and guide them. As distinct from them, the ministers of the Congress who had adopted the political objective of uniting the whole organization, perspective and method of struggle must submit themselves to a centralized discipline.

The Congress which decided to exercise full control over its ministries evolved a form of organization suited for this purpose. Before the elections it had formed a Parliamentary Board to nominate the candidates to contest elections and to carry on the organizational work in connection with the elections. After the elections it formed a Parliamentary Sub-committee consisting of Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Abul Kalam Azad to control the ministries and to give them guidance in their activities.

The very constitution of the Parliamentary Sub-committee with Patel as chairman and with Rajendra Prasad, a well-known right-wing leader, as a member, needs special mention. It was during the presidency of Nehru, a known leftist, that the Parliamentary Board was formed with a

rightist majority and with no place for Nehru in it. This Board was to control the functioning of the ministries. This was a clear evidence to show the correlation of forces inside the Congress. Nehru to attract the masses and secure their votes, and Patel to control the ministries after winning the elections—such was the division of labour inside the Congress.

Although Nehru was not a member of the Parliamentary Board, he was a force to be reckoned with in the formation of the ministries and in their functioning. Durga Das describes how the choice of the Chief Minister was made in U. P., the home province of Nehru.

> (Pandit) Pant told me one day of how his Ministry came to be formed. Purushottamdas Tandon was senior to Pant but was dedicated to the cause of Indian *Sanskriti* (culture) which appeared to Nehru and Rafi a reactionary outlook. Tandon was senior to Nehru too, and in fact was among the few who called him by his first name. Rafi manoeuvred to get Tandon to accept the Speakership of the U. P. Assembly and thus cleared the way for Pant...to take over as Chief Minister. Rafii, on his part, told me how he had helped to insulate the Pant Ministry against "the irritable criticism and interference of the unpredictable Nehru". Pant and he waited on Nehru at his residence in Allahabad and sought his blessings for the induction of Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit in the Ministry. Nehru, who doted on his younger sister, readily agreed. This plan did succeed to a very great extent, but still Nehru could not help an occasional outburst.[3]

With the formation of ministries Nehru began to drift away from his colleagues. He was not able to reconcile himself with the functioning of the ministries controlled by Patel and other right-wing leaders. Sometimes he publicly expressed his sentiments in this regard. For example, Durga Das has recorded an incident in which Nehru got infuriated at a meeting when Pant's peon entered clad in his official uniform.

3. Durga Das, *India: From Curzon to Nehru and After*, London, Collins, 1969, p. 184.

He was restive of many omissions and commissions of the Congress ministries. He had noted a tendency in the Congress ministers to be on good terms with the British civil officials rather than considering the ministry as an instrument in the struggle against the administrative system imposed by the British. Nehru's fury at the official uniform of Pant's peon was symbolic of his opposition to this tendency.

If this was the plight of Nehru, it is needless to mention that of the ordinary Congressmen. People had great expectations form the Congress leaders after they assumed ministership as the spokesmen and representatives of the *daridra narayans*.

> The expectations of the populace were pitched in a high key. When Zemindars (big landlords) were almost all defeated in the elections, a big revolution which had already been in full swing, received an added impetus in the Zamindars for the revision of old tenures and taxes. Agrarian relief, scaling down debts, removal of intermediaries in cultivation, restriction of the extent of lands possessed by absentee landlords, abolition of illegal exactions...these were the batch of Reforms which the popular ministers had to address themselves to.[4]

In other words, the people had expected that many of the demands raised by the peasantry before and after the formation of the Kisan Sabha could be realized with the emergence of the Congress ministries.

The Communist Party, Congress Socialist Party and the left-wing Congressmen tried to give an organized form to these expectations that arose among the peasants, workers and other labouring masses. Attempts were made to make the Congress implement a programme for social transformation. They consciously utilized the freedom of activities which became available with the formation of the Congress ministries to organize mass agitations and to form trade unions

4. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op cit*, pp. 54-55. A number of items such as total prohibition in the list of Sitaramayya have been left out here.

and peasant organizations. They transformed the very existence of the ministries under the command of Sardar Patel into conditions for the growth of the left movement. They came forward to raise the demand that the promises made to the people in the election manifesto and other official documents of the Congress must be fulfilled.

This led to serious clashes. The leftists and the ordinary Congressmen had started feeling that the Congress leaders who had now become ministers were not functioning in accordance with the promises formally given by the Congress. From the incident narrated by Durga Das it must be understood that even Nehru had shared this feeling. Dr. Gopal, Nehru's biographer, stated that having understood that he would not be able to reconcile himself with the political atmosphere arising out of the formation of Congress ministries, Nehru "virtually opted out of the day-to-day activities of the domestic politics" and engaged himself in developments outside India. [5]

The Congress governments freely used the provisions of those very repressive laws which the British government had been using against the Congress earlier, angainst the activists of mass organizations. Protests against these actions came not only from the ranks of the Congress but also from certain Congress committees in the different provinces.

In sum, the formation of the Congress ministries at one and the same time helped the growth of the bourgeoisie as well as of the left revolutionary forces fighting against the bourgeoise. It also helped each of them to formulate their respective strategy for anti-imperialist struggles. For the first time in the histroy of the Congress and of Indian politics, there emerged a bourgeois strategy of bargaining with the imperialists both by making use of the administrative machinery and by rallying the people under a well-trained centralized leadership as well as a leadership (Patel and others) to put this strategy into practice. On the other side,

5. S. Gopal *op. cit.* p 232.

a leftist political force basing itself on the strategy of revolutionary struggles against the Congress strategy of bargain began to emerge.

Nehru who aspired to remain on the side of these revolutionary forces but kept himself away from the conflicts between these two forces for want of mental strength was used by Patel and his cohorts as an ornament that could be placed at the top of their organization. The left forces which were uncompromisingly opposing the right-wing strategy of bargain with the British imperialists found another prominent leftist leader—Subhas Bose to stand with them at least for the time being. It was in the background of an impending clash between the left forces with Nehru and Bose on their side, and the right-wing leadership under Patel and Rajendra Prasad that the next annual session of the Congress was held in Haripura.

IV. TOWARDS CRISIS

The Haripura session of the Congress was held in February 1938 in the shadow of a political crisis that arose from the resignation of the Bihar Chief Minister Srikrishna Sinha and U. P. Chief Minister Govind Ballabh Pant. The resignation was a sequal to the refusal of the Governors to concur with the decisions of the cabinets of Bihar and U. P. to release political prisoners. The question arose before the delegates to the session whether this political crisis would remain confined to these provinces. Doubts were expressed whether the assessment of the political situation made by the Congress at the time of formation of the ministries following the political-legal controvery that lasted for three months was correct, whether the Governors were interfering in the functioning of the ministries or not and, if they were, whether it was not proper for the Congress leadership to direct other Congress Chief Ministers also to resign and lead a country-wide struggle.

A situation was developing all over the country which might turn this into a crucial political issue. In Bengal, well-known for the valour and sacrifice displayed in the anti-imperialist struggle, thousands of political workers were behind the bars. The government there did not take any action to release them. Instead, it was resorting to fresh repressive measures. Similarly, a considerable number of political prisoners from Bengal and other provinces had been banished to the Andaman Islands. The Central government did not even consider the question of releasing them. This naturally created deep discontent and unrest among the people throughout the country. It was in this context that the Congress governments of Bihar and U. P. decided to release the political prisoners under their jurisdiction. The interference of the governors drew a storm of protest from the people.

However, neither the Congress nor the Congress Chief Ministers wanted to bring the matters to a head. On the contrary, they adopted an attitude which would facilitate a compromise. Durga Das, who was the Lucknow correspondent of the *Statesman*, has put it on record that the U. P. Chief Minister Pant had drafted his resignation letter very carefully making sure that it did not impire his relations with the Governor and that he (Durga Das) helped Pant to soften the tone and approach of the draft.

The resolution adopted by the Haripura session of the Congress had made reference to an incident which drew objections from the Governor of U. P. In order to bring out the attitude of the Congress leadership towards the issue involved, the relevant part of the resolution is given below.

> On behalf of the U. P. Governor it has been stated that the demonstrations organised to welcome the Kakori prisoners and the speeches delivered by some of them had interfered with the policy of gradual release of political prisoners. The Congress has always discouraged unseemly demonstrations and other objectionable activities. The demonstrations and speeches referred to by the U. P. Governor were strongly disapproved by Mahatma Gandhi.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, President of the Congress, had similarly taken immediate notice of the indiscipline which was thus betrayed. Nor were they ignored by the Ministers. As a result of these corrective steps public opinion rapidly changed and even the persons concerned came to realise their mistake.[6]

The resolution was an open admission that the obections raised by the Governor were not entirely baseless as well as an expression of the readiness on the part of the Congress leadership to carry on matters according to the wishes of the Governors. The conciliatory attitude expressed in the resolution was in fact an appeal to the Governors not to interefere with the functioning of the ministers. Furthermore, this conciliatory attitude would not be limited to the question of the release of political prisoners. As we have repeatedly pointed out earlier, the Congress leadership was striving at a compromise with the British authorities on all the issues including the Federal system at the Centre in such a way as to protect maximally its own class interests.

However, the British authorities were aware of the fact that a considerable section within the Congress was working uncompromisingly against this conciliatory attitude. The actions taken by the Governors of Bihar and U. P. were designed to test the strength of this section as well as the willingness of the leadership to resist it and continue this conciliatory attitude. The resolution adopted at the Haripura session had moreover shown that the leadership was prepared for compromise disregarding the leftists. The resolution had specifically stated that the "Congress Ministers have more than once declared their determination to take adequate action in the matter of violent crime..."[7]

Consequently, soon after the Haripura session ministerial crisis in Bihar and U. P. were brought to an end. The ministers who had resigned resumed office and the statements and counter-statements were exchanged between

6. Zaidi and Zaidi, *op. cit*, p. 437.
7. *Ibid*, p.437

the ministers and the Governors for this purpose. But the Haripura session marked the beginning of an intense struggle within the Congress on several issues including the question of the relase of political prisoners.

> The commotions and the convulsions in national thought during the two preceding years were largely conditioned by the concepts of Socialism and Communism which travelled afresh into the country, the conflicts that arose in 1938 must largely be put down as the off-shoots of the earlier antagonisms that had been raging indeed for some years past in the Congress annals. Here was Gandhi who though not a member of the Congress was still the power behind the throne, the fountain spring of all ideas of constructive nationalism and the architect of that mighty barrage which helped to stem successfully the tide of violence. There were the younger folks who felt impatient over the slow progress of the ideas rooted in non-violence and were hard put to discover short cuts to vertical heights or make long jumps over impassable gulfs. The formation of Ministries in particular did not achieve that millinnium nor did the popular governments help to hasten the advent of that far off devine event, the emancipation of the Kisans.[8]

The growth of the Kisan Sabha became an issue of heated controversy in the Haripura session. The fact that its leapership was not with the Congress but with the Communists and Socialists agitated the right-wing Congress leaders. They launched a heavy attack on the Kisan Sabha for it was functioning independent of the Congress discipline and was hoisting red flag in its meetings and demonstrations. The resolution adopted at the Haripura session stated:

> In view of the difficulties that have arisen in regard to the Kisan Sabhas and other organizations in some parts of India, the Congress desires to clarify the position and state its attitude in regard to them. The Congress has already fully recognised the right of Kisans to organise

8. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op cit*, p 72.

themselves in peasant unions. Nevertheless it must be remembered that the Congress itself is in the main a Kisan organization and as contacts with the masses have increased, vast numbers of Kisans have joined it and influenced its policy. The Congress must, and has in fact, stood for these Kisan masses and championed their claims, and has worked for the independence of India which must be based on the freedom from exploitation of all our people... While fully recognising the right of the Kisans to organise Kisan Sabhas, the Congress cannot associate itself with any activities which are incompatible with the basic principles of the Congress and will not countenance any of the activities of those Congressmen who as members of the Kisan Sabhas help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policy. The Congress, therefore, calls upon provincial Congress Committees to bear the above in mind and in pursuance of it take suitable action wherever call for.[9]

It becomes obvious from the resolution that the conflict between the left and right-wings of the Congress were getting intense and that the problem of the relationship between the Kisan Sabha and the Congress arose as a symbol of this conflict. The complaint of the right-wing was that the leftists were going ahead with programmes, which were not to their liking, of propagating the ideologies of socialism and communism among the people and organizing peasants in the organizations independent of the Congress based on these ideologies. The resolution was adopted after a heated debate with a majority of votes.

Kisan Sabhas had been organized under the leadership of the leftists in all provinces where the Congress ministries were in power. The agitations, struggles, and demonstrations conducted by them under the red flag were a headache not only to the big landlords and the British rulers but also to the Congress ministers. It had become such a strong movement that it could march ahead even if it was opposed by

9. Zaidi and Zaidi, *op cit*, pp. 438-439.

all the right-wing Congress leaders including Gandhi. This was the case not only with the Kisan Sabha but also of the trade unions and students organizations. The message of socialism and communism had spread extensively in these movements. The Communist and Socialist parties had been growing in strength capable of leading them. Utilizing the freedom of speech and press and other civil liberties in the provinces where the Congress ministries were in power, the left parties were also engaged in publishing newspapers and journals and organizing meetings and demonstrations.

Changes were taking place in the old revolutionaries giving a fresh impetus to these developments. A considerable section of the prisoners in the different jails in India, including in the Andaman Islands, were those who believed in the politics of bomb. Acquaintance with the communist and socialist literature and world political developments including the rapid progress achieved by the Soviet Union made them rethink politically. They began to realize that the kind of revolution that had taken place in Russia and for which many other countries were preparing, would take place in India only by organizing the different sections of the people and making them politically conscious, rather than by physically eleminating the enemies of the people. Many who later became prominant Communist leaders were those who had adopted the ideology of communism at this stage.

The statement signed by the former bomb politicians renouncing the bomb politics was interpreted by the right-wing Congress leadership as evidence to the increasing influence of the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. It was, in fact, a victory of socialism and communism because it showed that the revolutionary forces inside and outside the Congress had begun adopting the perspective of working on the basis of organized revolutionary strength of the working class, peasantry and other toiling people.

It was as part of the approach of the right-wing leadership to stem the upswing of the left forces that they decided to install the leftist Subhas Bose as the president of the

Congress at the Haripura session. We have seen that the right-wing leadership was able to implement their own policies under the shadow of Nehru who had been placed as an ornament at the top of the Congress continuously for two years. They hoped that they would be able to perform the same feat under the presidentship of Bose as well. And this calculation was not an entirely misplaced one. Bose did not cause any "trouble" to the right-wing leadership during his presidency.

But by the time of the next session, the Congress was once again heading towards a split. The fierce controversy that raged in the Haripura session on the question of the relationship between the Kisan Sabha and the Congress was the first indication of the storm that was gathering.

V. PRINCELY STATES AND THE CONGRESS

Another important issue which came to be hotly debated in the Haripura session was the attitude of the Congress towards the struggles for democracy in the princely states. As in the case of many other issues, the left stood firmly against the attitude of the right-wing leadership on this issue. But unlike on most other issues, certain non-left sections also expressed disatisfaction over the stand taken by the right-wing on this matter.

As we have noted earlier, the official position of the Congress was that it would not participate in the popular struggles for democracy in the princely states. The contention of those who formulated this policy was that since the princes were sympathetic to the struggle against the British rulers, the Congress should not function in a manner that disconcerted them. But with the development of the bourgeoisie in the princely states as it did in British India, activities for establishing the democratic principles and values which were upheld by the Congress began to take place in these

states at least on a lower key. Just like the Congress demanded the transfer of power from the British rulers to Indian bourgeoisie, so the demand came from the princely states that the autocratic rule be ended and the bourgeios democratic system introduced.

Basically, the bourgeois leadership of the Congress should have been sympathetic to this demand. But considering the consequences of joining hands with democratic movements in the princely states, the Congress turned its back and adopted the policy "non-interference in the internal affairs of the princely states".

A change came about in this in the Round Table Conferences and in the years following the Conferences. It became clear that the princes were one of the main forces to support the British in rejecting the national demand raised by the Congress. Undoubtedly, those who would 'represent' the autocratic princely states in the Federation would be the henchmen of the rulers of these states. Therefore, in order for the Congress to achieve its objective, it was essential that there must be a basic change in the administrative set-up in the princely states. So, the Indian bourgeoisie had to raise the slogan of responsible governments in the states along with the demand of full independence for India.

It was in these circumstances that democratic organizations—*Praja Mandals*—working for the establishment of democracy in the princely states emerged. An all-India conference was convened in July 1936 at Karachi with a view to provide the various *Praja Mandals* scattered all over the country a uniform perspective. An all-India organization of the states' organizations was formed at the conference. The leaders of that organization appealed to the Congress for moral and practical assistance to the struggles being conducted in the states since they looked upon the Congress as an organization which represented their aspirations.

Although the democratic movements in the princely states were under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, the approach of the leaders of these movements was different

from that of bourgeois leadership of the Congress towards the autocratic rules in the states.They believed that they deserved the full support from a movement like the Congress. On the contrary, the right-wing leadership of the Congress feared that if they antagonized the rulers of the states by giving direct support to democratic struggles in the states, that would weaken the national front against the British rulers.

This difference in approach was found reflected in the top leadership of the Congress. Not only Nehru and Bose but also those right-wing Congress leaders who had at least a remote relation with the princely states were of the opinian that the Congress should reconsider its attitude towards the struggles in the princely states. As a result, the AICC meeting held in Calcutta in October 1937 adopted a resolution declaring support to the struggles of the people of Mysore against repression.

However this was severely criticized by Gandhi who maintained that although the struggles of the people of the princely states for responsible government was just, the direct participation of the Congress would do harm to these struggles. The Communists, Socialists and other leftists showed that Gandhi's argument was basically wrong and pointed out that his argument in fact amounted to conceding the contention of the autocrates in the states that the Congress was an "outsider" to their states. They also pointed out that since it had become clear that the British were trying to weaken the country-wide freedom struggle by differentiating between "British India" and "Indian India", responsible governments in the princely states should also be brought within the definition of *Purna Swaraj*.

At least on this issue a section of the right-wing leadership joined hands with the left. They joined the left forces to raise protest against the draft resolution prepared by the Working Committee to be placed before the Subjects Committee of the Congress at Haripura. The draft had completely prohibited formation and functoning of Congress Committees

in the states. Finally a "compromise" resolution was adopted at the Haripura session which included the following paragraph.

"The Congress therefore directs that, for the present, Congress Committees in the States shall function under the direction and control of the Congress Working Committee and shall not engage in parliamentary activity or launch on direct action in the name and under the auspices of the Congress. Internal struggles of the people of the states must not be undertaken in the name of the Congress. For this purpose independent organizations should be started and continued where they exist already with in the State."[10]

That this 'compromise' resolution did not have an iota of compromise would be clear to any one who has read it. Open struggle and parliamentary work are two facets of political work. The 'compromise' here was that the right-wing leadership had no objection to forming Congress committees *sans* these two facets of political work. This meant that no "outsider" should interefere in the internal affairs of the princely states, that Congress Committees are "outside" organizations for the princely states and that they should keep aloof from the conflicts between the subjects and rulers of these states. Thus, under the veil of 'compromise' the Haripura resolution re-affirmed the attitude of the right-wing leadership towards the struggles of the people in the princely states.

It was but natural that there was a powerful section among the delegates to the Haripura session which was opposed to this resolution. Whereas the Kisan Sabha-Congress relation was an issue on which the left and right confronted each other, on the question of the princely states a section of the right-wing leadership togather with the left raised a challenge to the approach of Gandhi and his associates. However, the resolution which was introduced by the right-wing leadership was adopted with a majority of votes.

10. Zaidi and Zaidi, *op cit*, p. 434.

In the months that followed the movements for responsible government forged ahead in many states. In Mysore, Cochin, Travancore, Kashmir and in the states in Orissa, Gujarat and other regions the slogan of responsible government reverberated and the struggle for it assumed different forms. For the first time since the formation of the Congress various princely states became the scene of fight aganist autocrotic rule and for responsible government.

Two distinct approaches emerged within and outside the Congress on how to handle the new situation.

As in the case with the struggle aganist the British, the right-wing leadership adopted the policy of mobilizing the people and utilizing the force thus gained to bargain with the autocratic rulers in the states. As distinct form this, the leftists started working with the perspective of leading the people of the states along the path of revolutionary struggles against autocratic rule. Depending on the correlation of forces of the right and the left, particular path was adopted in each state.

The State of Travancore was a brilliant example of the revolutionary path. There an organized working class movement and left parties based on it were growing for more than a decade. These left movements had close links with similar movements in the neighbouring state of Cochin and the Malabar region of British India. Further, there was a state *Praja* movement led by rightists but in which leftists actively participated. Following the Haripura session of the Congress, a bourgeois democratic movement called the State Congress came to exist there. Demands were raised for the establishment of a fully responsible government in the state. The organized working class in the state actively participated in the struggles waged to realize this demand. The agitation oranized by the State Congress in 1938 for responsible government and the political strike launched by the working class as an independent class as part of this agitation were important events in the political history of Travancore. The agitation for responsible government transformed itself into

a democratic struggle in which the working class led by the left parties played a significant role.

The struggle conducted in the state of Rajkot in Gujarat under the direct leadership of Sardar Patel with the blessings of Gandhi was quite distinct from this. Neither an organized working class nor leftist forces were there in that state and consequently the movement was completely in the hands of the rightists. The ruler of the state and Sardar Patel struck a compromise which was thrown to the wind by ruler before the ink was dry on the document forcing Gandhi to launch a fast in protest against this.

The situation in Kashmir was different from both these cases. Although bereft of any working class or left movement, there was a bourgeois leadership which had imbibed,to an extent, the left ideology, which later became well-known as the National Conference. Although leaders of the National Conference shared the thinking of the poor and middle classes in the towns and country side, they were not able to organize the people on a revolutionary basis with a working class outlook. All the weaknesses emanating from this could be found reflected in the activities of the National Conforence and its leaders like Sheikh Abdulla. But they did not try to bargain with the ruler in the state and gain their political objective as did the Gandhian leadership in Rajkot. They adopted the path of organizing massive struggles of the people which also found reflected in the later day politics in the state.

Struggles for responsible government broke out in many more states. But the Congress was incapable of giving a centralized leadership to these struggles. The resolution adoped at the Haripura session to the effect that the Congress was an 'outside' organization to the princely states and that Congress committees should not interfere with the internal affairs of the states cast its shadow over the democratic movements in the states.

Despite this, a section of the right-wing leadership of the Congress was forced by circumstances to remain on the

forefront of the *Praja* movements. What forced them to take this stand was the realization on the part of the Indian bourgeoise that it was essential to end the autocratic rule in the princely states to defeat the game of the British rulers and also the desire of the bourgeoise in each state to share power in their respective state.

VI. MINISTRIES AND THE RIVALS

The right-wing bourgeois leadership of the Congress used the ministries in such a way as to make use of the growing anti-imperialist trend to serve its own class interests. The ministries tried to implement the main slogans of the anti-imperialist front,viz., release of political prisoners, withdrawal of the repressive laws, and legislation against the interests of big landlords. In the process they often came in conflict with the Governors. In addition, they also initiated steps towards introducing educational reforms, transformation of Indian economy through industrialization and prohibition of intoxicating drinks. The formulation of an educational system linking education with manual labour and the formation of the National Planning Committee to introduce economic planing in post-independence India deserve special mention. These were the initial efforts made to tell the people the shape of things to come in the adminstration as well as in the economic and educational fields in independent India.

However, the Congress did not have an undisputed all-India representation as claimed by it; it was a minority in five out of eleven provinces. Of these five provinces, only in Assam and the NWF Province could it form ministries with the support of certain other political groups and individuals. In Sind, the Allah Baksh ministry which was formed after the fall of the ministry headed by Gulam Hussain Hidayatullah had the indirect support of the Congress. Therefore, it introduced certain items of the Congress programme. The

governments of the remaining two provinces of Punjab and Bengal were hostile to the Congress.

These two non-Congress ministries did not command a majority in the legislatures. The Unionist Party of Sikandar Hyat Khan in Punjab and the Krishak Praja Party of Fazlul Huq in Bengal were in power in these two provinces with the support of certain other parties. Since both of them were Muslim majority provinces, Jinnah made an attempt to bring the governments and the ruling parties under the influence of the Muslim League. But none of them yielded to Jinnah. Fazlul Huq even tried to get the support of the Congress. Although the Bengal Pradesh Congress was in favour of it, it had to reject it because the national leadership of the Congress was opposed to it. In spite of the fact that the Congress moved to the Opposition, Huq did not go to the League. Similarly, the Hyat Khan ministry remained independent of both the Congress and the League.

The situation in India as a whole was changing rapidly. As we have indicated earlier, efforts made to form a Congress-League ministry in U.P. failed. The rejection of Huq's request for support by the Congress created serious repercussions in the League leadership. Huq's appeal to Jinnah to come to terms with the Congress was turned down. Jinnah said that he too desired a settlement with Congress, but that it became imppossible because the Congress was trying to compel the British to accept its demand and leave the Muslims in the lurch.[11]

The political developments in India during and after the elections of 1937 prepared the ground for the rise of the Muslim League which was one of the several parties of the Muslims, as the sole representative of the Muslim community. Following the refusal of the Congress to give a share to the Muslims in the U. P. ministry and to cooperate with the Huq ministry in Bengal, the Muslim League led by Jinnah started a powerful campaign against the 'anti-Muslim attitude of the

11. R. Coupland, quoted in R. C. Majumdar (ed), *Histrory and Culture of the Indian People*, vol 11, *Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,* 1959, p.579.

Congress'. The report of the Committee headed by the Nawab of Pirpur, appointed by the League to enquire into the "anti-Muslim measures taken by the Congress government in U. P." provided considerable motivation to the Muslims to rally behind the Muslim League. The 'Pirpur Report' was hotly discussed by the Muslims all over India.

This was only the beginning. The alleged 'anti-Muslim policy' being followed by the Congress governments in other provinces created commotions among the Muslim masses. Propaganda was extensively conducted that if the national democratic set up as demanded by the Congress came to exist, the Muslims would be physically eliminated and that if that situation had to be avoided, the Muslims must set aside the differences among themselves and strengthen the League. The intention of those who let loose this propaganda was to raise the League to the position of a party of the Muslims as opposed to the "Hindu political party", the Congress.

With this anti-Congress propaganda of the League, communal clashes between Hindus and Muslims and between the Sikhs and Muslims began to erupt. These communal clashes became the worst in 1940-1941 by which the Congress had left the provincial governments. The Muslim League had adopted a resolution in its Lahore session in March 1940 demanding an independent state of Pakistan by combining the Muslim majority provinces in India.

Another event which took place in the same period which needs particular mention was the anti-Hindi agitation in the Madras province where a Congress ministry was in office. The people were agitated over the decision of the ministry to teach compulsorily in the schools Hindi which the Congress considered as the "symbol of Indian nationalism". The Justice Party which was defeated in the 1937 elections tried to fan the anti-Hindi sentiments of the people and turn it against the Congress. The message of anti-Hindi agitation reached the people who were already agitated over Prohibition and the newly introduced sales tax to make good the deficit

caused by it. This was the beginning of the anti-North India slogan raised by the Dravida Kazhakam and the Dravida Munnetra Kazgakam later on.

The emergence of the Muslim League as an all-India force and the beginning of Anti-Hindi agitation in Madras were pointers to the growth of certain new forces in Indian politics. Along with these, an anti-Congress wave was rising among the Sikhs, Christians, the depressed castes and others. Each of these sections was raising challenge in its own way to the claim made by the Congress that it was the sole representative of Indian people.

None of these parties and groups was against the declared objective of the Congress, viz., national independence and a democratic set-up in India. What turned sections of the people belonging to various religions and castes against the right-wing leadership of the Congress was the rights they were to enjoy in an independent democratic India.Therefore, it would be absurd to characterize any of them as 'lakeys of the British rulers' and 'enemies of national independence'. That the British rulers succeeded in turning them individually and collectively against the Congress and in their own favour was beside the point. The division of the country into India and Pakistan in 1947 and the accompanying communal riots were the culmination of the British moves.

The origain of this was in the years 1937-1939. As power was transferred to the bourgeoisie, though it was confined to the provinces, dispute arose among the bourgeoisie belonging to the different nationalities on the question of sharing the power thus transferred. It was this dispute and the communal riots that arose out of it that finally led to the slogan of Pakistan and the direct action based on it.

There is another side of the picture. Here we are referring to the left political forces which had been supporting the objectives declared by the Congress and challenging its right-wing leadership while engaged themselves in practical activities for the realization of these objectives. We have already described the advance made by the left forces including

the Communists and Socialists, its impact in the country, and the important position gained by the left outlook in the election manifesto and other official documents of the Congress. What follows are some instances which showed the natural results of these trends.

As we have mentioned earlier, the Communist Party of India which was reorganized in 1933-1934 was declared illegal in this period. A change in this situation came about when the Congress ministries came to power in the provinces. Since the Party was declared illegal by the Central government, the Congress governments in the provinces had no authority to lift the ban on it. However, they were able to release political prisoners including communists and communist sympathizers and to provide them facilities to conduct meetings and publish newspapers and journals. This enabled known communists to work openly in the trade unions, Kisan Sabhas and other mass organizations and also to join the Congress and contest elections. These facilities were offered by the Congress governments in the provinces.

Using these facilities, the communists began the publication of the *National Front*, a weekly from Bombay and the *New Age*, a monthly from Madras. The *National Front* was run by an editorial board consisting of the General Secretary and members of the Polit Bureau of the Party. The office of the journal became the legal office of the illegal Party. Prominent communist leaders could participate in the A I C C meetings as delegates and as press correspondents. Thus,the ban on the Party remained only on paper.

Leaders of the Congress Socialist Party which was not banned, openly conducted their political activities. They published their journal *The Congress Socialist* from Bombay. On the basis of an understanding reached between these two parties they cooperated with each other in working in the Congress, AITUC, Kisan Sabha, Students Federation and other organizations.

It was true that differences also arose between them in the process of these activities and it was also true that these

differences led to a split between them later on. But they were working together even at that stage on the basis of left unity.

Before and immediately after the election, the right-wing Congress leadership did not prevent the growth of these left forces in any way; they even helped them. But the situation had begun to change after the elections. We have referred earlier to the attack launched by the right-wing leadership against the activities of the leftists in the Kisan Sabha. However, the leadership at that time was not prepared to take things to an open split in the Cangress nor to take disciplinary actions against the leftists. On the contrary, they kept the leftists Nehru and Bose at the presidentship of the Congress continuously for three years. Things were moving, however, to a situation in which an open conflict between the left and right-wings appeard inevitable. And the conflict did burst out at the Tripuri session of the Congress.

The developments that took place before and after the Tripuri session will be dealt with in the following chapter. It is necessary to point out here that parties of the ruling classes like the Muslims League on the one side and the left forces under the leadership of the Communists and Socialists on the other, had started challenging the right-wing leadership of the Congress. The dispute between the former and the right-wing leadership of the Congress was over sharing the power in the future administrative set up and not over the form of the set up and the method to shaping it. The latter, on the other, opposed the right-wing leadership on the question of the method to be adopted to achieve independence as well as the social content of it.

21

CRISIS IN THE CONGRESS

I. THE PRESIDENT

Subhas Bose who took over the Congress presidentship fom Nehru at the Haripura session, though known to be a leftist like Nehru, never maintained personal relations with Gandhi as Nehru had done. Besides, a person who had been keeping relations with the four decade old revolutionary movement in Bengal, Bose had not been able to reconcile himself politically with Gandhi and the right-wing leadership led by him. Consequently, a considerable section of the Congressmen looked upon the circumstance that led to the election of Bose to the presidentship with mixed feelings.

The reasons that motivated the leadership to install a leftist leader as the president had not ceased to exist. Whatever the nature of the collective leadership of the Congress, a leftist president was absolutely essential for mobilizing the masses enthusiastically for political action. The next

best person to serve this purpose was Bose. However, the question arose whether Bose would submit himself to be tamed by Gandhi and other right-wing leaders as Nehru did, or whether contradictions and conflicts would develop between them. In any case, the leadership felt that if a well-known leftist leader from Bengal like Bose, who had spent a longer period in jail than Nehru, was not made the president at least for one term, it might create problems. Consequently, Bose was elected president with the full backing of Gandhi. In a statement issued on the occasion of his election, Bose stated that as long as he remained the president he would utilize that position to resist with all legal and legitimate means the federal scheme which contained all undemocratic and anti-national elements. He would utilize the presidency to strengthen the determination of the country to fight against the federal scheme by formulating, if necessary, a mass resistance programme which would include non-violent non-cooperation.

This was apparently no different from the statements issued by the right-wing leaders for they also had been claiming to prepare the people for a country-wide struggle against the federal scheme. However, in this statement as well as in his presidential address and other pronouncements made later during his presidency, there was an overtone of a determined anti-British struggle, whereas in the approach of the right-wing the slant was towards compromise. This was, in fact, the basis of the split that surfaced a year later at the Tripuri session.

Bitter controversies raged between the left-wing and right-wing in the Congress during the year that intervened between the Haripura and Tripuri sessions. The struggle inside was so intense that there was even a walk out by the leftist leaders led by Acharya Narendra Dev, a member of the Working Committee, at an AICC meeting held in September 1938. The attitude of the provincial Congress ministries towards the peasant struggle which were going on all over the country and the negative approach adopted by

Gandhi and other right-wing leaders towards the democratic struggles of the people in the different princely states made the leftists discontent and restive. On these and similar other issues Bose stood firmly with the leftists.

The conflicts between the two wings reached an explosive stage when the issue arose whether Bose should retire from presidentship after the one year term or whether he should be re-elected for a second as in the case of Nehru. The view became wide-spread among the leftist Congressmen that Gandhi and other right-wing leaders were not determined enough in organizing national resistance to the federal scheme. The behind-the-scene moves initiated by leading capitalists like Birla to bring a compromise between the Congress and the British government were well known. It was widely felt that Bose should continue as president if these moves were to be stalled. Unlike Nehru, Bose was relentless in his opposition to the right-wing leadership which made the leftists rally behind him.

Bengal was one of the provinces where the feelings against compromise were expressed in the strongest terms. For example, the Jalpaiguri District Conference of the Congress in a resolution proposed rejection of the federal scheme. The resolution also proposed that the British should be given a six months notice and that after the expiration of this period, a programme should be adopted to launch a mass struggle including civil disobedience and strikes. Bose himself had expressed this opinion on many occasions. An indication of this was also contaimed in the statement he had issued after he was elected president of the Congress at the Haripura session.

The Jalpaiguri resolution and Bose's statement were reflections of the sentiment of ordinary Congressmen in the other provinces as well. The idea of launching a mass struggle by mobilizing the people aganist the federal scheme had exerted considerable influence among the people. Bose appeared on the forefront as a powerful spokesman of this idea.

The right-wing leadership was totally against this stand. Consequently, they opposed tooth and nail the proposal to re-elect Bose for a second term. When his condidature was announced, they proposed Maulana Azad as their condidate for the presidentship. They argued that with the deepening political crisis and the Hindu-Muslim conflict in particular, a venerable Muslim leader like Azad would be a better choice. But Azad withdrew from the contest saying that it would do more harm than good if he were to stand against Bose. Following this, the right-wing leaders nominated Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya as the presidential condidate.

In the fierce fight between the two, both sides used all the weapons available. The sharpest weapon on the one side was the leftist sentiment that a decisive battle had to be waged against the British rulers serving them with a six months ultimatum. The effective argument on the other side was that for any such struggle to succeed, the mature and seasoned leadership of Gandhi was essential. Thus the pesidential context was between these two political views.

Bose was elected with a narrow majority. The election which might be considered as a victory for the left over the right led to the biggest crisis in the Congress since the Surat session. In a statement issued soon after the election, Gandhi owned Pattabhi's defeat as his own. He said: "... since I was instrumental in inducing Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya not to withdraw his name as a candidate when Maulana Azad withdrew, the defeat is more mine than his."[1] In this statement Gandhi was indicating that if the leftists represented by Bose gained upper hand in the Congress and a struggle was launched under its auspices, he would not participate in that struggle. The various statements and counter-statements that followed contained numerous allegations against each other. Soon the right-wing members in the Working Committee resigned bring the activities of the Congress at the top to a standstill.

1. D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 5,New Delhi, Publications Division, 1969, p. 32.

Gandhi's anti-left attitude was well known since 1934 when he had resigned his primary membership in the Congress stating that in case the socialists gained ascendanny in the Congress he would not like to remain in the organization. But the Congress Socialists and other leftists were a minority then. The situation continued to be the same during the presidency of Nehru. Nor was there any problem apparently during the year in which Bose was made the president. But in the confrontation that took place at the end of his presidency, the right-wing which was working with the blessings of Gandhi was defeated. Gandhi could not but hit back. This was what he had started with the statement that Pattabhi's defeat was his own.

Although the right-wing was defeated in the pesidential election, the left-wing had a serious weakness. Gandhi had known what this weakness was. A considerable section of the ordinary Congressmen who shared the sentiments of a relentless struggle also believed in the indispensability of the leadership of Gandhi for victory in the struggle for independence. To the ordinary Congressmen Gandhi was the only leader who inspired the masses and drew them into the struggle. The experience of the Indian people had not so far shown them that the path of mass revolution based on the Marxist-Leninist perspective was practical politics. Even the ordinary Congressmen who supported the line of uncompromising struggle championed by Bose and other left-wing leaders believed in the indispensability of Gandhi's leadership. The statement made by Gandhi conceding defeat in the presidential election was in fact the warning that these would not go together and that if they wanted his leadership, the programme advocated by Bose and others should be abandoned and a president and a Working Committee enjoying his confidence must come to the leadership. The resignation of the right-wing leaders declaring unwillingness to cooperate with the president who was elected with a narrow margin of votes was another form of the same warning.

Gandhi's statement and the resignation of the right-wing leaders from the Working Committee brought about a change

in the co-relation of right-left forces among the delegates. Although a majority of the delegates to the Tripuri session was with Bose at the time of the presidential election, most delegates considered that Gandhi's leadership was indispensable. Most delegates were under the spell of a phychological conflict, a conflict between the feelings that the statement and the resignations were designed to hound out Bose and that the continuance of Bose as president should not be at the cost of Gandhi's leadership.

Exploiting the state of mind of a majority of the delegates, the right-wing leadership made a clever move. On its behalf Govind Ballabh Pant introduced a resolution suggesting that Bose continue as president and nominate the members of the Working Committee in consultation with Gandhi. The rationale for raising this demand was mentioned in the resolution.

> In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory during such a crisis, the Congress regards it as imperative that the Congress Executive should command his implicit confidence...[2]

The introduction of the resolution led to a lot of procedural wrangle. Many incidents took place reminiscent of the Surat session. Finally the resolution was adopted, which represented a greater victory for the right-wing than that of the left-wing in the presidential election. The political result of the Gandhi-Bose confrontation was that it belittled the narrow victory of the leftists and carried the majority of the ordinary congressmen to stand behind Gandhi and other right-wing leaders. Organizationally, Pant's resolution placed the leftist president at the mercy of the right-wing leaders. In other words, Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders who were successful in taming Nehru took a major step towards destroying the entire left movement by trouncing

2. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of Indian National Congress*, vol II, Bombay, Padma Publications, 1947, p. 110.

Bose in a direct political-organizational fight. A few months after this, they launched a fresh attack on the left.

II. THE SWORD OF DISCIPLINE

The meaning of the resolution introduced by Pant and adopted at the Tripuri session was that in return to his remaining as the president, Bose should be prepared to nominate a Working Committee as proposed by Gandhi and acceptable to the right-wing leadership. Bose andGandhi could not come to an agreement with regard to the implementation of the resolution. Consequently, the entire Congress organization remained paralyzed for several weeks after the Tripuri session. This was a development which was not anticipated by the delegates who elected him president. Seeing no way out of the impasse, Bose tendered his resignation and called a meeting of the AICC.

The AICC session which was held in Calcutta to consider the resignation of Bose and other related matters was equally stomy. Since the right-wing had a big majority in the AICC there was no difficulty in accepting the resignation of Bose and electing Rajendra Prasad as president in his place. Thus the election of the president by a majority of delegates and the support to the left policy demonstrated in that process were rejected by this action of the AICC.

The leftist outlook in the Congress and the reality of its manifestation in the different forms could not be eleminated by this organizational action alone. Just as the right-wing political force was not wiped out by the election of Bose as the president of the Congress, so the left political force was not destroyed by the forced resignation of Bose from the presidentship. Even after the resignation of Bose, popular feelings rose high against the right oriented policies pursued by the leadership in general and the anti-people measures of the Congress ministries in particular. Workers' strikes, peasant

satyagraha and other forms of direct actions became widespread all over the country, in which ordinary Congressmen joined hands with Communists and Congress Socialists. In all provinces numerous district and local Congress committees and in certain provinces like Bengal, U. P and Kerala even the provincial committees actively participated in these mass actions. These were, in fact, the expression of the anguish of ordinary Congressmen over the repressive actions being resorted to by the Congress governments in which they were little different from the non-Congress governments. The tactics adopted by the right-wing leadership in hounding out a president who was elected by a majority also intensified the protest of the Congress ranks.

In order to meet the new situation, the AICC which met in June 1939 at Bombay adopted two resolutions. One of these resolutions was designed to prevent Congressmen and lower level Congress committees from going on agitations by putting the restriction that "any movement or Satyagraha for any purpose should be run under the direction, control, and superintendence of the Provincial Congress Committees". The other resolution was intended to prevent open criticism of the provincial Congress governments by the Congress Parliamentary Parties or Provincial Congress Committees. The resolution laid down that "in administrative matters, the PCC should not interfere with the discretion of the Ministry but it is always open to the Executive of the PCC to draw the attention of the Government to any particular abuse or difficulty...In matters of policy if there is a difference between the Ministry and the PCC reference should be made to the Parliamentary Board. Public discussion should be avoided."

These resolutions gave a clear indication to the direction in which the right-wing leadership and the ministers under their control were moving. The essence of these resolutions is that since the Congress is in power in some of the provinces, people in those provinces should not launch struggles, and even if they did, Congressmen should not participate in these

struggles and that even if an action of the governments is found to be wrong, which causes the struggle, this should not be stated publicly. In other words, the Congress committee should function as an appendage of the Congress ministry.

There were certain political developments behind all this. As Dr. Gopal, Nehru's biographer, has stated, the British rulers were having a sort of honeymoon with the right-wing Congressmen. The repressive policies adopted by Rajagopalachari in Madras and Munshi in Bombay gave tremendous satisfaction to the British rulers who began to realize that if the Congress ministers, on being given the power to rule at the provincial level, were prepared to "maintain law and order" so satisfactorily, giving them power at the Centre would in no way cause harm to their imperial interests.

Feeling upset by the close relations between the Congress and the British rulers, Jinnah began to make certain counter moves. On the other hand, the suspecion spread among the ranks of the Congress that the right-wing leaders were trying to reach a compromise with the British rulers. What made Subhas Bose the target of the ire of the right-wing Congress leadership was that he gave a manifest form to this suspecion. The charge openly made by Bose that the right-wing leadership was trying to arrive at an understanding with the British rulers, the criticism of the right-wing that this amounted to questioning their honesty and the declaration that they would not cooperate with Bose unless he withdrew the charge—all this led to the resignation of Bose from the presidentship after being elected with a majority of votes.

The resolution adopted by the AICC which met at Bombay in this background came to be sharply criticized by the leftists. The leftist coordination committee formed by the Congress Socialist Party, the newly formed Forward Bloc under the leadership of Subhas Bose, the Communist Party, the Royist group and the All-India Kisan Sabha called upon the people to observe 9th July as a Protest Day to organize public opinion against the approach of the right-wing

which had taken a dangerous form as evident from these resolutions. The Protest Day was observed on a big scale all over the country. It became evident that the actions of the right-wing had brought the leftists closer. Sensing the danger involved in the left unity, the right-wing leadership decided to take 'strong actions'. The new president, Rajendra Prasad, asked for an explanation for the 'breach of Congress discipline' on the part of Bose. The reply given by Bose throws light on the prevailing political situation as well as on the main issues of dispute between the left-wing and the right-wing in the Congress. The relevant parts of his reply are quoted below.

In the first place, one has to distinguish between protesting against a certain resolution and actually defying it or violating it. What has so far happened is that I have only protested against two resolutions of the AICC.

It is my constitutional right to give expression to my opinion regarding any resolution passed by the AICC when a particular session of that body that comes to a close. If you want Congressmen the right to express their views on resolutions passed by the AICC you cannot draw a line and say that only favourable opinions will be allowed expression and unfavourable will be banned. If we have the constitutional right to express our views, then it does not matter if those views are favourable or unfavourable. We have so long been fighting the British Government, among other things, for our Civil Liberty. Civil Liberty, I think, includes freedom of speech. According to your point of view, we are not to claim freedom of speech when we do not see eye to eye with the majority in the AICC or in the Congress. It would be a strange situation if we are to have the right of freedom of speech against the British Government but not against the Congress or any body subordinate to it. If we are denied the right to adversely criticize resolutions of the AICC which in our view are harmful to the country's cause, then it would amount to denial of democratic right.

I hope you will agree that when a resolution is once passed by the AICC it is open to us to have it reviewed or amended or altered or rescinded at a subsequent meeting of that body. I hope you will also agree that it is open to us to appeal against the AICC to the higher court of appeal, namely, the open session of the Cangress. You will agree further, I hope, that it is open to a minority to carry on a propaganda with a view of converting the majority to its point of view. Now how can we do this except by appealing to Congressmen through public meetings and through writings in the press? If you maintain that once a resolution is passed in the AICC it is sacrosanct and must hold good for ever, then you may have some justification for banning criticism of it. But if you grant us the right to review or amend or alter or rescind a particular resolution of the AICC either through that body or through the open session of the Congress,then I do not see that you can gag criticism, as you have been trying to do. Apart from the fact that it is our constitutional and democratic right to protest against resolutions which in our view are harmful to the country's cause, a consideration of the merits of the two resolutions, if given effect to will serve to accentuate the drift towards constitutionalism, to increase the influence, power and authority of the Provincial Ministries at the cost of the Congress organizations, to isolate artificially the Congress from the general public as also the AICC from the rank and file of the Congress. Moreover, they will serve to undermine the revolutionary spirit of the Congress. Consequently in the best interest of the country these two resolutions should be immediately held in abeyance and ultimately altered suitably or withdrawn.

In this connection I cannot help drawing your attention to certain incidents at the time of the Gaya Congress in 1922 and after. Please do not forget what the Swaraj Party did in those days. Please do not forget either that when the AICC amended the resolution of the Gaya Congress, the Gujarat PCC resolved to defy it.

Lastly please do not forget that Mahatma Gandhi wrote... that the minority has the right to rebel. We have not gone so far yet as to rebel against the decision of the majority in the teeth of our opposition.

I hope you will accept my explanation as satisfactory. But if you do not do so and if you decide to resort to disciplinary action, I shall gladly face it for the sake of what I regard as a just cause. In conclusion I have to request that if any Congressman is penalised in connection with events of 9th July, then you will also take action against me. If the observance of an all-India day of the 9th July is a crime then I confess, I am the arch-criminal.[3]

The right-wing leadership rejected all his contentions, except the responsibility which he owned for the protest day. Therefore, accepting the admission he had made that he was the "arch-criminal",the Working Committee decided to award him an "exemplary punishment" of removing him from presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and also disqualifying him from holding elective posts of the Congress for a period of three years. Disciplinary actions were also taken against many other leftist Congressmen who had taken part in the obeservance of the protest day.

The post-Tripuri situation must, in fact, be compared with the post-Surat situation and not with the post-Gaya situation as Bose has done, for the sharp differances that surfaced in the Gaya session did not lead to a repture in the relation between the two groups which were existing at that time. Rather, an unwritten agreement was reached between the two allowing the Swarajists to go their own way and their opponents to function as they liked. In Surat and Tripuri, on the other hand, there was not only a repture but the right-wing also took organizational actions in order to curb the growing influence of the left-wing.

Besides, in the days about the Tripuri session, as was the case with the Surat session, the right-wing in the Congress

3. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of India National Congrss*, vol. II, Bombay, Padma publications, 1947. pp 116—117.

had been making attempts to come to a settlement with the British government. The main condition for the success of such attempts was to expell the left-wing from the leadership, if not from the organization. In Surat, Gokhale and Pherozeshah Mehta came forward to face the extremits, thinking that Tilak or Lajpat Rai becoming the president of the Congress would be dangerous to their attempts. In the Tripuri session and in the months following it, Gandhi and his associates thought that continuance of Bose as president would be dangerous and decided to remove him from the presidentship.

Dispite this similarity, there was a major difference between the Surat and Tripuri sessions. As distinct from the moderates of the Surat days, the right-wing leadership in the Tripuri days was a mature bourgeois leadership having gained the experience from rallying the millions around itself. The leftists at the Tripuri session too were more experienced than Tilak and his colleagues in leading mass struggles. So, the dispute between the two wings was over the method and the perspective of the final battle against the British rule. There were two contending methods and perspectives: the non-violent civil disobedience struggles combined with non-payment of taxes as proposed and demonstrated by Gandhi and mass agitations including worker's strikes and peasant actions combined with civil disobedience, non-payment of taxes and other forms of struggles as proposed and put into practice by the leftists. People in millions were rallied in both the camps representing these methods. Both the groups waged the struggles standing in the forefront of the people.

The disciplinary actions were taken against Bose and other left-wing Congressmen at a time it was not clear where this struggle would reach and what forms it would take. Within a month of the disciplinary action, in the first week of September the Second World War broke out which completely changed the political situation in the world, including India. This made the right-left division as it continued for the past more than a couple of years irrelevant. The relations

and co-relations prevailing in the country in general and in the Congress in particular changed in a fundamental way. Following this, the internal crisis in the Congress was resolved temporarily. But new problems emerged inside and outside the Congress which assumed news forms.

III. COMMUNIST PARTY AND LEFT FORCES

Although the Communist Party, the Congress Socialist Party, the Forward Bloc, the Royist group and the Kisan Sabha were united in general in the fight against the policies of the right-wing leadership of the Congress, there were differences among them on a number of fundamental issues. These agreements and disagreements had played a significant role in the progress of the independence movement as well as in the post-independence political developments in India.

Among these organizations the Communist Party alone had possessed the greatest ideological clarity and organized style of work. This quality of the Party has been referred to earlier while dealing with its development at the different stages. In particular, we have shown that, apart from the infantile disorders common to all political parties and organizations, the severe repressions let loose by the British imperialism on the Communists as part of its opposition to the world communist movement had stood in the way of forming and fostering a Communist Party in India. The Communist Party was finally reorganized in the year 1933-1934. In other words, a stable Communist Party was established in India in the 1930's as part of the new anti-imperialist upswing witness in this period.

But as distinct from other left parties, the Communist Party has an international outlook of its own. It is a Party which is striving to create a revolutionary movement by rallying the entire masses under the leadership of the working class in India as has been done in other countries following the victorious October Socialist Revolution in Russia. The

Party, as part of the Communist International, was striving to consolidate the leadership of the working class in the anti-imperialist movement in India and to rally the peasantry and other working masses against the policies of the bourgeois leadership. This is what distinguishes the Communist Party from all other left parties.

We have mentioned earlier the services of M. N. Roy in the early years of the development of the Communist movement in India. But Roy after being expelled from the Communist International and his Radical Democratic Party began to work in a manner hostile to the Communist Party of India. This brought Roy to opportunist politics in the later years. But, this political group was part of the left movement in the second half of the 1932's. In those years the phrasology and style of functioning of his group appeared to be in keeping with the traditions of the Communist International.

The attitude adopted by the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party was different from that of these two organizations. As pointed out earlier, it had its origin in the efforts made to give an organized form to the extremist views that had begun to emerge within the Congress. Consequently it possessed a characteristic which was absent in the Communist Party and the Royist group. This characteristic was the stipulation that anyone who wished to be a member of the Congress Socialist Party must be a member of the Congress. The leaders of the Congress Socialist Party thought that theirs was a party of the left-wing in the Congress.

The Communist Party and the Royist group, on the other hand, were non-Congress Parties which were striving to organize the masses against the bourgeois leadership of the Congress. The Royist group had never given up the Communist outlook that the right-wing leadership of the Congress was, from the class point of view, the leadership of the bourgeoisie. The Congress Socialist Party had never accepted this position.

At the international level, there was an organization called the Socialist International parallel to and opposing the

Communist International in ideology and in practical politics. This was the continuation of the Second International which was working on the basis of class collaboration as against the working class revolutionary outlook represented by Lenin in the world working class revolutionary movement. The outlook of the British Labour Party which had some connection with the Indian national movement and which had come to power twice in England, was that of the Second International. Its ideological influence held sway over the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party as also some other sections of the Indian nationalists. It reflected itself in the attitude of the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party towards the world communist movement, the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of India. It publicized in India the anti-communist and anti-Soviet slanders fabricated by the enemies of communism, in which the Party's Joint Secretary M R Masani, the editor of the Party journal Ashoka Mehta and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia were prominent. Consequently, this group of the Congress Socialist leadership was inimical to the Communist Party.

The political developments that took place at the national and international levels in the later half of the 1930's were such that this hostility to communism was not likely to cut much ice. European fascism which started in Mussolini's Italy and spread to Hitler's Germany and the Japanese militarism which was striving to conquer the entire Asia were growing as a big threat to world democratic movement. The possibility of a global war breaking out if this aggressive tendency was not contained shocked the people.

Efforts were going on at the international level to build a fighting front against fascist aggression, in which the different nationl organizations in India, including the Congress, were actively participating. In particular, India made practical contributions to the heroic battles being waged against the fascist forces. Nehru's visit to Spain and the Indian medical mission led by Dr. Kotnis sent to China were examples.

The Communist International was in the forefront of this world anti-fascist upsurge. The anti-fascist call given by Dimitrov who took over the leadership of the Communist International after being released from the Hitlerite prison in Germany, reverberated the whole world. Responding to this call, Communists all over the world were striving to forge unity among the anti-fascist, anti-war democrats in their respective countries. As an impact of these developments, Communists in India engaged themselves in uniting all the anti-imperialist organizations and movements including the Congress. They came to the fore as the most effective propagandists of the anti-imperialist programme formulated at the Lucknow Congress and in the following years.

The leadership of the Congress Socialists could not ignore this. The anti-communism which the Masani & Co tried to display in the national and international politics as a result of its relationship with the bourgeois leadership of the Congress at home and the influence of the Socialist International abroad, failed to be effective. On the contrary, the Congress Socialist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan were of the opinion that Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party should not only unite with each other but also should build a joint front. This was the basis of the left unity mentioned earlier.

This united action helped to bring certain changes in the Congress Socialist Party. A section of the members of the Congress Socialist Party and even a section of its leadership gave up anti-communism and anti-sovietism, and analyzing the right-wing leadership on the class basis, began to perceive the bourgeois nature of its leadership. They gradually transformed themselves into communists. The present author is one among them. The same change took place among the leadership and ranks of the Congress Socialist Party in Kerala. Thus, after a few years the entire Congress Socialist Party of Kerala transformed itself into the Communist Party. Things moved in the same direction in many other parts of the country. Thus, the cooperation between the Congress

Socialist and Communist parties led to the growth of the Communist Party.

This enhanced the influence of the anti-Communist group of Masani in the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party. They failed to appreciate the fact that this political change was the natural result of joint action and constant exchange of views. Appreciating it would amount to admitting one's own political weakness! So they carried out an extensive propaganda that this was the result of a 'Communist conspiracy'. At the same time they would claim that the earlier transformation of a section of Congressmen into Congress Socialists was not the result of a Congress Socialist Conspiracy but the result of political experience and exchange of views. They faild to appreciate the role of a similar political process in the transformation of Congress Socialists into communists.

Consequently, many prominent Congress Socialists including Jayaprakash Narayan who earlier took the initiative to forge political unity with the Communists and who declared at the Meerut conference that their objective was Marxism and not merely socialism, capitulated to the new anti-communist attack. This process reached its culmination after the outbreak of the Second World War. But the attack on the Communists inside the Congress Socialist Party had started long back.

The 1939 Congress presidential election and the subsequent events took place in the political atmosphere in which the Congress Socialists and Communists were jointly building the anti-imperialist front on the one side and engaged in political conflicts between each other on the other. The protest domonstration of 9th July and the disciplinary action taken by the right-wing Congress leadership against Bose and other left-wing Congress leaders resulted in the emergence of a new leftist party distinct from these parties. Forward Bloc did not subscribe to Marxism-Leninism or even to the right-wing Socialism. It was merely based on left-wing nationalism. The common outlook of an anti-imperialist

struggle linked the Forward Bloc with the other three left parties, but it lacked the outlook of workers and peasants struggle which was shared by the latter. Its leaders visualized mass struggles mainly based on the middle-classes.

On the issue of International politics also the Forward Bloc held views which were different from that of the rest of the left parties. The latter parties were striving to unite the revolutionary forces all over the world against fascism and war. The Forward Bloc, on the other hand, was striving to develop friendly relations with the world fascist and militarist forces thinking that the British imperialism was its sole enemy. They were viewing the national and international politics on the basis of the principle that 'one's enemy's enemy is one's friend'. And this was exactly what led Bose to Germany and Japan during the war.

The attitude of Nehru was just the opposite. He was close to Communists in viewing world politics and Indian politics which was a part of it. He was also closer to Communists in holding the outlook of an anti-imperialist front by unifying all anti-imperialist and anti-fascist forces in India and converting the Congress as the platform of such a front in which the fighting organizations of workers and peasants had a significant role to play. But unlike the Communists and Socialists, he was not prepared to clash with the right-wing leadership of the Congress on the issue of this anti-imperialist front. He, in fact, began to engage himself in the world politics as a means to escape form the internal conflicts that surfaced in the Congress before and after the Tripuri session. Nehru's biographer states: The national movement was in a reverse gear and at Haripura Subhas Bose had taken over the Congress presidency. Jawaharlal was pressed hard to become the general secretary but refused. He had even wished to step out of the Working Committee. He had been prevailed upon not to do so, but his interest was elsewhere, and in June, gleefully turning his back on India, he sailed for what to him were the vital centres of activity in Europe.[4]

4. S. Gopal *op cit*, p. 233.

It will be rewarding to compare the roles played by Nehru and Bose in the independence struggle and in the Congress organization. Even after 1938-1939 Bose held the logic of 'enemy's enemy', no matter it was fascism. For him, the imminent world war was an opportunity to liberate India. There would be no pricks of conscience for him even in accepting the assistance from the fascist forces for that purpose.

Nehru, an the other hand, considered fascism and British imperialism as twin brothers. He could not even imgine opposing imperialism with the assistance of fascism. Nor could he think of accommodating British imperialism on the protext of preventing the advance of the fascist powers. Apart form this, Nehru and Bose were poles apart in their approach towards the right-wing leadership of the Congress, especially towards Gandhi.

The activists of the Kisan Sabha included people who were holding all these views and outlooks. Consequently there is nothing to mention particularly about its character. Suffice it to say that the inclusion of this organization which was organizing the peasantry against the landownership systems like the Zemindari, etc., added to the strength of the left forces in the anti-imperialist front.

22

THE WAR AND NATIONAL STRUGGLE

I. THREAT OF WAR: DIFFERENT VIEWS

The aggressive actions of Hitler after his assumption of power in Germany created the fear that a new war more devastating than the First World War might break out soon. In Asia, this fear was strengthened by the Japanese invasion of China.

A section of the Indian bourgeoisie evaluated the new situation on the line that the war which appeared imminant would offer tremendous opportunities for gaining national independence. We have noted earlier that the view that 'England's need in India's opportunity' was widespread among bourgeois political circles in India during the First World War. Besides, basing on the view that 'England's peril is India's opportunity', a section of Indian revolutionaries tried to carry out a programme of creating as much

problem as possible to the British rulers during the war and organizing an armed revolt in India with the assistance of their enemy, Germany, as well as of the U. S. A. and Canada which, though friendly to Britain, were trying to weaken her. The same view was maintained by a section led by Subhas Bose with regard to the military threat posed by Fascist Germany and Militarist Japan now. When Germany had started conquering the European countries one by one and Japan had invaded part of the Chinese territories, this section of the bourgeois nationalists expressed sympathy with these forces which were rising against the world domination of Britain. They calculated that these anti-British forces could be utilized to India's advantage.

As we have indicated earlier, the attitude of Nehru and the right-wing leaders of the Congress including Gandhi was opposed to this. This does not, however, mean that Nehru or the right-wing leaders never held the view that 'England's peril is India's opportunity'. The difference between Bose and these leaders were, in fact, over the question of how to utilize England's 'peril' as an 'opportunity' for India. Unlike Bose, Gandhi and other right-wing leaders did not view the fascist powers as helpful to India's independence struggle. They were thinking in terms of taking advantage of Britain's peril to bargain with the British with a view to wrest maximum concession from them and to get the political power transferred from the British to Indians. Before considering the details of the clash between these two approaches, it is necessary to point out that Nehru, the right-wing Congress leaders including Gandhi, and Bose were now representing, in the ways characteristic of each of them, the Indian bourgeoisie which had become more mature and powerful than at the time of the First World War.

The limited programme of industrialization which the British were forced to carry out in India during and after the First World War had helped the growth of Indian bourgeoisie. They registered tremendous growth both in terms of number and assets. In the sphere of politics, a series of

political actions such as the Khilafat-non-cooperation movements, the emergence of the Swaraj Party, the civil disobedience movements of 1930-1932 and the parliamentary programme that followed had made the bourgeoisie a powerful class. It had acquired the capability to rally the entire masses against the imperialist domination and to bargain with British rulers on the strength of this organized popular force. This process reached its culmination towards the end of 1930s when the political party of the bourgeoisie—the Congress—had been able to consolidate its mass base more than ever before. The Congress ministries which assumed power in the provinces in 1937 helped the bourgeoisie to muster enough strength to challenge the British rulers.

In 1937 Congress ministers in the provinces holding the portfolios of Industry and Labour held discussions among themselves under the auspices of the Congress. These discussions were followed by a conference of Congress chief ministers in May 1938. Although the conference brought out a number of economic problems they had to handle as provincial ministers, the conference ended with the formation of a National Planning Committee. In his inaugural address Congress President Bose set the objective of introducing an industrial revolution as rapidly and organized a way as it had happened in the Soviet Union. Jawaharlal Nehru was appointed chairman of the Planning Committee. The formation of the Planning Committee on the initiative of a well known leftist leader and chaired by another was an important event in the history of planning process in India. This was the forerunner of what is known as the Bombay Plan prepared on the initiative of the eminent industrialists Tata and Birla during the Second World War and the country-wide discussions that followed.

The formation of the National Planning Committee marked an important mile stone in the growth of Indian bourgeoisie. It was a clear evidence to show that the bourgeoise had already started making attempts to prepare the outlines of economic development of free India in

parallel the to struggles to get the political power transferred from the British. It may be noted that even before this Sir M. Visweswarayya had prepared a plan for India's economic development on the capitalist lines. But this was the result of his personal efforts. Now following the sharing of power by the Congress in the provinces, the bourgeoisie was getting engaged in a collective thinking on a countrywide activity for economic construction.

As soon as the thinking on planning started, difference of opinion surfaced between the Planning Committee and Gandhi on the one hand and between members of the Committee and Nehru, on the other. These were the manifestations of the differences that existed among the different sections of the bourgeois leadership on the direction of planning. But all of them agreed on the point that since the transfer of power to the Indians would take place before long, it was necessary right now to start thinking as to how Indian economy had to be reconstructed after the transfer of power. In other words, the leaders belonging to different political persuasions who agreed on the need to formulate a plan for reorganizing the society in post-independent India, differed from each other on the question of the nature of this reorganization.

Yet, the problem remained as to how to get the power transferred to the Indians. Two methods were suggested. One of the methods suggested was to seize power from the British by organizing armed revolts with the assistance of the fascist forces on the basis of the logic of 'enemy's ememy'. Subhas Bose was the main spokesman of this method. Nehru and the right-wing Congress leaders including Gandhi, on the other hand, regarded the war as an opportunity to effectively bargain with the British. Consequently, they remained in the camp of the world revolutionary movement against the fascist forces which were opposed to Britain.

This difference of opinion came into the open only after the war broke out. Till now the Congress had been taking decisions on international issues unanimously. All the

resolutions adopted by the Congress sessions and the AICC meetings on each of the aggressive actions taken by Italy, Germany and Japan were in consnance with the attitudes of the world anti-fascist movement. Although it was Nehru who was in the forefront in drafting and explaining these resolutions, they had enjoyed the support of Bose as well as the right-wing leaders including Gandhi. This was because the imperialist powers including Britain had been abetting the fascist aggressions. The rebellion in Spain led by Gen. Franco, Hitler's actions against Austria and Czechoslovakia and Japan's invasion of China had the backing of Britain. Therefore the movement against fascism and war turned out to be a movement against British imperialism also. The entire anti-fascist movement took the form of anti-imperialism. Thus even to those who were thinking in terms of seeking the assistance of the fascist forces after the breakout of the war it was not difficult to take an anti-fascist stand before the war.

However, Bose and the right-wing Congress leadership came to a clash with each other over the question of how to utilize the situation that might arise out of the war between the fascist forces and the imperialist forces including Britain, which they knew was inevitable, to the advantage of India. Gandhi and the right-wing leaders were thinking in terms of effecting the transfer of power by bargaining with Britain which was caught up in a dangerous crisis. As we have repeatedly pointed out earlier, Bose was trying to organize an armed revolt in India with the assistance of the fascist forces.

Bose's approach was partly shared by Jinnah who was suspecious of Britain's "semi-honeymoon" with the right-wing Congress leadership. He sent A. R. Siddiqi and Khaliquzzaman to Europe in 1939 to contact the Italian and German governments.[1] But there was a significiant difference between Bose and Jinnah, which needs particular mention. Unlike Bose, Jinnah was not seeking the assistanee of the fascist

1. S. Gopal, *Nehru: A Biography*, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1976, P. 240.

forces to organize an armed revolt in India. He was also thinking in terms of a bargain with the British. But when he felt that the British rulers were showing the tendency of moving closer to the Congress, he contacted the fascist forces as a counter-move. In other words, Jinnah simply began to make an attempt to bargain with the fascist forces as part of the policy of bargaining with the British, which he shared with Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders. When the "semi-honeymoon" of the British with the Congress ended, he re-established relations with the British.

As distinct from the right-wing Congress leaders, Bose and Jinnah, the Communists had taken a stand which was simultaneously anti-fascist and anti-British. Theirs was an approach which linked together the objective of preventing the advance of fascism and strengthening the anti-British struggle. They opposed both the right-wing policy of bargaining with the British and the policy of liberating India from the British rule with the assistance of the fascist forces pursued by Bose. The method adopted by the Communist was to organize workers' strikes, peasants' struggles and other forms of revolutionary struggles and to link the Indian independence struggle to the growing world movment against fascism. The right-wing leadership of the Congress Socialist Party and Nehru adopted the same stand until the war broke out. But owing to their relationship with the right-wing leadership of the Congress, they failed to adopt the policy of an uncompromising struggle against imperialism. Thus, soon after the war started they and the Communist Party began to move along different paths.

II. THE IMPACT OF THE WAR

Before the outbreak of the war in September 1939 it was anticipated that the Second World War would be fought out between Nazi Germany on the one side and the Soviet Union and other European Powers like Britain and France

on the other. It was in anticipation of such a war that the Soviet Union and the Communist International were working. But the war did not start that way.

On 24th August 1939 the news broke out surprising the world that the Soviet Union and Germany had signed a no-war pact. By securing her eastern borders through this pact, Germany turned towards the west.

The Nazi forces attacked Poland first. Soon after the attack, the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain made a statement that since Poland was an ally of Britain, the attack on Poland was an attack on Britain. He issued an ultimatum to Germany that if the Nazi forces did not withdraw from Poland immediately, Britain would declare war on Germany. As Hitler did not heed the ultimatum, Britain declared war on Germany.

Thus the war started between Germany and Britain and not between Germany and Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, the only power capable of rescuing Poland by joining hands with Britain, was keeping out of the war. Britain, on the other hand, could not come to the rescue of Poland because she had no direct access to that country without crossing other countries. Thus, the British assurance to Poland and her declaration of war on Germany remained only on paper. In a few days Germany conquered Poland.

There is relatively long history behind such a turn of events. Right from the days of the October Revolution, the imperialist powers including Britain had adopted different tactics to destroy the Soviet Union. When all these tactics failed, they encouraged Hitler's aggressive activities as part of their foreign policy of providing all opportunities for Germany to became a mighty military power against the Soviet Union and the world communist movement and aiding her aggressive acts while pretending to oppose them. When Germany conquered Austria and Czechoslovakia, Britain approved of these actions through the League of Nations. The Munich Pact is a standing testimony to their betrayal of Czechoslovakia to the Nazis. When world public

opinion, including that of their own, became irresistible, the rulers of the West European countries took an apparently anti-fascist stand. They nominally put forward the opinion that the Soviet Union in the east and Britain and France in the west must join hands together and co-operate militarily in order to stall the advance of Hitler. Apart from declaring their wish they refused to take any action in this regard. Instead of holding discussions in a serious way to face the dangerous situation, they were putting them off indefinitely.

There was a reason behind this ambivalence on the part of Britain. They wanted to push the Soviet Union, the consistent enemy of fascism, into a war against Germany while keeping themselves aloof from it and provide an opportunity to Hitler to destroy the Soviet Union. Leaders of the Soviet Union saw through this imperialist design. The Soviet-German no-war pact was a clever counter-move to this imperialist design.

Hitler could now turn westwards. A few months after the fall of Poland, Hitler conquered the entire western Europe including France and made an unprecedented bombardment on Britain with a view to conquering her. The German army even landed on the British Isles. It was feared that Britain too would be conquered soon. All this exposed the bankruptcy of the policies Britain and France had been following in the pre-war years. Chamberlain who gained notoriety as being the author of this policy was removed from the Prime Ministership. Churchill who stood for halting the Nazi onslaught with the cooperation of the Soviet Union took over as the Prime Minister.

Later when Hitler turned eastwards and attacked the Soviet Union, the anti-fascist front envisaged by the Soviet Union and the Communist International came into being in 1941. In the historic counter-attack launched by the Soviet people combined with the guerilla attacks organized by the people in the German occupied countries and the onslaughts of the American and British forces, the Nazi forces were completely destroyed.

To anyone who examines the later events it would be clear now that the Soviet-German no-war pact was a clever move on the part of the Soviet Union to expose and oppose the strategy of the imperialist powers of turning Hitler against the Soviet Union without engaging themselves in the war. But the situation prevailing then was different. The news that the Soviet leaders who were engaged themselves for a long time in rallying the people around the world against Hitler suddenly entered into a pact with him shocked the world. This created confusion even in the Communist parties in many countries. Non-communist anti-imperialists added to the anti-Soviet feelings by their sharp criticism of the "opportunist policy of the Soviet leaders". This was reflected in Indian politics too. Indian Communists too were confused. The anti-Communists among the socialists and in other left parties, on the other hand, used this opportunity to whip up anti-communism and anti-Sovietism that was growing in the left-parties. The left-unity which was built up with strenuous efforts reached a near collapse.

There were serious differences within the Congress leadership too, which were not confined to the problem of the Soviet-German pact. The entire approach towards the war and towards Britain which was involved in the war became the subject for discussion. Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders expressed the opinion that it would be wise to cooperate with the British in their war efforts. The Congress ministers in the provinces came forward to carry out the programmes prepared by the Governors and the British officials for the prosecution of the war. The Madras Chief Minister Rajagopalachari was ready to take certain actions (such as detaining Germans which even the Governor considered high handed). But Nehru and some other Congress leaders were opposed to this. They were not prepared to be drawn into the war which was declared without consulting the people of India, their elected representatives, and to allow Indian men and materials to be used for the prosecution of the war. They argued that there was no question of the

Congress cooperating with the British in the war unless the government was prepared to concede the main demand raised by the Congress before the outbreak of the war, namely, the transfer of the administration at the Centre to the Indian people's representatives. In the words of Pattabhi Sitaramayya:

> Gandhi was of the view that we must offer our moral support, allow the ministries to function and he had the confidence that through the ministers, he could manoeuvre a declaration of Poorna Swaraj or Dominion Status, a declaration of the next step of the same that Jawaharlal expected by negotiation. In both cases the contingency of a promise not being fulfilled did exist, but under Gandhi's technique, the chance of the fulfilment of such a declaration was certainly greater. [2]

In other words, it was the aim of both the left and right-wing leadership of the Congress including Gandhi and Nehru to utilize the war situation and get power transferred from the British. While Gandhi believed that it would be useful to assure unconditional assistance to Britain in her was efforts for achieving the objective, Nehru thought it more prudent to ask the British to declare her war aims clearly.

Since the difference between these two approaches could not be resolved, the leadership could not decide its attitude towards the war immediately after it broke out. Meeting the Viceroy in response to his invitation in early September, Gandhi told him that his sympathies were with England and France. Contradicting the views expressed by Gandhi in several of his statements, Nehru issued a number of statements sharply criticizing the roles being played by Britain in world politics and in the affairs of India. After all these controversies, the Congress Working Committee which met on 14th September adopted a resolution which may be summarized as follows.

1. The Congress is sympathetic to the objective of the war in which England and France are involved. It is a war for

2. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op cit*, p. 130.

democracy and against the imperialist and fascist powers. However, India is a country which has been fighting against the denial of freedom and peace in the country for about a century and a half. In this war the people in the Dominion States who are participating on the side of Britain are doing it in accordance with the decisions taken by their respective parliaments. India, on the other hand, had been forced into the war by the imperial power without consulting her people. The government at the Centre which is not responsible to the people is taking all the decisions in this regard. India cannot submit to this.

2. In the final analysis, it is for the provincial governments to take all actions with regard to the war. These governments must have the necessary powers to function accordingly.

3. Past experience, particularly of the First World War, does not allow the Congress to take the war-time declarations being made by the British government at their face value. Therefore, along with making an unambiguous statement about the future of India, the rulers should make clear what they propose to do to implement the principles contained in the declaration immediately.

The Working Committee declared that as long as the government was not prepared to make its stand clear, the Congress would not be able to fully co-operate with the government in its war efforts.

It is clear that the resolution embodies more of the approach of Nehru than Gandhi's. Accordingly Gandhi proposed that Nehru should take over the presidentship form Rajendra Prasad and nominate a Working Committee of his choice. Rajendra Prasad offered his resignation but for various reasons the proposed change did not take place and the existing team continued.

Thus, in the first weeks of the war considerable confusion and uncertainty prevailed in the bourgeois leadership of the Congress too. The official policy of the Congress during this time was characterized by the presence of a number of

contradictory elements such as agreement with the war objective of the British, non-cooperation with Britain's war efforts in protest against her policies towards India, while at the same time the continuance of the provincial ministries which were expected to play significant roles in the prosecution of the war.

The bourgeois leadership was not prepared to rally the people in an anti-war movement making use of the revolutionary idea contained in the slogan of 'Britain's war is India's opportunity'. Nor were they prepared to unconditionally cooperate with the British as proposed by Gandhi now and by the moderates earlier. But matters were moving in such a way that it was impossible to hold on the existing policies.

III. THE POLITICS OF RESIGNATION

The resolution adopted by the Working Committee on 14th September left the door open for negotiations with the British rulers. Following, both the parties raised arguments and counter-arguments through press statements. The polimics showed that the gulf that existed between the two camps was unbridgable. The British government was not prepared to declare its war aims as demanded by the Congress. Nor did it concede the demand raised by the Congress with regard to the administration at the Centre. The Congress, on the other hand, held firm the position that unless these two demands were conceded, it would be impossible for it extend cooperation to the British in their war efforts. The opinion spread in the Congress ranks that it was not proper for the Congress ministries to continue in office in the prevailing circumstances. Nehru and many other Congress leaders were in favour of this opinion.

Besides, the Communist Party, the Congress Socialist Party and Subhas Bose had been conducting powerful agitations against the continuance of the Congress ministries.

All this compelled the right-wing leadership including Gandhi to adopt the policy of resignation of the ministries. A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of the A I C C held on 9th-10th October. In the light of the statements issued later, the Working Committee confirmed the decision.

The decision was that the ministries should submit resignation by 31st October. It was also proposed that an extraordinary meeting of the provincial legislatures should be called before the resignation of the ministries to adopt the following resolution.

> This Assembly regrets that the British Government have made India a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany without the consent of the people and have further in complete disregard of the Indian opinion passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers and activities of the Provincial Governments.
>
> The Assembly recommends to the Government to convey to the Government of India and through them to the British Government that in consonance with the avowed aims of the present war, it is essential in order to secure the co-operation of the Indian people that the principles of democracy with effective safeguards for the Muslims and other minorities be applied to India and her policy be guided by her people; and that India should be regarded as an independent nation entitled to frame her own constitution and further that suitable action should be taken in so far as it is possible in the immediate present to give effect to that principle in regard to the present governance of India.
>
> This Assembly regrets that the situation in India has not been rightly understood by His Majesty's Government when authorising the statement that has been made on their behalf in regard to India and in view of this failure of the British Government to meet India's demand, this Assembly is of the opinion that the Government cannot associate itself with the British policy.[3]

3. *ibid* p. 142

It is clear that the resolution is an expression of the views and demands of that section of the bourgeois which was represented by the Congress. It was in fact a compromise between Gandhi who wanted to extend unconditional cooperation to the British government and Nehru who argued that Britain's attitude towards India should be considered as a touchstone to test the sincerity of the British clain that it was fighting against fascim and for democracy. Like the 14th September resolution, this resolution also was one that left the door open for negotiations even after the resignation of the Congress ministries. For the same reason, the Congress leaders did not provide an answer to the question: 'After the resignation, what?'.

In addition to the British, the Congress had to face also the Muslim League which had been growing as a political party in all provinces since the 1937 elections. Its leadership had been bargaining with the British on the one side and with the Congress on the other. It did not oppose the resolution moved by the Congress in the provincial legislatures regretting the British action of declaring "India a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people". They simply introduced an amendment which reads as follows.

> This Assembly recommends to the Government to convey to the Government of India and through them to his Majesty's Government that they should, when considering the question of India's constitution either during the duration of the war and after it is concluded, bear in mind that the democratic parliamentary system of Government under the present constitution has failed, being uttery unsuited to the conditions and genius of the people and, further, apant from the Govenment of India Act of 1935, entire problems of India's future constitution should be wholly reviewed and revised *de novo* and the British Government should not make any commitment in principle or otherwise without the approval and consent of the All India Muslim League, which alone represents, and can speak

on behalf the Mussalmans of India, as well as without the consent of all important minorities and interests.[4]

It is clear form this amendment that the Muslim League had now entered the political scene as the representative of a section of the bourgeoisie with interests which are different and even opposed to that of the Congress. This section of the bourgeoisie also could not compromise with the interests of the British bourgeoisie. They could not express their contradictions with that section of the bourgeoisie which was represented by the Congress without taking an attitude aganist the British bourgeoisie. At the same time, they feared that if power was transferred as a result of the bargain between the Congress as the sole representative of the Indian people and the British, it might adversely affect their own interests. Therefore, the section of the bourgeoisie represented by the League claimed their right to intervene effectively in the negotiations between the Congress and the government.

Although, in the final analysis, the Congress and the Muslim League represented the same bourgeois class, there was a significant difference between the policies and approaches of the leaderships of this class. The Congress possessed a leadership which had been bargaining with the British government on the basis of the mass strength gained through drawing the people in struggles and agitations. It has an organization which has conducted numerous countrywide struggles in the 1921-22 and 1930-32 periods; it has a supreme leader, Gandhi, who has led a number of struggles beginning with the struggles of the South African Indians, and several others who have given active leadership to many struggles as his trusted colleagues. All these were being utilized for bargaining with the British government. Although the League also is at the bargaining counter—that is the only similarity between the two—but it lacked a programme of struggle and an outlook as compared to that of the Congress.

4. *Ibid* p. 143.

There was another difference between the Congress and the League. The Congress was a political party which was fighting against the British government by rallying under its own leadership all the left forces inside and outside its organization. Its leadership would adopt the leftist phraseology and programmes as and when found necessary for this purpose. It considered that the fundamental contradiction was between itself and the British government.

As for the Muslim League, its fundamental contradiction was with the Congress. It was mainly concerned about the future of that section of the bourgeoise which it represented in the event power was transferred to the Congress. They were trying to establish that in this respect there were other minority interests also with them. That was why in the amendment to the Congress resolution in the legislatures, the Muslim League warned the British government against giving assurance to the Congress on the Indian constitution without obtaining the consent of the minority interests.

The British government used this situation in a clever way. On 1st November—the day after the date fixed for the resignation of the Congress ministries—the Viceroy invited Gandhi, the Congress President Rajendra Prasad and the League President Jinnah for a talk. In the meeting the government proposed to expand the Viceroy's Executive Council to include immediately the representatives of the Congress and the League. It was also suggested that in order to pave the way for this, the Congress and the League start negotiation between themselves with a view to reaching an agreement at the level of provincial administration. This meant that the Congress and the League should participate in the existing Executive Council without the government making the declaration on its war aims and without introducing any change in the Central administration and that the Congress and the League should similarly form coaliton governments in the provinces.

The latter part of the proposal was in fact suggested by the League following the 1937 election and rejected by the

Congress. If it were to be accepted now, it would amount to an admission of defeat on the part of the Congress. The former part was also unacceptable to the Congress, because it was a negation of the policy which was adopted by the Congress as a compromise between the views of the right and left wings of the Congress. Following this, there was a war of statements between the Congress leaders and the government. Gandhi was forced to issue several statements justifying the attitude of the Congress to which he was opposed in the beginning. All this created the impression among the ranks of the Congress that another round of mass struggle against the British was inevitable. This impression was strengthened by the speeches and statements of leaders like Nehru inside the Congress and by others like Bose outside. On the other hand, the government utilized the statements made by the leaders of the Muslim League and other minorities and interests to reject the claim made by the Congress.As a reply to this, the Congress repeated the same old argument which it had presented at the Round Table Conferences earlier that the problem of the different communities was an internal problem of the Indian people, which will be resolved by the Indian people themselves.

Thus the policy of the Congress reached a blind alley. It became clear that the aim with which the Congress leadership decided to relinguish office in the provinces was not going to realize. The statements issued by the leaders before and after the resignation of the ministries did not bring about any change in the attitude of the government.

On the other hand, the grip of the repressive laws was becoming tight day by day, following the resignation of the ministries. The situation in the country was becoming worse. Following the declaration of the war, prices of essential commodities were shooting up. The people were discontent at the resulting rise in the cost of living. Trade Unions and other mass organizations began to demand higher wages in proportion to the rise in prices. Communist, Congress Socialists and other left-wing Congressmen were in the forefront

of the agitations and struggles of the people in defence of their demands. Basing on the confidence of the people they were able to earn through these struggles, the leftists had been bringing pressure to bear upon the right-wing Congressmen to start a country-wide mass movement.

In this background, the Congress Working Committe was forced to review the situation and move along the path of anti-war struggles. At the same time, the leadership was doubtful if they would be able to control the struggle as before in the new international and national situations. After prolonged discussions, it was decided to call a Congress session at Ramgarh in Bihar in March 1940.

IV. RAMGARH AND LAHORE

The disputes among the government, the Congress and the League led finally to two important developments. The Congress, tired of the British obstinacy, decided at its Ramgarh session in March 1940 to launch a *satyagraha* movement. The League adopted the historic 'Pakistan' resolution at its Lahore conference which was also held in March 1940. The Lahore resolution which changed the entire course of Indian history stated:

> It is the considered view of this session of the All India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or be acceptable to the Mussalmans unless it is designed on the following basic principles, namely, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions, which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustment as may be necessary that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in majority as in the northwestern and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute "independent states", in which the constituent unit shall be autonomous and sovereign.

We shall return later to the agitation launched by the Leaguers under Jinnah to get India devided into two

independent states in accordance with this resolution and to the discussions held in this connection. Here we stall deal briefly with the background of the League's Lahore resolution and its immediate repercusions in the Indian politics.

As we have noted earlier, ever since the idea of transfer of power from the British to the Indian hands and the political movement based on it emerged, there emerged the Islamic politics in India which was also connected with the same idea of transfer of power. We have also noted that under the pressure of the national movement the British government had been forced to propose one constitutional change after another. At each such stage, two sets of views—Hindu and Islamic—had also appeared, which were cleverly made use of by the British to protect their own interests. Whenever the Indian national movement against the British led by the Congress gained in strength, the Islamic politics also got strengthened in parallel. The amendment introduced by the League members to the resolution moved by the Congress in the legislatures on the eve of the resignation the Congress ministries was the final form of this process. It must, however, be noted that even at this stage,the reference was to the future constitution of an undivided India. What was pointedly stated in the amendment was the decisive role the League should have in the discussions relating to the future constitution.

The situation radically changed with Lahore resolution of the League. Now there was no question of an undivided independent India; India should be divided as she gained independence. In order to understand the reason behind this change, it is necessary to look back at the changes that had taken place in the course of the European war immediately before the Lahore conference of the League and the resultant changes in the Indian politics as well as in the policies of the Congress. As we know, the Congress decision to relinguish office in the provinces came in the midst of bargaining with the British authorities on the future constitution of India in the new situation created by the war. The resolution moved by

the Congress in the provincial legislatures was a move in the pressure politics which was part of the strategy of bargain. The amendemant moved by the League to that resolution was the Islamic form of the same pressure politics.

When the initial form of this pressure tactics failed and the Congress felt that it was necessary to strengthen the pressure tactics in the form of a *satyagraha* movement, the League also felt the need to strengthen its own pressure tactics. The League felt that efforts were being made to shape the future constitution in a manner visualized by the Congress through a mass struggle more powerful and wide spread than those of the 1921-1922 and 1930-1932 periods and that the defeat in the European war was forcing Britian to yield to this. Therefore, the 'Pakistan' resolution of the League was designed to build a base for mass struggle to face the new situation and to shape the future the way it visualized.

The Ramgarh session of the Congress was held while the Islamic politics was moving in that direction. The speech made by the Chairman of the Reception Committee Rajendra Prasad, the new president Abul Kalam Azad and Gandhi who had played a decisive role in the procecdings of the session were full of exhortations to the masses as well as warning to the rulers. A consideration of an anti-compromise conference held immediately before the Ramgarh session would help to gauge the feelings expressed in these speeches. The anti-compromise conference was presided over by Subhas Bose who was under the disciplinary action by the Congress leadership. Bose and other leftist leaders participating the proceedings of the conference accused the Congress leadership of trying to reach a compromise with the British rulers. They reminded of the leadership's withdrawal of the 1932 struggle on the pretext of *Harijan Seva* (service to the depressed castes) and the subsequent entry in the legislature and called upon the people to ensure that history was not repeated this time.

The Ramgarh session which was held in this atmosphere gave a clarion call to the coming struggle of the Indian

people against the war efforts of the British. At the same time, it imposed severe Gandhian type of restrictions and controls on the volunteers and issued caution against 'violent tendencies'. Gandhi made himself clear that he was a leader who was not at all prepared to give any concession with regard to the form of struggle and the behaviour of those who were expected to participate in the struggle. The Congress decided to launch the struggle under the leadership of such a person like Gandhi.

The speeches made by Gandhi in the Subjects Committee and in the open session threw light on his own views and on the nature of the forthcoming struggle. Gandhi made it clear that the struggle which he was going to lead would not be the kind of mass struggle which the Communists, Congress Socialists and other left-wing Congressmen were visualizing.

Warning the delegates that the forthcoming struggle would a hard one, Gandhi pointed to two difficulties, "external diffiiculties" and "internal difficulties". The former, according to him, were due to the fact that "the British Government are engaged in a war and naturally, if we engage them in a fight, we ask for enough trouble". Regarding the "internal difficulties", Gandhi said: Our Congress registers are full of bogus members who have swelled them because they know that getting into the Congress means getting into power. Those who, therefore, never before thought of entering the Congress have come into it and correpted it.[5]

Suggesting observation of strict discipline and avoidence of groups in the Congress, Gandhi continued:

> There is no discipline in our ranks and they have been devided up into groups which strive to gain more and more power. Non-violence as between ourselves does not seem to us to be necessary. There may be groups, but then they should strengthen and not weaken and destroy the organization. Ours has been both a democratic organization, ever since we reorganized it in 1920... I have said

5. D. G. Tendulkar, *Op. cit*, Vol. 5, P. 260

> times without number that, if you will be soldiers in my army, understand that there is no room for democracy in that organization. The army may be a part of a democratic organization, but there can be no democracy in it... In an army, the general's word is law, and his condition cannot be relaxed. I am supposed to be your general, but I do not know a more feeble general in history. My only sanction is the love and affection in which you hold me... I know that you love me. Does your love translate itself into action? If it does not, if it does not mean ever increasing discipline and ever-increasing response to what I say, then let me declare to you that I cannot launch civil disobedience and you must select another general. You cannot make me your general on your terms.[6]

It may be noted that these are not mere metaphorical expressions used while comparing the struggle with a battle. The underlying politics is clear from what he continued to say: Compromise is a part and parcel of my nature. I will go to the Viceroy fifty times, if I feel like it... I could not have fought the Dutch and the English without love in my heart for them, and without a readiness for compromise.[7]

Here Gandhi was expressing his fundamental disagreement with the leftist view of waging an uncompromising struggle until the final victory was achieved, considering Britain's difficulties as the opportunity for India.

Many delegates both in the Subjects Committee as well as in the general session criticized the resolution for not specifically characterizing the struggle a "mass" struggle. To them Gandhi replied: Well, if it is not mass civil disobedience, is it to be the civil disobedience of a handful? In that case I shonld not have come to you." Continuing, Gandhi said that every Congress committee should become a "*satyagraha* unit". "If it does not become such a unit", he said, "millions of our dumb countrymen will be sacrificed. None of my campaigns has crushed or ruined the masses."

6. *Ibid*, P. 262.
7. *Ibid*, p. 260

Later Gandhi explained what he meant by the proposal that every Congress committee should become a *satyagraha* unit. "Every Congress committee should become a satyagraha committee and register such Congressmen who believe in the cultivation of the spirit of goodwill towards all, who have no untouchability in them in any shape or form, who would spin regularly, and who habitually use khadi to the exclusion of all other clothe. I would expect those who thus register their names with the committees, to devote the whole of their spare time to the constructive programme. If the response is sincere, these satyagraha committees would become busy spinning depots."[8] Gandhi explained how these constructive programmes had to be carried out and how to centralize these activities.

It is clear from the above that except those who got immersed themselves in the Gandhian constrctive programmes, none else would have any role in the struggle to be launched by the Congress under Gandhi's leadership. Further, in the midst of such a "mass" struggle, Gandhi would not miss even a slight opportunity to arrive at a compromise with the British rulers.

This and the intolerance displayed by Gandhi towards the existence of the different mutually competing groups demonstrated the real nature of the political approach of Gandhi and the right-wing Congressmen led by him. They were jittery about the different groups based on communism, socialism and other revolutionary ideologies, the growth of the organized strength of the working class and peasantry under the influence of these ideologies and the eagerness shown by the ordinary Congressmen to oppose the compromising attitude of the right-wing leadership. They were aware of the possible consequences of launching a struggle without being cautious of these forces.

However, the bourgeois leadership was confident of organizing a struggle under their full control by removing these "obstacles". The leadesship was also confident that if

8. *Ibid.* p. 266,

they could carry forward such a struggle, the British rulers would be forced to relax their rigid attitude. That was the reason why they adopted a resolution couched in the language of struggle. And it was for the same reason that Jinnah and the Muslim League led by him adopted a new approach suited to protect their own interest by facing the new move made by the Congress.

23

TENSIONS DURING THE WAR

I. IMPACT OF THE 'BLITZKRIEG'

During the summer of 1940, certain developments took place in Europe which significantly affected the political future of India, Europe and the world. The strategy adopted originally by Britain and France was to afford all facitities to Hitler to destroy the Soviet Union, the sworn ememy of capitalism and imperialist domination. They expected that in the event of a German invasion of Poland, the Soviet Union would go to the defence of Poland, which would eventually result in a war between Germany and the Soviet Union. But the German-Soviet no-war pact frustrated the design of Britan and France. It made possible for Hitler to turn to the west after conquering Poland. Although Britain and France declared war on Germany as allies of Poland, in the absence of an alliance with the Soviet Union, they were not in a position to take military actions against Germany.

Hitler did not turn towards the Western European countries, either. Thus a situation of a 'farcical war' prevailed in Europe during the last months of 1939 and initial months of 1940.

By summer the situation changed The Nazi forces entered Westerm Europe and conquered the West European countries including France, within about a month and half. This was known as the 'Blitzkrieg'. This transition from the 'farcical war' to the 'Blitzkrieg' was of great importance in world politics. France and Holland which had been trampling underfoot numerous countries in Asia and Africa collapsed under the Nazi attack. London and other cities of Great Britain, another colonial power, received heavy doses of bombardment. The British government and people feared that the Nazi forces might conquer the island under the cover of the air attack.

This ignonimous defeat of Britain and France helped anti-imperialist sentiments in the colonial countries including India to soar. The revolutionaries in Indo-China, Philippines, Malaya and other countries made conscious and organized efforts to utilize the crisis of the ruling classes in the imperial countries to strengthen the independence struggle in their own countries. It was in this situation that the Workers Party of Vietnam, which had made its indelible mark in world history, and its leaders like Ho Chi Minh, Gen. Giap and Le Duan prepared themselves for their epic battle for liberation from the French colonial domination. In other South-East Asian countries in which Marxist-Leninist parties were not well organized, or lacked mass base, war-time revolutionary movements later became weak or even desintegrated.

In India, the Marxist-Leninist party was weak. Besides, the colonial government in India did not collapse as it happened in many South-East Asian countries. Above all, a bourgeois national leadership capable of effectively using—to control—the anti-imperialist feelings of the people had been existing in India. It was a leadership which stood in the forefront of the fighting masses and adept in utilizing the popular force for negotiating with the imperialist rulers. As

a continuation of this strategy, the Congress leadership utilized the discomfiture of the British rulers following the 'Blitzkrieg' to open another round of negotiation with the rulers. They maintained the hope that Britain, whose future was in danger like other allied countries in Europe would be prepared to show concessions if the Congress was ready to extend cooperation which they needed in order to face the danger to their own country. This led to serious differences of opinion within the Congress leadership. Before considering the details of these differences, it is necessary to refer in brief to the impact of the 'Blitzkrieg' on the internal politics of Britain.

As noted earlier, Neville Chamberlain, the auther of the notorious policy of appeasement towards Hitler, was the Prime Minister of Britain when the war broke out. There was a strong feeling among the ruling classes of Britain that the German-Soviet pact was a result of the failure of this policy. This feeling got strengthened with the beginning of the 'Blitzkrieg' as a result of which the Chamberlain government was replaced by a government headed by Winston Churchill who was known to be a hard anti-Nazi. Although Churchill was known to have had no sympathy towards the Indian national movement, many 'friends' of India were in his cabinet.

Many among the Congress leaders thought that if India assured her assistance and cooperation to the British when they were facing a dangerous situation, they would be compelled to grant, in return, the demands which the Congress had been raising continually. Gandhi's close disciples like Rajagopalachari and Sardar Patel were prominent among the spokesmen of this view. But Gandhi did not agree with this. Serious differences arose within the leadership now as ever before. A majority in the Working Committee was against Gandhi's opinion. The Working Committee adopted a form of struggle which was opposed to what Gandhi was envisaging.

As we have seen earlier, a similar situation arose immediately after the war broke out, in which a majority in the Working Commitiee was against the opinion of Gandhi. Then Gandhi was holding the view that India should offer uconditional assistance to Britain when she was facing an extremely difficult situation. However, Nehru was of the opinion that since Britain had been taking a rigid attitude towards the national movement in India and other British colonies, India could not cooperate with her in her war efforts unless she relaxed this rigid attitude. A majority of the Working Committee agreed with Nehru, leading to the resignation of Rajendra Prasad from the Congress presidentship in favour of Nehru. Almost a similar sitution prevailed in the days following the 'Blitzkrieg'. Once again the majority opinion in the Working Committee was against Gandhi's views.

It must be specifically mentioned here that when Gandhi advocated unconditional assistance to the British in the days immediately after the outbreak of the war, he did it subject to a crucial condition. Gandhi was of the opinion that India should not offer the kind of assistance which would go against his creed of non-violence. He even advised the Briton "to fight Nazism without arms or, if... to retain the military terminnology, with non-violent arms". Obviously, Gandhi could not agree to the offer of assistance to the British, inclu ding military service, which would involve violence. He continued to hold the same view even after the beginning of the 'Blitzkrieg."

Interestingly, the dispute now was not over the question whether assistance should be offered to Britain at all as it was the case earlier in the begining of the war, but over the kind of assistance, assistance involving violence or non-violence. The majority in the Working Committee supported the views of Rajagopalachari and Sardar Patel, while a minority remained with Gandhi who adhered to the 'non-violent assistance'. Although Nehru disagreed with the majority, he refused to stand with Gandhi. On the resolution

adopted by the Working Committee with majority votes, Gandhi said:

> Rajaji was the framer of the resolution. He was as certain of his position as I was of mine. His persistency and courage and utter humility brought him converts. Sardar Patel was his greatest prize.[2]

Although there was a sharp difference of opinion on the attitude towards the British rulers and their war efforts, every one in the Congress leadership was in agreement on the objective of the Congress that the British rulers must immediately declare their readiness to constitute a constituent assembly for India with the representatives of the Indians as soon as the termination of the war and in the meantime to introduce the necessary administrative changes at the Centre to include Indian people's representives in it immediately.

The resolution adopted by the Working Committee was later confimed by the AICC making one more effort to bargain with the British authorities.

II. VINOBA, NEHRU, AND BOSE

Events did not develop as Rajagopalachari, Patel and the majority in the Working Committe expected. The assistance offered by the Congress to the British war efforts did not evoke the anticipated response in the rulers. They refused to concede the demands raised by the Congress in return for its offer of assistance. Althongh the Congress leaders and the spokesmen of the government continued to communicate with each other through public statements, the gulf that existed between them remained as wide as ever.

The Congress demand was that the necessary changes be made in the set-up of the Central government and in its functioning so that India too might enjoy in effect the Dominion Status like many other former colonies. The

2. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma* vol. 5, p. 299

rulers, on the other hand, were not prepared to introduce any change in the existing set-up beyond including the representatives of the Congress and other organizations in the Central Executive Council. Nor were they prepared to offer any assurance as to the future constitution of India after the termination of the war. In other words, the new situation created by the 'Blitzkrieg' did not bring any change in the rulers.

The government, on the contrary, was taking more repressive actions against the Congress and other anti-imperialist organizations. Although most of the top Congress leaders, except Bose, were left free, leaders at the lower livels were arrested and put behind the bars. In the provinces, various charges were framed against many. Those who were in jails had to suffer a lot. In addition to prohibiting public meetings and curtailing the freedom of the press and other mass media under the existing law, an emergency law banning volunteer organizations was enacted. These repressive actions caused deep anguish among the Congressmen and the people.

In this background the Congress resolution offering assistance to the government's war efforts lost its relevance. The entire scheme to exert pressure on the rulers to get the demands conceded through negotiations collapsed. The majority of the Working Committee members including Rajagopalachri and Patel became convinced that a struggle was the only way out. They appealed to Gandhi to resume the leadership of the Congress.

Gandhi was prepared to resume the leadership of the Congress only on his own terms. He explicitly stated that he was not prepared to lead a struggle which deviated from the path of non-violence; the struggle which he would launch would be subject strictly to the conditions and restrictions he would place on it. The majority in the Working Committee, on the other hand, was prepared to accept any condition put forward by Gandhi. Thus within hardly two months of taking the decision to offer cooperation to the war efforts of Britain rejecting Gandhi's non-violent path, the AICC now came

forward to launch a non-violent *satyagraha* and to appoint Gandhi its commander-in-chief.

The AICC took this decision in the middle of September 1940. Even before this decision was taken, mass struggles of various forms were going on throughout the country. In many important cities and industrial centres workers struck work and organized processions in which tens of thousands of workers and other poor and middle class people participated. The Communist Party and other leftist organizations were in the forefront of giving these mass struggles an organized leadership and in organizing anti-war propaganda. A section of the ordinary Congressmen and Congress committees co-operated with them in these activities. It may be noted, for example, that the Kerala Provincial Congress Committe which was then under the leadership of the leftists gave a call to organize anti-war demonstrations. The Protest Day observation on 15th September led to a clash between the demanstrators and the police. Gandhi and other Congress leaders were distrubed over the growth of this tendency. The problem before them was how to curb such 'violent' activities when discussions were progressing on the launching of a struggle under Gandhi's leadership. The problem of how to start a 'strictly controlled struggle' was haunting them. After prolonged discussions it was made clear that a mass struggle of the type launched in 1930 and 1932 was not being visualized now. It would be individual *satyagraha* as in 1933. But as distinct from the 1933 *satyagraha*, only those whom Gandhi believed to have full faith in Gandhian philosophy and way of life would be chosen to offer *satyagraha*. Gandhi, as long as he remained outside the jail, himself will decide on the individuals to offer *satyagraha* one after the other. Strict instructions were given out that except those chosen by Gandhi, no one should violate the laws and rules framed by the government.

As in the case of the form of the struggle, Gandhi was also particular about the issues to be raised through the struggle. It was not a struggle for Full Independence; nor was Dominion Status the object of the struggle. The protest against

dragging the Indian people to a war without their consent also did not form the basis of the struggle. The purpose of the struggle was to express opposition to war in general and to protest against the denial of freedom to propagate this opposition.

In order to make this clear, it is necessary to understand Gandhi's theoretical attitude towards war. In an earlier chapter we have seen that Gandhi had given active support to Britain in her war efforts and that he was opposed to Tilak's opinion that the cooperation offered to the British should be subject to certain political conditions. We have also seen just above that at the beginning as well as at the later stages of the Second World War, Gandhi maintained the same attitude towards the war. Briefly, Gandhi had been maintaining the uncompromising policy of gaving unconditional cooperation to the British in war. But when it became clear that the British rulers were not only rejecting the offer of conditional cooperation by the Congress but also gagging the press and the people and suppresing the Congress, he admitted that his policy of unconditional cooperation had ceased to be relevant. Consequently, he changed to unconditional opposition to war and unconditional right to compaign against war. Gandhi viewed the impending struggle under his leadership as opposition to war and to restrictions imposed during the war.

Gandhi was in search of a person to be appointed the first *Satyagrahi* in the individual *satyagraha* which he was going to launch. Finally he found Vinoba Bhave who had been devoted for long to the Gandhian constructive programme of spinning and propagation of *Khadi* and whom he considered to be the best qualified and able to carry out the kind of *satyagroha* he had in mind. Thus Vinoba who till then had been a relatively unknow person whose activities had been confined to an *ashram* in a village near Wardha all of a sudden agained all-India fame.

The form of the individual *satyagraha* started by Vinoba is also noteworthy. He would move from place to place in a

village and openly state that he was against war and exhort the people not do anything that would help the prosecution of the war. If he were arrested by the police, he would go to the jail; otherwise he would go to the next village and repeat the same thing there and so on. Vinoba was finally arrested only after offering *satyagraha* in this manner in some villages.

It must specifically be stated that this *satyagraha* was against all wars, no matter who conducted them. Gandhi and his disciples found absolutdy no distinction between Hitler and his gang who conquered other countries and the people in those countries who resisted the Hitlerite aggression to defend own their country. This was evident from the letters Gandhi had addressed separately to Hilter and the Britons. Their approach towards the war was not the political approach of forging unity of the democratic forces in India and abroad against the fascist powers as envisaged in the official resolutions of the Congress, but the ethical and moral approach of the believers who opposed use of force of all forms.

Gandhi's opinion that Vinoba Bhava was best qualified to start the individual *satyagraha* with such an approch towards war need not surprise anyone. But what was indeed surprising was Gandhi's choice of the successor to Vinoba.

Gandhi's choice of the Second *Satyagrahi* did not fall on acclaimed Gandhian disciples like Rajendra Prasad and Shankarrao Deo, but on Jawaharlal Nehru! Although Nehru showed atmost personal layalty to Gandhi and carried out in a disciplined way the decisions of the Congress on Gandhian lines, he was no firm believer of Gandhian ideologies. He had the tradition of rendering moral and material assistance to the peoples of Spain and China in their fight against the fascist and militarist forces. He was opposed to the British rulers not only because of their colonial domination of India, but also because of the role they played in the growth of the fascist powers in Europe. That was why he was also opposed to Gandhi's policy of offering unconditional assistance to Britain in the initial stages of the war as well as to

the praposal of Rajagopalachari and others to offer conditional assistance to the British in their war efforts.

Now the question is how did Gandhi's choice of the Second *Satyagrahi* fall on Nehru who had always been dealing with the issue only politically by considering the general nature of the war and Britain's role in it. In order to find an answer to this question, it is necessary to examine closely both the agreements and differences between the ideological approaches accepted by Gandhi and Nehru, and the reality of class politics underlying these approaches. As indicated above, Gandhi approached the war from moral and religious points of view. Nehru, an the other hand, looked upon the war not in general terms, but a specific war fought between fascism which had became a danger to the whole world on the one side and the chief imperialist powers of Britain and France on the other, in which the latter were deploying feely the men and materials of their colonies including India. But both Gandhi and Nehru who thus viewed the war from different angles had to safeguard the interest of the same (bourgeois) class. The political content of the approaches adopted by both was the intention to rally the Indian people behind that class and to utilize their organized force to bragin with the British rulers. Although the bargaining was prolonged for about a year, they failed to bring about a change in the attitude of the rulers. As a result, the Congress was moving towards an inevitable struggle. The entire Congress leadership wanted Nehru to join Gandhi and Vinoba Bhave in this struggle, for it would create the impression that the struggle was being conducted unitedly by the Congress overcoming the differences of opinion that had surfaced at the different stages after the outbreak of the war. In addition, it would strengthen the pressure tactics employed by Gandhi, Nehru, Rajagopalachari and Patel in different forms.

There was another important fact which needs particular mention. Soon after hearing that a *satyagraha* was going to be launched under Gandhi's leadership, Subhas Bose wrote to

Gandhi offering his services in carrying out the struggle successfully. But Gandhi rejcted the offer stating that his differances with Bose were fundamental in nature. But even before the war broke out, Gandhi was not prepared to trust Bose who had been the victim of punitive measures by the leadership for having raised a challenge aganist Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders. Between Gandhi and Bose there was only difference of opinion, whereas the bond of mutual trust between Gandhi and Nehru was stronger than the difference of opinion between them. Bose would not be able to participate in a struggle led by Gandhi and subject to the conditions set by him, On the contrary, like Vinoba Bhave, Nehru would be able to function within the Gandhian framework, no matter how broad were the basic differences that existed between Gandhi and Nehru. These were the considerations basic to the two decisions of Gandhi—the selection of Nehru as the Second *Satyagrahi* and the rejection of the offer of coopertion made by Bose.

III. DISRUPTION OF THE LEFT MOVEMENT

The difference that had begun to appear in the left movement before the outbreak of the war became acute in the months following the outbreak of the war. The leftists as a whole were opposed to the compromising attitude of the right-wing leaders of the Congress. However, there were differences among them on the question of how to draw the Congress leadership to the struggles against the war and imperialist domination. In this respect, the Communist and the Congress Socialists took an attitude which was distinct from that adopted by Subhas Bose. The Communist and the Congress Socialists regarded that since the Congress had a decisive role to play in rallying the people against imperialism and war, it was the duty of the leftists to preserve the organization and unity of the Congress. Bose and his colleagues, on the other hand, did not mind even if the fight

against the compromising policy of the right-wing leaders led to a split in the Congress.

There were differences of opinion between the Communists and Congress Socialists on the question how to carry out the activities to maintain unity in the Congress. The latter were working on the expectation that the entire right-wing leadership of the Congress could be drawn to the path of struggles. For them Congress discipline was supreme. Their policy was to struggle as strongly as possible inside the Congress to make the leadership accept the path of struggle and carry out the programme decided upon by the Congress leadership.

The Communists, on the other hand, while working within the Congress with a view to leading it along the path of struggle, led the people independently in their agitations and struggles. They played a significant role in mobilizing workers and organizing strikes against price rise during the first months of the war. Considering the class character of the Congress, they did not expect its leaeership to go along the path of struggles. They believed that it was the task of the left to organize and rally the people against the compromising policy of the Congress leadership.

On account of the serious differences of opinion that existed between Bose and the Congress Socialists on the one hand and the Communists on the other, an intense ideological struggle took place among these three parties in the first months of the war. Bose and the Congress Socialists complained that the Communists were trying to grow at the expense of other left parties. In March 1940, the Congress Socialist Party announced the expulsion of Communists from that Party. Although the Communists had no formal connection with the Forward Bloc the polemics between the Communist and the Forward Bloc was as sharp as that between the Communists and the Congress Socialists.

One of the reasons for the rise of these differences of opinion and competition between these parties was the fact that they viewed the war differently. While two camps with

Britain aligned with one of the camps are engaged in a war with each other, how to utilize the situation and gain independence?—this was the common concern of the right-wing Congress leaders, Congress Socialists and the Forward Bloc. Utilizing the war-time situation, the right-wing Congress leaders as well as the "left" Nehru tried to bargain to derive maximum gain. That was why Nehru was chosen as the Second *Satyagrahi* to succeed Vinoba Bhave.

The Congress Socialist Party, and the Forward Bloc, on the other hand, looked apon the war-time situation as an opportunity to organize a revolution, instead of arriving at a compromise with the British rulers. But they disagreed with each other on the question of how to organize a revolution in India utilizing the war-time situation. We have already noticed the revolutionary perspective of the Congress Socialist Party *vis-a-vis* its special relationship with the Congress. Bose and the Forward Bloc led by him were trying to organize a revolution with the assistance of the foreign powers opposed to Britain, defying the decisions of the Congress, if necessary. In other words, the political approach adopted by the Forward Bloc was the continuation of the political outlook of the revolutionaries who tried to organize a revolution in India with the aid of of certain imperialist countries durnig the First World War on the basis of the logic of 'enemy's enemy, the friend.'

When the Congress decided to launch the indivividual *satyagraha* in October 1940, the differences in outlook that existed among the left parties came to the surface. The Congress Socialist Party never lagged behind the Communists in formally opposing the method of Gandhian *satyagraha*. But instead of rallying the masses against this rightist policy of the Congress, they tried to successfully carry on at least the *satyagraha* led by Gandhi.

As we have noted in the previous section, Bose had offered his services to Gandhi for the successful conduct of the *satyagraha*. When this offer was rejected by Gandhi, he secretly left for Germany where he established contact with the

Nazi rulers with a view to organizing a revolution in India with their aid. For the same purpose, he later went to Japan and organized the Indian National Army and established the Azad Hind Government abroad. The Congress Socialist Party did not approve of these exploits of Bose initially, but when the right-wing Congress leadership started eulogizing Bose as an epic hero after the 1942struggle, the Socialists also followed suit.

The attitude of the Communist Party was quite different from all this. The Party agreed that the war had brought about a situation which was favourable for a revolution. But they did not look upon the war in an abstract way as did all others. They examined the character of the war and Britain's role in it by making an objective evaluation of the international background in which the war broke out, the resultant class forces and their interrelationships, the complex political problems arising out of this situation and so on. On the basis of this examination, the Communist Party came to the political conclusion that the war being fought by Britain and France against Nazi Germany was not a real anti-fascist war, but it was an imperialist war. The Soviet Union tried its best to ensure that the Second World War as it broke out would be a real anti-fascist War. The Soviet leaders suggested that the military strength of the capitalist countries like Britain and France and that of the Soviet Union should be consolidated and combined together to administer a deadly blow at the forces of Hilter and Mussolini. The Communists pointed out that the rulers of Britain who were prominent among those who rejected the Soviet proposal and prepared the ground for Hitler's aggressive war were donning the garb of anti-fascism in order to consolidate their domination over India and that it was the task of the revolutionaries to tear away this anti-facist garb and expose the real character of British imperialism. On this basis, the Communist Party examined critically the policies and approaches of the right-wing Conggress leadership, the Congress Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc. The Party fundamentally disagreed with

the standpoint of the Congress leadership that India was sympathetic to the anti-fascist war being fought by Britain and France and that since the British rulers were not prepared to effect any change in their attitude towards India, India was unable to cooperate with the British. It pointed out that Britain had been following an imperialist policy not only towards India but also towards the anti-fascist world politics. This was another reason for the Party's fundamental oppositition to the compromising policy of the Congress.

Neither the Congress Socialist Party nor the Forward Bloc subscribed to this view. The leadership of the Congress Socialist Party was in the hands of those who had been following the line of the world social democratic movement for which anti-communism and anti-sovietism formed the core ideology. Althought the path of socialist-Communist cooperation was opened up in 1935-36 under the leadersaip of Jayaprakash Narayan, the Congress Socialist leadership transformed itself, like all social democratic parties, into a group expressing anti-communism and anti-Sovietism. They refused to perceive the role being played by the Soviet union in world politics and denied the fact that the Second World War was caused by the anti-Soviet politics of the Chamberlain & Co. They visualized an anti-war movement based on India-British relation alone without exposing the pro-fascist role played by British imperialism in the war and world politics. In other words, having conceded the British claim that they were fighting an anti-fascist war, they simply opted for a revolutionary struggle in place of barganing with the British.

Bose and the Forward Bloc went a step further. For them the slogan of anti-fascist war was irrelevant. They thought it possible to gain independence with the assistance of Germany and Japan which were fighting a war against India's national enemy, the British imperialism. This idea reached its full and practical form in 1942-43 when the Soviet Union and Germany were engaged in a crucial war against each other and Japan had reached the door-steps of India after conquering all the South-East Asian countries.

In fact, it had already started appearing in its primary form during 1940-41 when a general feeling had begun to spread that Nazi Germany was the force that was going to be helpful in destroying the British domination. The people desired a powerful struggle to develop even if it was under Gandhi's leadership. It was in these circumstances that Bose offered his co-operation to Gandhi in launching the individual *satyagraha* campaign. When this offer was turned down by Gandhi, Bose left for Germany secretly in January 1941.

Thus, four main political parties and views appeared activetly on the scene: the Congress leadership striving to bargain with Britain while making anti-fascist declaration, the Congress Socialist leadership which, while pretending to oppose the Congress, was in effect approving its policies, the Communist Party which was striving to expose the real character of the British rulers by tearing away its anti-fascist veil, and the Forward Bloc which was striving to organize a revolution in India with the assistance of the fascist powers.

A word about the Royist group which was a component of the anti-imperialist front during 1935-39. It had changed itself into a political party right from the outbreak of the war offering full assistance to the British in their war efforts losing the left character it had been maintaining.

IV. IMPACT OF THE SOVIET-GERMAN WAR

The Nazi military attack on the Soviet Union which began on 22nd June 1941 brought about a fundamental change in the relationship among the left parties and between them and the Congress. It also affected the basic character of war and the world politics. In this new development, each party was compelled to re-examine its own political stand.

It need not be repeated here that the Communist Party, as distinct from other parties, views war in the international context in which it occurs. Communists in India, as elsewhere in the world, evaluated the war in the background of the

sharpening contradiction between the decaying world capitalism and the growing socialism—the principal phenomenon in world politics that emerged with the October Revolution in Russia. The Party's approach towards the government and towards the political parties was consistent with this evaluation.

This might sometimes create difficult problems for the Communist Parties of some countries. The foreign policy requirements for the existence and growth of the Soviet Union, the only socialist country in the world, might often be incompatible with the internal policy requirements of the Communist Parties in other countries in meeting its obligations towards the class struggle or national struggle in their respective countries. However, this problem somewhat lost its seriousness as more than a dozen countries came under the socialist system after the Second World War. Capitalism became less capable of annihilating the developing Socialist World. But this was not the situation during the first half of the 1940s when the world capitalism had been trying to destroy the lone Socialist country in different ways. The Nazi military attack on the Soviet Union was the culmination of this attempt. The Soviet Union, while mainly relying on its own strength, needed the help of the imperialists of Britain, France and the U. S. A., to give a fitting counter-blow to the Nazi aggressors.

This placed not only the Communists but also those Congressmen and Congress Socialists who had adopted an anti-fascist appoach in India in a quandary. All of them desired a Soviet victory in its anti-fascist war and all of them were prepared to do what they could in this regard. They protested against the obstacles put in their way by the British government. All of them agreed in the opinion that the British government should change its policy in such a was that they were able to help the Soviet Union. It was in fact the refusal of the government to change its policy that led Congress and the Congress Socialist Party to the Quit Inidia struggle. It was the same that led Subhas Bose to form the Indian

National Army (INA) and the Azad Hind Government and to cooperate with Japan. Before entering into the details of these, it is, however, necessary to dwell on the confusion that existed within the Communist Party on this issue.

During the first stage of the Second World War, the international and national policies of the Communist Party of India were fully compatible with each other. It was not at all difficult for the Party then to expose the fact that the British imperialists were the main obstacle on the path of creating the condition for waging a real anti-fascist war and that the war they were fighting was not an anti-fascist war but an imperialist war. Nor was it difficult for the Party to state the need of starting an anti-British mass struggle on the ground that the same British rulers who had been pursuing a pro-fascist policy were taking measures to continue their domination over India. It was also easy to expose the Congress leadership which was adopting a compromising policy in this regard and to rally the people against it.

On this the Congress Socialist and the Forward Bloc had no disagreement with the Communists. But as regards the international outlook, the former parties were at loggerheads with the Communists. They did not agree with the assessment of the Communists that the Second World War was the result of the fundamental contradiction between the Socialist society represented by the Soviet Union and the capitalist world represented by the rulers of other countries and that since Britain and France were the representatives of the anti-Soviet attttude, the war they were fighting was definitely an imperialist war. They argued that the meaning of the Communist stand was that they would give up their anti-British stand once Britain changed her attitude towards the Soviet Union while maintaining the attitude towards India unchanged. For this and other reasons the relations of these parties with the Communist Party continued to deteriorate.

The situation changed with the entry of the Nazi forces into the Soviet Union and the subsequent British-Soviet pact. The incompatibility between the international interest

with regard to the victory of the Soviet Union's anti-fascist war and the national interest of India's fight against the British imperialist domination came to the surface. Differences arose within the leadership of the Communist Party on the question of how to resolve these difficult problems that resulted from the incompatibity of interests.

The leadership of the Party which remained outside the jail considered that although the entry of the Soviet Union had brought about a fundamental change in the international character of the war, the Indian people could not extend cooperation to Britain's war efforts, since the policy of the British rulers towards India had not undergone any change. The comrades in jails argued, on the other hand, that 22nd June 1941 marked the beginning of a new phase in world politics and that it was wrong not to perceive its importance. After a protracted exchange of views between the comrades inside and outside the jail for about six months, the party leadership outside the jail (the Polit Bureau) adopted a resolution on 15th December 1941 generally accepting the views of the comrades inside the jail.

The Communist International in general and the Communist Party of Great Britain in particular had helped the party leadership in taking this decision. They pointed out to the Indian Communists that adopting an approach towards the war purely on the basis of the British attitude towards India would be a bourgeois nationalist approach and not of proletarian internationalism that Communists were expected to uphold. Although the Polit Bureau could not accept their arguments in the beginning, it prepared a note entitled "Our New line on War: British Comrades Correct Us" and included it in the *Party Letter*, a secret publication of the party.

It must be noted in particular that one of the documents on the basis of which th Party stated that the "British Comrades Correct Us" was a letter which the General Secretary of the British Communist Party, Harry Pollitt, had sent to the members of that Party in December 1941. During

the first phase of the war, finding the incompatibility between the class struggle in his own country and the international stand on the war, Pollitt requested permission from the Party leadership to resign the general secretaryship. When the permission was granted, he relinguished the post. Pollitt then could not subscribe to the view characterizing the war which was causing danger to the national interest of Britain as an imperialist war. In the second phase of the war, when Britain joined hands with the Soviet Union to fight the anti-fascist war, the working class and the Communist Party in India had to face a situation similar to that the British working class and the Communist Party had to face during the first phase of the war. Although Harry Pollitt had resigned the party general secretaryship, he fully participated in carrying out the party decision. Furthermore, he played an important role in the second phase of the war to make the Communist Party of India adopt a policy which was fully acceptable to him.

These incidents are recounted here to get a clear picture of the role played by Indian Communits in the period immediately following the Quit India struggle. Those who accuse the Communists of characterizing the "imperialist war" as "Peoples' war" 'overnight' for the sole reason that the Soviet Union had entered the war must remember these facts.

The characterization of the war by Communists as 'imperialist' in its first phase and as 'peoples'war' in the second phase was based on one and the same principle. It is certainly a crucial issue what attitude the ruling classes of Britain take towards the Soviet Union which is destined to decide the future of the human society. The Communist Party had never hidden its stand on this issue. Everyone who is interested in man's onward march to socialism would take the same stand. It is noteworthy that the same Congress leadership which later gave the call for the Quit India struggle had adopted a resolution after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war expressing sympathy to the Soviet people and praising the Socialist system they were building. As we are going to

show in the next chapter, by adopting this stand, the Congress leadership was striving to negotiate with the British in a new form for a compromise. The Cammunist Party which had been opposing the Congress policy of bargain continued its opposition to that policy. The Communist Party was of the opinion that in the atmosphere of the decisive war being fought between the Nazi army and the Soviet Red army, the way to India's freedom was opposition to fascism relying on its own forces. As stated in the resolution of the Polit Bureau published on 15th December:

> Our policy in the present phase differs from the policy of the national bourgeois leadership in the same way as our policy in the imperialist phase of the war differed from their corresponding policy in that phase. Then they did not frankly and openly declare it to be an imperialist war which required an unconditional opposition. They dodged and prevaricated, put up constitutional opposition, made gestures of mass opposition to war, and ultimately settled down with individual satyagraha to wait for compromise at the next favourable opportunity. One thing they did not want was to rely upon people, to put up real resistance against war. Today they again refuse to rouse the people to the consciousness that they have to win it in common with other peoples of the world in order to ensure their own freedom. They refuse to rely upon the people, to rouse them to such activity and initiative that will smash the obstacles which prevent India from playing her part in the struggle for world liberation and thus paving the way for her own liberation.[3]

3. Subodh Roy (ed.), *Communism in India*, Unpublished Documents 1935-1945 Calcutta, National Book Agency, 1976, p. 337.

24

THE 1942 STRUGGLE

1. THE CRIPPS MISSION

The fact that the Soviet Union and Britain were fighting together on one side in the war did not bring out any change in the British attitude towards India. As ever before, the British rulers were adament in their stand of not conceding India's demand.

. In this context, Prime Minister Churchill's speech in the British parliament in September 1941 needs special mention here. Earlier, the United States and Britain had jointly published a document, called the Atlantic Charter. It envisaged freedom for all peoples of the world to choose their own mode of governance and for those who had lost sovereignty to restore it. But Churchill stated that the Atlantic Charter would not apply to India. What enboldened him to take such a stand was his belief that there were serious differences of opinion among the different groups within the Congress

as well as between the Congress and other political organizations in India. And this belief was not altogether baseless. For instance, it was well known that there were differences between the Congress and the colleagues of Subhas Bose and between these two on the one hand and the Communist and Socialist parties on the other. Further, there were differences within the Communist Party on the change that the nature of the war had undergone and within the Congress on the evaluation of the development that took place following the individual *satyagraha* movement. Added to these were the differences that existed between the Congress and the Muslim League and between them on the one hand and the liberal leaders on the other. The British government decided to cleverly utilize these differances.

The differences of opinion that existed among the Congress leaders need special mention. As we have seen earlier, twice after the outbreak of the war the Congress had taken certain steps which were at variance with those taken by Gandhi. What created this gulf between Gandhi and the Congress leaders was the differences in the outlook of Gandhi who was holding fast the "means of unadulterated non-violence" and those of the "practical politicians" like Nehru, Rajagopalachari, Patel and others in the Congress.

The Congress decided to launch individual *satyagraha* and to assign its leadership to Gandhi only because Britain refused to concede the demands raised by it even after a majority of the leaders adopted an attitude of willingness to cooperate with the British in their war efforts despite Gandhi's opposition.

The first year of individual *satyagraha* was coming to a close. Rajagopalachari and some other leaders demand a review of the year's experience. Although about 2,000 *satyagrahis* were arrested, the movement did not yield any significant result. Moreover, opportunities were coming forth for fresh negotiations with the British rulers in the new situation created by the entry of the Soviet Union in the war. Accordingly, on the initiative of Rajagopalachari, the

Congress Working Committee adopted a resolution during the Christmas of 1941 expressing readiness to cooperate with the British in its war efforts.

Certain helpful moves came from the British also. Thus many top ranking Congress leaders including Nehru were released from prison. The situation of war once again changed basically with the Japanese attack on the United States' Pearl Harbour in December 1941.

Although the United States had taken an attitude openly in favour of Britain and France, it was not a participant in the war till December 1941. With the American entry in the war, the war now became one with the governments of the U. S., Britain and the Soviet Union along with the liberation movements of the German occupied countries in Europe on the one side fighting against the German and Italian fascism and the Japanese militarism.

The surrender of France to Hitler, Japan's occupation of Indo-China as a gift from France and the occupation of other Asian countries following the declaration of war in December 1941 would have made it easy for Japan to enter India. It was the interest of the united states also to create a political situation that would prevent such an eventuality. It occurred to the American rulers that the Churchill government's attitude towards India might turn out to be dangerous to the Allies, including America. They made this known to the rulers of Britain. They impressed upon the British that it was in the interest of the Allies to liberate those Asian countries which had fallen to Japan and also to prevent India from falling to it. By this, they were, in fact, trying to replace the crumbling Dutch-French-English imperialism by their own imperialist domination in a new form.

But whatever their intention, the U. S. move helped the bourgeois Congress leadership. America's generous political support, the publicity received through the American newspapers, the powerful anti-imperialist stand taken by the Soviet Union, and the sympathies of the neighbouring countries like

China were all considered as valuable assets by the Congress leaders.

It was in this situation that the Chinese President Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang visited India. China was then fighting Japan. Because of their political weekness, they could not exert much pressure either on Britain or on the Indian government. But their visit with an open expression of sympathy to India's national demand gave a boost to the Congress policy of bargain.

This could not but leave an impact on the British rulers. They were disturbed and anxious over the fate of India following the Japanese occupation of Singapore. This also reinforced the pressure being exterted by President Roosevelt on the British Prime Minister Churchill. All in all, Britain was forced to take some action to change the Indian public opinion. It was in this background that the British government sent to India Sir stafford Cripps, a member of the war-time Cabinet and a sympathizer to the Indian national movement. The announcement in this regard created the impression that the British authorities were trying to renounce their hardline attitude towards India and to satisfy the Congress and other political parties in India. Such was the publicity the Cripps mission received in the Indian and foreign press.

Even before Cripps set off to India, a draft declaration had been prepared by the British government on India's future constitutional set-up and on the changes that were to be introduced in the existing system during the war time. This draft document was kept a secret until Cripps reached India and held talks with the leaders of the different political parties. On behalf of the British government, Cripps claimed that he was trying to bring a settlement between the government and the representatives of the Indian people.

The declaration had been prepared in such a way as to make it appear progressive as compared to all the earlier declarations made by the government. It had been stated that the government would take steps to create "a new Indian Union which will have the full status of a Dominion."

The objctive was stated to be to enable India to achieve the "earliest possible realisation of self-government". The declaration specifically stated that in order to realize the objective, a constitution-making body would be set up "immediatly upon the ceasation of hostilities".

Considering the policy declarations that the Congress had hitherto been making, this draft declaration should have been acceptable to it. But there were two impartant conditions included in the draft declaration. One of the conditions was that if one or more provinces were not prepared to join the Indian Union, such province or provinces would be free to frame a separate consitution and would have the same status as the Indian Union. The rulers of the princely states also would have the same right. The second condition was concerned with the minorities. The new constitution of the Indian Union and other provinces and states staying out of it would guarantee the assurances given earlier by the government to the Muslims, Christians, Parsis, Europeans, Anglo-Indian and other communities.

All these were relating to the constitution. Equally important were the problem of what was going to be done immediately. The British government desired and urged the effective participation of the different sections (parties and organizations) representing the interests of the Indian people in the functions of the governments of their own country, the British Commonwealth and the United Nations. Cripps claimed that what was being visualized was an Indian national government with Dominion Status at least nominally.

The Cripps mission was a big gain to the Muslim League, for most of the demands raised by the leaders of the League with regard to Pakistan had been accepted. Not only that all the guarantees given to the religious minorities had been honoured, the Mnslim majority provinces were now given the freedom to stay away from the Indian Union and to form a separate nation by themselves. Furthermore, if the League would have a share in the Central government which was going to be formed in accordance with the Cripps

proposals, it could strengthen itself utilizing the new position in the government.

As for the Congress, the proposals seemed attractive in the beginning, but as discussions progressed it realized the underlying dangers. The provision contained in the proposal giving the right to the provinces and the princly states to stay way form the Indian Union disturbed them. But Rajagopalachari, Nehru, Patel and certain others were ready to accept the Cripps proposal even ignoring Gandhi's opposition to it. (This was exactly what happened after the termination of the war.) What was really unacceptable to them was the proposal relating to the change to be introduced immediately in the Central government. Had the authorities been prepared to constitute immediately a national government at the Centre with the status of Dominion along with the provision giving the right to the provinces to stay away form the Indian Uuion, the Cripps proposal would have been accepted in toto by all the Congress leaders except Gandhi.

The talks that took place at the different levels—between the Congress leaders and Cripps, among Cripps, the viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, among President Roosevelt's personal representative and the Indian and British leaders—revealed what exactly were the differences between the British government and the Congress. The latter insisted on its demand that the Viceroy's Executive Council should right now start functioning as the national government with the status of a Dominion. But the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief would not budge an inch insofar as sharing their authority with others. Although Cripps and the U. S. representative tried their best to make them accept the position, the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief, who had the support of Churchill, were adament.

Thus failed the efforts to enlist the support of the Indian people in the war against the fascist forces with the cooperation of India's popular leaders. Cripps returned to England empty handed.

II. 'QUIT INDIA'

Even while Cripps' talks with Indian leaders were on, the situation in India's eastern borders was causing alarm to the Allied Powers and to the people. The Japanese forces were steadily advancing along the India-Burma road, conquering on their way the British possessions of Singapore, Burma, Malaya and the Andaman islands. There were Japanese naval attacks in the Bay of Bengal. The estern port cities of Vishakhapatnam and Kakinada came under Japanese bombardment. The government themselves had ordered destruction of certain establishments in Madras fearing Japanes invasion. In brief, there was an increasing probability of India coming under the attack of Japan, like other Asian countries.

The Congress maintained that in order to be able to meet this threat a mere declaration about India's future was not enongh and demanded tranfer of power, in whatever form, including that of the defence department to the representatives of the Indian people. The British rulers, on the other hand, held adamently that they would not part with the control of such crucial departments as defence and home. Consequently, the Delhi talks broke off which, in turn, caused great resentment and anger among the people. There was practically no one in India who was not infuriated by the stand taken by the British rulers, who were leading an army which were fleeing on the face of the Japanese attacks, that they would not hand over the country to her own people, no matter even if they had to surrender it to Japan.

It may be recalled that it was also the time when one of the topmost national leaders, Subhas Bose, who had left India, had been raising the Indian National Army (INA) with Indians in the territories held by Japan to liberate India with the assistance of Japan. The contempt towards the British army which were facing defeat after defeat together with the impression created in India that the INA led by Subhas

Bose were planning to launch an offensive against the British rule in India aroused national sentiments among the people. It seemed to them that the opportunity was at hand to liberate themselves from the British rule.

This sentiments were, in fact, contrary to the policies the Congress and other anti-imperialist organizations had been pursuing. They had been ceaselessly speaking to the Indian people for about a decade against the fascist forces of Italy and Germany and Japanese militarism. They had been maintaining all along that an advance of the fascist and the militarist forces would not set free the dependent countries; it would lead only independent countries to lose their freedom. They never entertained the illusion that India could be liberated with the assistance of Japan. On the contrary, they knew that a victory of Japan meant changing from one master to another. That was why they demanded that the British should transfer power to the Indian people and resist Japan with their support.

But the experience of the leaders who expressed readiness to lead the Indian people to fight Japan even at the cost of the creed of Gandhian non-violence posed the question before all the political parties, excepting Bose and his colleagues: What is to be done next? Different Congress leaders answered this question differently.

Gandhi had left Delhi right in midst of the discussion with Cripps. The proposals put forward by Cripps did not at all seem to him attractive. Referring to Britain's defeat in Malaya and Burma and their indifference in enlisting the support of the people which was an essential condition for avoiding the repitition of the defeat in India, Gandhi described the Cripps proposal as a "postdated cheque on a crashing bank". He regarded it an urgent task to take a strong action against the British rulers who were adamently refusing to hand over India to her people. Accordingly, Gandhi drafted a rosolution and sent it to the Working Committee which was to be met towards the end of April. He expressed the opinion that though the victory of the

Axis Powers in the war appeared certain, Japan would leave India alone. In case an invasion took place, he expected "the people to offer complete non-violent non-cooperation to the invading forces and not to render any assistance to them."

Many members of the Working Committee, including Nehru and Azad, were not in agreement with Gandhi's ideas. They considered the idea of ejecting the British with the assistance of Japan absurd and thought it possible to get the adament attitude of the British relaxed with the assistance of the world leaders like President Roosevelt, since an anti-fascist front including China, the Soviet Union and the United States which were sympathetic to India had now been formed. Later, a resolution to this effect was adopted by the AICC replacing the draft resolution submitted by Gandhi.

However, this hope was soon shattered. It became clear that neither Roosevelt nor other world leaders could intervene in the Indian affairs. Nor did they come forward to exert pressure on the British, since they were convinced that a transfer of the defence department to the Indians in the midst of the war would adversely affect the efficient conduct of the war. Hence, most leaders including Nehru and Azad had to fall in line with Gandhi. How agonizing this change was had been stated by Azad:

> I reached Wardha on 5 July and Gandhiji spoke to me for the first time about the 'Quit India' Movement. I could not easily adjust my mind to this new idea... I felt that we must refrain from any word or action which could offer encouragement to the Japanese. It seemed to me that the only thing we could do was to wait upon the course of events and watch how the war situation developed. Gandhiji did not agree. He insisted...that the British must leave India. If the British agreed, we could then tell the Japanese that they should not advance any further. If in spite of this they advanced, it would be an attack on India and not on the British. If such a situation developed we must oppose Japan with all over might.

I have already said that I had been in favour of organized opposition to the British at the outbreak of the war. Gandhiji had not then agreed with me. Now that he had changed, I found myself in a peculiar position. I could not believe that with enemy on the Indian frontier, the British would tolerate an organized movement of resistance. Gandhiji seemed to have a strange belief that they would. He held that the British would allow him to develop his movement in his own way. When I pressed him to tell us what exactly would be the programme of resistance, he had no clear idea. The only thing he mentioned during our discussions was that unlike previous occasions, this time the people would not court imprisonment voluntarily. They should resist arrest and submit to the government only if physically forced to do so....

Gandhiji held that the British would regard his move for an organized mass movement as a warning and not take any precipitate action. He would therefore have time to work out the details of the movement and develop its tempo according to his plans. I was convinced that this would not be the case....

Gandhiji's idea seemed to be that since the war was on the Indian frontier, the British would came to terms with the Congress as soon as the movement was launched. Even if this did not take place, he believed that the British would hesitate to take any drastic steps with the Japanese knocking at India's doors. He thought that this would give the Congress the time and opportunity to organize an effective movement. My own reading was completely different....

Our discussions started on 5 July and continued for several days...We began to discuss in greater detail the various elements of the proposed movement. Gandhiji made it clear that like other movements, this would also be on the basis of non-violence. All methods short of violence would however be permissible. During the discussions, Jawaharlal said that what Gandhiji had in view was in

fact an open rebellion, even if the rebellion was non-violent. Gandhiji liked the phrase and spoke of an open non-violent revolution several times.[1]

This rather long passage is quoted here to show the depth of the crisis of thinking the Congress was caught in before the 'Quit India' resolution was adopted. The strategy of Nehru and Azad of bringing pressure on Britain with the assistance of the U.S. and China had failed. If, in place of it, Gandhi's strategy was to be adopted, it would create an atmosphere for the successful advance of the hated fascist Axis forces. On one side, the adament attitude of the British and, on the other, the popular urge to force the British to quit India even with the assistance of the fascist Axis forces, Bose and his colleagues in between the two trying to enter India along with the Japanese army—how to face all these simultaneously? Finally Nehru and Azad surrendered to Gandhi.

There was another prominent Congress leader, Rajagopalachari, who, as indicated earlier, had deviated the Gandhian path more than once and trodden his own. Once again he came out with his own views and proposed that the Congress should be courageous enough to concede the Muslim League's demand for Pakistan and revive the Congress ministries in the provinces. Rajagopalachari got two resolutions incorporating his proposals adopted by the Congress Legislature Party of Madras Presidency. He also presented one of these resolutions before the AICC, which was, however, rejected with a large majority of votes. Not only that; the AICC adopted a counter-resolution declaring that "any proposal to disintegrate India by giving liberty to any component state or territorial unit to secede from Indian Union or Federation, will be highly detrimental to the best interests of the people of the different States and Provinces and the country as a whole, and the Congress, therefore, cannot agree to any such proposal".

1. Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom*, Orient Longman, 1959, pp 173-74.

As soon as the result of the voting on the resolution was made known, Rajagopalachari announced that he would campaign for his views in his province (Madras). He resigned from the primary membership of the Congress as well as his membership in the Madras Legislative Assembly, following the directive of the Parliamentray Party. (He had already resigned from the Working Committee earlier.)

Rajagopalachari's actions failed to create any impact either in his province or in the Congress. Although he was occupying a high position in the Congress, he was swimming against the current of popular sentiments. The masses were angry over the series of defeats being inflicted on Britain and other Allied Powers in Europe and over Britain's obstinacy in holding on to power in India even in the humiliating conditions created by these defeats. Bose and Gandhi were givinig shape to this popular anger in two distinct forms. Although Nehru and Azad did not agree with their policies, they had to take account of the popular sentiments and adopt the 'Quit India' resolution. They were constrained to launch a mass struggle which might, perhaps, lead to the victory of Japan and other fascist forces in the war—a step hard to digest for them from the very beginning.

The passage quoted from Azad makes it obvious that however forcefully and determinedly Gandhi was talking about the 'Quit India' struggle, he was, in fact, gropping in the darkness. For instance, he did not know where to stop the struggle which he was going to launch. Although he was talking enthusiastically about a mass struggle, he had made no arrangement to carry it out in an organized way. He was operating with a child-like confidence that enough time and facilities would be available and that the rulers would not go in heavily to suppress the struggle. It is doubtful if the world has ever witnessed a mass revolution which has been led so unplanned a way. This is the basic character of the "Quit India' struggle which has been subsequently eulogized so highly. A mass struggle of such a magnitude that has never taken place in Gandhi's entire political life in a political back-

ground deviod of a programme of struggle and of an organization to carry it out—this was 'Quit India'.

This may sound strange. But there is nothing strange in it, for the present struggle, like all the earlier ones, to be launched by Gandhi was not designed to overthrow the British rule relying on the revolutionary potentials of the people, but to create a political atmosphere neccessary for reaching a compromise with the rulers. Gandhi had made it clear to Nehru and Azad that he was contemplating to launch 'Quit India' struggle on the calculation that the rulers would be compelled to seek a compromise not long after the launching of the struggle.

III. THE 'AUGUST REVOLUTION'

On 14th July 1949 the Congress Working Committee met at Wardha and adopted a resolution which subsequently became well known as the 'Quit India Resolution'. The Working Committee also decided to convene a meeting of the AICC at Bombay on 7th and 8th August to take a final decision on the resolution.

Nehru and Azad had abandoned their stand and come round to Gandhi's way of thinking even before the Working Committee met. This, however, does not mean that their doubts about the desirability and consequences of the struggle had been removed. Rather, they came round because there was no alternative left before them on the face of the adament attitude of the British rulers and also the helplessness of the world leaders. So, they simply cast aside all the doubts and joined hands with Gandhi.

Interestingly, it was Nehru himself who presented the Quit India resolution at the A I C C meeting. Again, it was he who answered the Communists who introduced amendments to the resolution. Gandhi was thus able to rally all sections in the A I C C behind himself and get the resolution passed almost unanimously (excepting opposition from Communists).

The A I C C adopted the Quit India resolution on 8th August and before dawn of the next day, all Congress leaders who were present in Bombay were arrested and put behind the bars. Simultaneously, Congressmen at the different levels were arrested similarly all over the country. It became evident that the government had a well-designed plan to suppress the Quit India struggle lauched by the Congress without a plan.

There were indications to show which way the government was moving. Immediately after the Working Committee meeting Gandhi made an attempt to open negotiation which was 'part and parcel of his method of struggle'. He sent one of his close disciples, Miss Slade alias Mira Ben to the Viceroy to explain to him the resolution of the Working Committee and the form of struggle envisaged therein. But the Viceroy refused her permission to meet him making clear that "the goverment would not tolerate any rebellion during the war, whether it was violent or non-violent" and that it was not prepared "to meet or discuss with any representative of an orgamiaztion which spoke in such terms".

Besides, on 17th July (three days after the meeting of the Working Committee), Gandhi had obtained a copy of the circular sent by the Secretary of the Publicity Department of the Government of India to the provincial governments, to which Gandhi had referred in his speech at the Bombay A I C C meeting. Thus, the Congress had received the warning that the government was getting ready to face the struggle it was going to launch. Since the Publicity Department had issued such a circular, it could well be imagined that other departments also must have made similar arrangements to face the situation. But as against it, there was absolutdy no preparedness on the part of the Congress. Gandhi never bothered either to save at least a section of the leadership from mass arrests or to create an underground organization functioning continuously in the background of such mass arrests as any party in the world would do while organizing mass revolts against the government. What is more, he even made it clear in his speech before the Bombay A I C C that

he was opposed to any such venture and maintained that since the struggle he was visualizing was an "open mass revolt", there was no room for underground activities and so on, and those who indulged in secret activities would land themselves in danger and so forth.

It may be argued that there was nothing strange in it since Gandhi was always opposed to secret activities. He had always maintained that secret activities were negations of the *satyagraha* programme he had formulated. But as distinct from the struggles conducted under his leadership earlier, he now left the participants free without placing any restriction on them. He was not bothered about "violent tendencies" of which he was afraid in each struggle he undertook to lead since 1921. Now his central slogan was "do or die". Gandhi gave the direction that in case he and other Congress leaders were arrested, Congressmen at the different levels and the people should take their own initiative to carry on the struggle in whichever way they considered right.

This idea was, in fact, contained in the AICC resolution which stated: "A time may come when it may not be possible to issue instructions or for instructions to reach our people, and when no Congress committee can function. When this happens, every man and woman who is participating in this movement must function for himself or herself within the four corners of the general instructions issued. Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India."[2]

Gandhi had laid down the condition eirlier that everyone who participated in the struggle should enage onself in the implementation of his constructive programme of spinning and weaving Khadi. He also used to avoid struggle whenever there was a semblance of "violent tendency" and call off the struggle when there was a minor incident of

2. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *op. cit.*, vol II, p. 346.

violence. None of these principles had been adhered to now. He gave unconditional and unlimited freedom to everyone to engage onself in anti-government activities in whichever way one considered appropriate. That was why Nehru told that what had come form Gandhi now was a call for an "open rebellion", a statement which Gandhi himself approved.

Nevertheless, the Quit India struggle cantained most of the features of the Gandhian method of struggle. As in the case of the earlier struggles, in the present one also the large-scale mobilization of the people was designed to solve the problem through negotiations (bargaining) with the authorities. That was why immediatly after the meeting of the Working Committee which adopted the 'Quit India' resolution, Gandhi sent Mira Ben to get in touch with the Viceroy. What is more, both the resolution of the Working Committee adopted on 14th July and the 'Quit India' resolution in August had left the door open for negotiations.

As we have seen, on many an occasion after the outbreak of the war, Gandhi had differed from the majority of the Working Committee on the question of whether the Congress should participate in Britain's war efforts—actions which are quite at variance with the Gandhian principle of non-violence. On this issue also Gandhi had gone back from his earlier position. For example, the Working Committee resolution made it clear that the Congress was "agreeable to the stationing of the armed forces of the Allies in India, should they so desire, in order to ward off and resist Japanese or other aggression, and to protect and help China" and that the interim national government would have no objection in participating in such activities, because the Congress was as much interested as Britain and the Allied Powers in driving out the Japanese aggressors and rescuing China. It must be specifically noted that reference to this was made by way of explaining the background of launching the Quit India struggle in the resolution drafted with the approval of Gandhi.

The Quit India resolution was an appeal to the radical sections in Britain as also to the Allied Powers of the U. S.,

Soviet Union and China. The line of argument was that the Congress was launching upon the struggle reluctantly since the British was not prepared to give up its adament attitude towards granting India its rights which would prepare the ground for the Congress to mobilize the whole people of India in the war in which these foreign friends were interested. Clearly, this was an approach designed to prepare the ground for negotiations.

The Congress approach was such that it was likely to appear justifiable to any impartial observer in relation to the relationship between the British rulers and their allies and also between the Congress and other political parties and organizations. Gandhi and Azad emphatically stated that the Congress was not demanding the British to leave for the sake of the Congress but for the whole country and that if the British were making use of the claims made by the Muslim League as a trump, they would not mind even if power was transferred to it. The resolution stated that what was aimed at was "a provisional government formed by the cooperation of the principal parties and groups in the country" and the preparation of "a constitution for the governance of India acceptable to all sections of the people". Thus, the present struggle was also looked upon as a means to win the demands through bargain.

But as distinct from the earlier struggles, what was contemplated now was a massive struggle by releasing the people to do what they liked. "Leave India in God's hands", Gandhi told the British authorities, "in modern parlance, to anarchy..." The Congress leaders realized that nothing short of a massive, unrestrained struggle which Gandhi did not hesitate to call a "open rebellion", would create conditions for effectively bargaining with the British.

The Congress leaders were aware of the fact that it was dangerous to launch a struggle at a time when the war had reached a critical juncture. And this was specifically mentioned in the AICC resolution. But they gave the call for a struggle facing any possible eventuality that might

arise in the circumstances in which Britain had been facing one defeat after another in the war. According to their calculation, the popular support they might gain through such a struggle would help them to bargain with the authorities at least in the future. They felt that if they surrendered before the adament attitude of the rulers, they would lose whatever popular support they had been able to gain through the struggles for several decades.

The British rulers, too, had realized their own weakness. They knew that they would not be able to remain in India for long even if they succeeded in suppressing the Congress for the time being. A noting made by the then king of England, George VI, in his dairy in July 1942 throws light on this. Quoting Churchill's statement that his colleagues and all parties in the British Parliament were ready to hand over India to the Indians after the war, he wrote that things appeared as if Cripps, the newspapers and the American public opinion together had impressed upon these parties that the continuance of their rule in India was wrong. Thus, neither the British rulers nor the Congress leaders had any doubt that the British would have to leave India handing over power to the Indians not long after the war. The former maintained that their rule should continue without any significant change during the war in order to prosecute the war effectively, while the Congress held that in order to realize the same objective, Indians themselves should wield power in India. This was the difference between the two sides. Each side began to operate on its own stand-point.

The AICC session terminated at night on 8th August 1942 after adopting the Quit India resolution. The slogans like "Freedom or Death" and "Do or Die" reverberated throughout the country. On the same night the government struck hard at the Congress which crumbled as never before. This was what the Congressmen and Socialists praised as the "August revolution". Was it really a revolution? Let us examine.

There were protest demonstrations following the mass arrests that took place throughout the country and there were police lathi-charges and firings at the demonstrators. In many places where such actions took place, the people went into counter-actions aganist the police and the military. These were what was known as the "August revolution". Congressmen and Socialists are in the habit of proclaiming proudly that they were the organizers and participants of that "revolution". They used to denounce the Communists for having refused to participate in it and for opposing it.

But what actually took place during August and September 1942 was not a revolution as they are claiming; it was only a demonstration of protest against the repression let loose by the government. Neither Gandhi nor other Congress leaders had ever tried to give an organized form to the anti-imperialist feelings spontaneously displayed by the people. On the other hand, the government had a pre-determined plan to suppress the struggle within a matter of days.

Thus, the government was able to sweep at one stroke and throw into prison the leaders who were repeating the words "revolution" and "open rebellion" without doing anything necessary to organize that "revolution". The advocates of "August revolution" are, in fact, characterizing this attack of the rulers on the Congress and the national movement as revolutionary attack of the Indian people against the British rulers!

IV. STAGES AND ORGANIZERS OF 'QUIT INDIA'

The movement variously called the 'Quit India struggle' and the 'August revolution' began with the mass arrests that took place before the dawn of 9th August. As we have seen in the preceding section, neither Gandhi nor other Congress leaders had any idea as to how to organize and lead the struggle. In the words of Nehru: "Neither in public

nor in private at the meetings of the Congress Working Committee did he (Gandhi) hint at the nature of action he had in mind, except a one-day general strike. So neither he nor the Congress Working Committee issued any kind of directions, public or private, except that people should be prepared for all developments and should in any event adhere to the policy of peaceful and non-violent action."[3] But as distinct from earlier struggles in which severe restrictions were imposed on the participants, the general instruction given in the AICC resolution and respeated by Gandhi in his speeches and statements was that "every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide" in the fight against the British rule. People were given a free hand in deciding the mode of the struggle and in forming the fighting orgainzations. Gandhi and other leaders never knew and nor did they want to know how the people would act and against whom they would turn in carrying out the task set before them; they merely declared that what they intended was an "open rebellion" that might follow the release of the fighting spirit of the people.

It was in the background in which this idea had run deep into the people that the mass arrests took place before the dawn of 9th August in a manner that enraged the people. And they expressed their protest against this action by holding huge demonstrations.

It must be noted that the demonstations held on 9th and and 10th August were relatively peaceful. But when these peaceful protest actions by the people were brutally attacked by the government, the people came out to sabotage the railway lines and the post and telegraph services in order to prevent the movement of the police and military forces which were being used to attack the people.

Viewed from the tradition of the Gandhian struggle, this had created the situation which was sufficient for the withdrawal of the struggle. However, neither Gandhi nor the

3. Quoted in R C. Majumdar, *History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol 11, Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969, P. 656

other leaders of the Congress deprecated these acts of violence. On the contrary, they attributed the violence on the part of the people to the use of force committed by the authorities on peaceful and non-violent demonstrators. From the prison Gandhi had sent a letter to the Viceroy to this effect.

The government charged that the forms of struggle adopted at the second stage, as distinct from those of the days immediately following the mass arrests, were the result of a planned programme, for which they put the blame on Gandhi and other leaders. In support of this, the rulers pointed out that the nature of the subotage that took place several places simultaneously was the same. They also pointed out that these acts of subotage were such that they could be executed only by those who had the necessary expertise in using specialized equipments.

But there was no evidence whatever to suggest that Gandhi or any other member of the Congress Working Committee had ever given any instruction for carrying out sabotage. On the contrary, there was enough evidence to show that they gave the call for this "mass rebellion" without giving any clear instruction on the conduct of the struggle and without creating an organization for that purpose. This, however, does not mean that the Congress leaders were free from the responsibilities for the forms of the struggle employed following the incidents that took place on 9th August, including the acts of subotage. For they had openly given the general direction to the people to express their discontent and anguish towards the British rule by adopting any means which each one of them considered appropriate. What happened throughout the country after the mass arrests was that they carried out this direction in its literal sense. The people considered it their duty to paralyze the oppressive rule which unleashed cruel repression on the peaceful protest demonstrations in the initial stage of the struggle.

Among the people who were thus agitated, there were also experts in technical matters. They dedicated their expertise to the 'Quit India struggle' and trained others in

such acts as removing railway tracks damaging bridges, destroying government office buildings, post and telegraph services, and so on. Thus, acts of subotage of different kinds and forms took place extensively as part of the expression of their protest without any specific direction from above.

A certain development took place in the meantime which gave these unorganized activities an organized character. There were some leaders at the provincial level and below who had escaped arrest on 9th August. They and certain others like Jayaprakash Narayan who had escaped from prision formed a secret organization of the Congress and started sending circulars to the Provincial Congress Committees as "A I C C directives". Similar secret organizations came into being in many provinces. Illegal printing presses and publications, short time radio broadcasting stations, etc., also began to function. Collecting fire arms, teaching and learning bomb-making, conducting subotage making use of explosives and such other activities started in an organized manner. With all this, the "Quit India struggle" acquired an organized character with an underground leadership centralized at least at the provincial and local levels.

As a result of these activities, the government machinery became competely paralyzed at least in some areas and secret mass movements which can rightly be called "parallel governments" emerged. Such parallel governments were formed and started functioning in Ballia in U. P., Bhagalpur and other places in Bihar, Midnapore In Bengal and in Satara in Maharashtra. Although these movements were Shattered before long in the face of attacks by the authorities, they constituted an important development that took place as part of the "Quit India' struggle in the different parts of the country.

Both the British rulers and the liberal politicians blamed the top leadership of the Congress and Gandhi for this situation. That this charge was unfounded is clear from the unplanned character of the struggle visualized by the Congress. For, the Congress leadership had never sent out

any directive with regard to the struggle. Besides, it would be clear to anyone that if the Congress had really intended to carry out such programmes as sabotage and setting up parallel governments, they could have organized them in much more wider a scale than what had happened in the weeks following 9th August. The fact that these were confined to a few places and lasted for a short duration makes it evident that the organizers of these activities enjoyed much less organized popular support than the central Congress leadership,

However, it is significant to note that neither Gandhi nor other Congress leaders came forward to deplore the sabotage, parallel governments and other activities organized in the name of the 'Quit India' struggle. On the contrary, they characterized the organizers of the struggle who adopted the means which were contrary to the Gandhian non-violence as patriots who carried out the call given by them. Furthermore, they sought to justify the Quit India struggle which, in effect was violent,and to own it entirly to themselves on the pretext that it was the British rulers who forced the struggles to adopt the means unacceptable to them.

It still remains a riddle as to what Gandhi and other Congress leaders would have done, had they not been arrested en masse before the down of 9th August. Suppose that the Congress leaders and the people in a certain place adopted means of struggles deviating from the Gandhian creed of non-violence which was reiterated in the Quit India resolution. Would Gandhi have disowned such means of struggle? If the answer is in the positive, would it not be a repudiation of the Quit India resolution and the statements he had made earlier? If the answer is in the negative, would it not give room for the interpretation that he led a mass struggle throwing overboard his own method of non-violence for the first time in his long life?

Fortunately for Gandhi and other Congress leaders, there was no occasion for these questions to be raised. They became free from the responsibility of deciding the form of

the struggle which they themselves called for. They could easily maintain that the incidents of violence developed because they were behind the bars. At the same time, since there were leaders outside the jail who had the capacity as well as the willingness to carry out the struggle in an organized way, the programme of struggle which caused extreme difficulties to the goverment were carried out under their leadership. This provided opportvnity to Gandhi and other Congress leaders both to shrug off the resposibility for the consequences of the actions organized by this group of lealders and to own to themselves the gain of the "August revolution" at the same time. As we shall see in the later chapters, they did utilize this opportunity effectively during the years 1945-46.

Prominent among those who organized the underground activities and gave the Quit India struggle an organized character after the first stage of the struggle were Jayaprakash Narayan, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia and Mrs. Aruna Asaf Ali. Although they functioned on behalf of the Congress, they were socialists. They declared that they stood for a people's armed revolt, rather than adhering to the principle of nonviolence contained in the Quit India resolution. They sharply criticized the Congress leaders for giving a call for a countrywide popular revolt without chalking out a programme of struggle or creating an organization for that purpose. These leaders who created the impression that they were effectively carrying out the struggle through underground organizations, were in a sense organizing the rank and file of the Congress against the leadership.

This enhanced the popularity of the socialists. People felt that although Gandhi and the Congress leaders had called for the struggle, it was the socialists who were carrying out the struggle in practice. Jayaprakash, Lohia and Mrs. Asaf Ali came to be revered by the people.

However, this impression did not last long. The people knew that although it was the socialists who created the necessary organization for the struggle and gave leadership

to the struggle, the actual call for the struggle came from Gandhi and other leaders of the Congress and that the former only helped to carry out the call given by the latter. Their level of consciousness was such that they thought that it was perhaps a minor error on the part of the Congress leadership, which, of course, could be corrected and that the leaders of the struggle, at any rate, were the top Congress leaders including Gandhi. In other words, the feeling they had towards Jayaprakash, Lohia, Aruna and orher leaders were secondary to their reverance to Gandhi and other Congress leaders.

25

THE CONGRESS AND ITS OPPONENTS

I. THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

By the time Jayaprakash Narayan and other Socialist leaders started functioning as an underground centre of the AICC the struggle had already become stattered. The centre in a statement issued in November 1949 said that "our ranks have been repleted; our resources, in the form of local assistance in rural areas, and active enthusiastic support from village youngmen have been reduced by repression". In spite of this, the leaders of the underground organization firmly believed that the Indian masses were solidly with them. So they chartered a programme of action to make the struggle more wide-spread and more democratic. The programme included the following items.

"1. The peasantry should refuse to pay the land tax and obstruct the revenue and police officers to collect the

tax. Even a military invasion should be rendered ineffective by flight into the jungles.

2. Non-sale of food-crops and cattle.

3. Non-acceptance of paper money.

4. Emphasing upon the people the danger of food and cloth famine.

5. Organization of *Swaraj Panchayat* and boycotting of revenue or police officers.

6. Roads, and telegraphs and railways to be destroyed to defeat the British military."[1]

But the programme remained only on the paper. This was not because the people were loyal to the British or they were opposed to the Quit India struggle, but because the government had succeeded in suppressing with arms all demonstrations of protest during the one and a half months following 9th August. A general feeling spread among the people that it was futile to fight the British.

However, while the struggle within India was being suppressed, certain developments were taking place outside the country, which culminated in the formation of the Indian National Army, its attempts to enter India under the leadership of Subhas Bose and its final defeat.

When Subhas Bose left India secretly in Jauuary 1941, Japan was not a party in the Second World War. Germany was making preparation to attack the Soviet Union under the cover of the no-war pact it had signed with it. Hitler was waiting for an opportunity to attack Britain and the countries under its possession after defeating the Allied forces in Europe. Therefore Bose first went to Germany where he established relation with the German Foreign Minister Ribbontrop and the fascist rulers of Italy, and started making regularly anti-British propaganda on the German radio. This evoked two different reactions among the politically conscious people in India. Among those who had adopted an anti-fascist outlook, thanks to the systematic propaganda

1. R. C Majumdar, *History and Culture of the Indian People*, vol. 11, Bombay, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1969, p. 657.

carried out by anti-fascist organizations in India including the Congress, Bose's activities evoked opposition. They were disturbed by his friendship with the fascist forces. At the same time, another section expressed sympathy with his activities. Their hatred towards the British rulers was stronger than that towards the fascist forces.

The entire course of the war changed before long. During the initial months when the German forces made rapid advances, a general impression was created that the Soviet Union would be defeated in the war. On the Asian front, Japan began to make advances. This too helped to create two reacions. It created sympathy towads the Soviet Union and China and hatred towards Germany and Japan. The second reaction was the feeling that Germany and Japan together were crushing the British and India could utilize this opportunity to win freedom. Both these reactions were found reflected on the people at large and particularly among the ranks and leadership of the Congress.

The Congress leadership participated in the talks with Cripps as a compromise between these two outlooks. At this stage, the sympathy towards the Soviet Union and China bore more weight with the leadership. But as the talks broke down, the joy over the advances being made by Germany and Japan as well as the feelig that India would be able to take advantage of the situation and gain freedom became stronger. Even in the midst of their talks with Cripps, the Congress leadership had maintained that in spite of their sympathy to the Allied powers, they would not be able to participate in the war efforts of the British as long as they continued to hang on to power in India. Even in the Quit India resolution, the Congress reiterated its sympathy to the Allies.

While this was the situation within the country, among the Indian living abroad there was a wide-spread feeling of admiration for Germany and Japan in their victory in the war and the optimism that India would be able to utilize the new world situation and gain independence. Even those

living in countries occupied by Germany and Japan, who had anti-fascist feelings, did not express them. Thus, Berlin and Tokyo became the centres of the Indians who were eager to wage an anti-British struggle. Berlin was the main centre of such activities until Japan declared war on the United States and Britain. With Japan's entry in the war and its triumphant march over many Asian countries, the centre was stifted to Tokyo.

Rash Behari Bose, an Indian revolutionary who had left India during the First World War was living in Japan as a Japanese citizen. On his initiative, a conference of Indians was held in Tokyo from 28th to 30th March 1942, which formed the Indian Independence League of the overseas Indians. Following, a larger conference was held in Bangkok from 15th to 23rd June in which 100 delegates representing Indians living in East and South-East Asia participated. Rash Behari Bose was elected president of the Indian Independance League. The conference hoisted the Indian tri-colour flag and declared the immediate attainment of complete freedom for India its objective.

The Conference through a resolution invited Subhas Chandra Bose, who was then living in Germany, to Asia. Accepting the invitation, Subhas Bose reached Tokyo in June 1943 and took over the presidentship of the Indian Independence League from Rash Behari Bose.

Meanwhile, in December 1941 Japan invaded Malaya and defeated the British forces there. A numberof soldiers were taken prisoners of war. A small party of Indian soldiers led by Capt. Sohan Singh who escaped from the advancing Japanese forces surrendered finaily after wandering in the forest for a few days. The Japanese officers held talks with Sohan Singh and suggested to him to form an "Indian national army" out of a selected number of Indian prisoners of war and march to India in cooperation with the Japanese forces to end the British rule there. Sohan Sing accepted the suggestion. This was how the Indian National Army

(INA) was formed with Indian prisoners of war. In accordance with the decision of the Bangkok conference, a Council of Action was set up with Rash Behari Bose as the president and Sohan Singh as the minister of defence and the cammander-in-chief of the Army. However, the activities of the Council were hampered for several reasons and it was only after Bose arrived and took up the leadership that they could be carried out smoothly.

As Subhas Bose took over the leadership of both the Council and the Indian National Army, a new wave of enthusiasm swept over the Indians in the Japanese occupied countries and even over a section of nationalists in India. It may be noted that after his taking over the leadership, the name of the Council was changed to "Provisional Government" on 21st October 1943. The feeling became wide-spread among the nationalists in India and abroad that the INA and Provisional Government were safe under the leadership which was capable both of liberating India from the British rule with the assistance of Japan and of preventing Japan from establishing its domination on the country thus liberated. It was also widely believed that the anti-British underground movement led by Jayaprakash and other socialist leaders was going to achieve final victory with the offensive actions of the INA forces led by Bose.

The initial activities of the INA were such as to create this impression. Bose was determined to maintain independence of the INA and the Provisional Government from the Japanese government and its military bosses. A number of biographical notes and reminiscences contained instances of Bose having taken strong position against the actions of the Japanese government which were not in correspondence with his ideas.

The consciousness spread among the INA men that far from being the mercenaries of Japanese masters, they were rising as the national army of India. In addition to the former prisoners of war, a section of the civilians trained by them also became an integral part of the INA. This enlarged

INA with Bose as its supreme commander fought and marched ahead. More than 4,000 among them were killed in actions and finally they were able to set foot on the Indian soil in March 1944. The Japanese ruler Tojo declared that Japan was resolved to extend all means in order to help to expel and eleminate from India "the Anglo-Saxon influence" and enable India to achieve "full independence in the true sense of the term".

But by the time they were able to reach about 150 miles inside the eastern borders of India, the course of the war began to change. The INA's first target was Imphal. However, they could not achieve the objective because the Japanese failed to reach the necessary supplies and materials. Meanwhile, the monsoon set in preventing their further advance. The British, on the other hand, used the opportunity to regroup their forces and made a successful counter-attack on the Japanese and INA forces as the monsoon withdrew. This marked the beginnning of the end of the Japanese army and the INA.

Thus, both the Quit India movement inside India and the INA offensive outside India aborted. The British were able to suppress the Quit India struggle using its police and military forces. They were also able to defeat Japan and recover Burma, Malaya and Singapore with the support of the anti-fascist forces all over the world and with the military aid and cooperation from the Allies including the Soviet Union and the United States.

But the Quit India struggle and the activities of the INA had shaken the foundation of the British rule in India. The former remained in a subdued state ready to erupt at the first opprtunity. The experience with the INA provided the warning that even the Indian soldiers who had been regarded as mercenaries of the British might turn the direction of their guns at an appropriate movement. When the INA trial began in the court, the ire of the people including that of the Indian servicemen rose high. The country-wide protest against the trail clearly showed that if the British were to hang on to

power arrogantly with the claim that they were successful in suppressing both the movements, not only the people of India in general but even the armed forces under the British control would rise against them. This was confirmed by the mutiny organized subsequenthy by the naval ratings in Bombay.

It was under these circumstances that the British decided to re-start negotiations. Details of these negotiations will be given in the later chapters. However, it is necessary here to find an answer to the questions why did the 'August revolution' fail and why did the INA crumble after registering partial success in the initial stage.

1. The Quit India struggle was not built upon the organized strength of the masses, no matter how wide a support it had received. It was the same leadership which had been arguing that any mass struggle was contrary to the principle of non-violenoe that now called upon the people to adopt any method each of them considered appropriate in the Quit India struggle. Even this call was subject to the principle of non-violence! Therefore, as Jayaprakash and others pointed out later, the absence of an organization strong enough to wage the struggle disarmed the people.

2. The Quit India struggle failed to create even a ripple among the armed forces maintained by the British. Like their English counterparts, the Indian soldiers continued to act in accordance with the orders given by their superiors. There was not one minor incidence of insubordination any where in India during the 1942 struggle as was witnessed in Peshawar during the 1930 salt *satyagraha*. Munity in the organized armed force is an important element in the success of any revolution. As Lenin stated, without immobilizing the armed forces no major revolution had succeeded and will not succeed.

3. The INA was the first indication to the fact that the British Indian armed forces would not act as loyally as before. What made the INA a strong willed military force was the fact that a section of the Indian army turned against

the British and thousands of civilians turned themselves into trained soldiers under such a popular leader like Subhas Bose.

4. Even at that stage, the Indian soldiers who were deployed against the INA were acting loyally to the British rulers. Neither the organizers of the Quit India movement nor the INA was able to "immobilize" it. Added to this was the fact that in Europe in the west and in Asia in the east, the fascist powers were facing one defeat after another. All this led to the final defeat of the INA.

II. AUGUST STRUGGLE AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY

In the midst of the people who were exicited by the politics of the Quit India struggle and the formation of INA, the Communist Party was growing as a new political force in the country. From 1933-34 when a perpetually functioning central leadership of the Party emerged, the Communist Party had been striving to unite the left forces within and outside the Congress and to draw the Congress along the path of an uncompromising struggle against the British. Thus, the party was functioning as part of a leftist united front in which the top Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose had played important roles.

As the war broke out, the left front broke up and the constituents of the front—the Communist Party, the Congress Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc—began to proceed along their respective ways. The Congress came under the leadership of Gandhi, though deviating at times from his path. The Communist Party which was fighting against the compromising policy being persued by Gandhi and the Congress, could earn the appreciation of the anti-imperialist circles in the country.

The situation changed once again in the second stage of the war when Germany attacked the Soviet Union and Japan

overran the Asian countries and reached the eastern frontier of India. People's indignation rose high against the British rulers who were utilizing the economic and manpower resources of India to protect their own imperialist interests without conceding to India its right to independence. The anti-fascist attitude the Congress had hitherto been maintaining got weakened. Not only Bose who, camping at Berlin, Bangkok and other places, was cooperating with the fascist forces, but also the Congress leaders in India began to take an attittude which was in effect favourable to Japan on the belief that "Japan would not attack India". Statements and speeches contrary to the anti-fascist policy and approach that the Congress had been pursuing for a decade came in abundance form leaders like Gandhi. Other Congress leaders like Nehru and Azad who were disturbed by this new trend, however, succumbed to the pressure of popular sentiments and helplessly supported the Quit India resolution.

As we have seen earlier, the only section in the Congress which had uncompromisingly opposed this was the Communists. The Communist Party did not give in even after the adoption of the Qint India resolution by the AICC. The Party continued to hold that it was suicidal to launch the Quit India struggle in a manner that would obstruct the war efforts of the Allied Powers including the the Soviet Union in the prevailing world situation in which the very future of the Soviet Union was hanging in the balance and a large part of Asia including the eastern border countries of India came under Japanese occupation. It could not agree with the views of Bose of liberating India with the assistence of Japan. So the Communist Party kept itself aloof from the Quit India struggle as well as from the activities of the I N A. Not only that.The Party did not hesitate to organize compaigns among the People that the activities on these lines were suicidal.

For the Party it was a period of great trial. It was placed itself in a situation in which it had not only to challenge the bourgeois leadership of the Congress but had to move against the current of anti-imperialist feelings which

had become strong among all classes and sections of the people. Furthermore, immediately before launching their attack against the Congress, the authorities released many well-known communist leaders from the prison and withdrew arrest warrents issued against many others who had escaped arrest. This had helped to create an impression among a large section of the people who had participated in the Quit India struggle or who were otherwise sympathetic towards the struggle that "the communists had struck a deal with the British".

This was the circumstance under which the communists came to be alienated from the people including those who had regarded them highly for the part they had played earlier in the anti-imperialist struggles. Later, this was also utilized by Nehru and other top Congress leaders in making fierce propaganda against the communists who, according to them, "joined the other side during the independence struggle".

However, judging the activities of the communists before 1942 and after 1945, no one would think that they would do anything that would help the British rulers in suppressing the freedom movement. Hence, it is necessary to examine objectively what the communists did in the period 1942-45.

It was true that the Communist did not take part in the Quit India struggle called for by the Congress. It was also true that at the end of the first stage of the struggle when subversive activities were organized by the Congress functioning underground under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan and others, the Party mobilized all its resources to campaign extensively among the people that the policy they were pursuing was suicidal. Further, the opposition put up by the Party against the approach of Bose of liberating India with the assistance of Japan helped to spread bitterness towards the Party amongst other anti-imperialist forces in the country. But the truth was that the Party adopted this attitude on the basis of the anti-fascist policies which had

been consistently followed by all anti-imperialist forces in the country and officially adopted by the Congress itself.

The 1942 Quit India resolution and all other official documents and declarations of the Congress had expressed the determination of the Congress not to do anything that would impede the anti-fascist war efforts of the Allied Powers which included Britain. We have also noted that Nehru and Azad amongst the top Congress leaders who had subscribed to this view more strongly could not really agree to Gandhi's policy with regard to the Quit India struggle. Their dissent was in essence the policy which was adopted by the Communist Party towards the struggle. On account of the "affectionate pressure" from Gandhi and motivated by the rising anti-imperialist feelings of the people, they renounced their own stand and gave approval to the Quit India resolution. The Communist Party, on the other hand, adhered to its own stand till the end—this was the only difference.

The entire Congress leadership, including Gandhi, Nehru and Azad utilized as ever before the situation arising out of the present war as an opportunity to protect their own (bourgeois) class interests by bargaining with the British rulers. They subordinated the hatred towards fascism, sympathy towards the Soviet Union and China and all other sentiments to the policy of bargain with the rulers. They were ready to cooperate in the war efforts if the government was prepared to accept their conditions; otherwise, they would launch a struggle that would obstruct the efforts of the government—this was the atttiude of the Congress leadership.

The Communist Party totally disagreed with this. The Party pointed out that in the anti-fascist war which was going to decide the future of mankind, moblizing masses against facism was not the concern of the British alone, but also of the whole Indian people. The demands raised by the Congress were just. The Party had no doubt about it. The Party regarded that the British fighting the war without acceding to these demands and with such policies as would only result in creating discontent among the people was in effect defeating

their own efforts. It mobilized all its resources to place these views before the people. Since the Party's propaganda campaigns had this anti-British component, the government's repressive weapons were also used against it. Yet, the Party maintained that launching the Quit India struggle in protest against the adament attitude of the British in a manner helpful to the Japanese invation was like burning the castle to kill the rat.

It may be recalled that the call for the Quit India struggle was given by the Congress when the historic battle of Stalingrad was going on in Europe, while in the east the Japanese forces had reached the estern borders of India. In that situation the Communist Party proposed that it was not enough to conduct country-wide campaigns aginst the adament attitude of the British rulers and to build pressure in order to compel them to concede the demands, but it was also necessary to take all steps, includiug guerilla war, against the Japanese aggressers to stop the advance of fasism, should Japanese fores crossed the Indian borders. The Party was of the opinion that the Congress and other anti-imperialist organizations must also conduct activities on a number of war-time problems such as providing medical aid to the victims of bombardment and organizing people against hoarders and blackmarketeers, including profiteering by exploiting the war-time situation.

Nehru had at one stage agreed to these proposals. He expressed the opinion in favour of organizing guerilla squads in areas falling to the Japanese forces. But after holding talks with Gandhi, he gave up the idea. Yet, the Party did not swerve. Furthermore, during the Quit India struggle, the Communist Party acted in accordance with the programme which was even accepted at least partly by Nehru at one stage. It did not hesitate to establish contact with the government and accept the assistance necessary for carring out this programme.

Even while engaged in these activites, however, the Communist Party continued to organize campaigns against the government's policy of refusing to arrive at an understanding

with the Congress on India's national demands and against arresting them en masse.

This was a policy which was adopted not only by Indian Communists but also by Communists all over the world during the anti-fascist war. The French Communist Party, the most glorious of them, devoted everything for the anti-fascist guerilla war. The Communist parties of the present day Asian socialist countries of Vietnam, Laos, Kampuchia, Korea and China and the parties in other occupied countries of Malaya, Burma, and Indonesia had accepted different kinds of assistance including military training and military hardware form the imperialist countries including Britain and USA during the anti-Japanese war. It was with these materials that the Communist parties and other anti-fascist organizations in those countries prepared the people for the fight against the colonial domination immediatly after the termination of the Second World War.

Such a situation did not develop in India. The Japanese forces had to retreat even before entering India. The Communist Party, however, did make some efforts, in a small way though, to meet any Japanese attack. The authorities had come forward to give training in guerilla warfare to the Communists for that purpose. The Party did not hesistate to obtain assistance from the departments concerned for organizing defence against air raids, etc.

At the same time, the Communist Party organized massive campaigns exposing the anti-people politics of the government and stressing the fact that the anti-fascist war could not be fought keeping the Congress leaders behind the bars. Simultaneously, the Party also made efforts to foster trade unions, peasants organizations socio-cultural associations and organizations of students, youth and women and to bring the masses in the struggles against hoarding and black-marketing and against price rise and famine. The Party also organized struggles against hoarders and black marketeers by systematically organizing relief work in the 1943 famine in Bengal and other provinces. As a result of all these

activities, there was tremendous increase in the membership of the Party, the cirulation of Party journals and people's contributions to party fund.

It is often stated that the reason for the success of the Party was that they were able to freely carry on their activities while the Congress leaders were behind the bars and the socialists were working underground. That this was hardly the truth can be seen from the fate of M N Roy and other Royists who were fully cooperating with government during the same period. They enjoyed more freedom than the Communist Party. It may be stated that the although many of the Party leaders were released from prison, a number of them had still remained inside. Similarly, though the arrest warrents against many had been withdrawn, many others were forced to remain underground. Cases against many leaders were still pending in courts. It may be noted that the Royists were free from all these problems. In spite of this, they met with their doom because they were functioning as an appendage of the govenment giving up the independent stand of the working class. The Communist Party, on the other hand, was opposing the Quit India struggle by organizing country-wide campaigns against the general policies of the government.

This, however, does not mean that the Communist Party did not commit any error in translating its general approach towards the Quit India struggle into practical activities. Failing to properly appreciating the popular feelings behind the struggle, the Party had often displayed a tendency to denounce those participating in the struggle as fascist agents. It had also made certain errors in organizing mass struggles during this period. All such errors were subjected later to severe self-criticism, particularly in the Second Party Congress held in Calcutta in 1948.

Dispite the omissions and commissions, the Party adopted a policy which was by and large correct during the Quit India struggle. The Party combined anti-imperialism with anti-fascism. It adopted an independent working class

revolutionary attittude facing both the provocations and threats from the rulers and the rising popular sentiments under the leadership of the bourgeoisie. The Communists came out as a party independently organizing the people while striving to criticize the British rulers who were fighting the war while suppressing the people and their leaders, Bose and his follows who were rejoicing at the victory of the fascist forces and operating on the expectation that they would be able to liberate India with their assistance, and the Congress leadership which was looking upon the anti-fascist war as an opportunity to bargain with the British rulers. The Communist Party engaged itself in the task of organizing the working class, the peasantry and other working masses on the basis of this political approach of anti-imperialism combined with anti-fascism.

It was for the first time that the Communist Party was rising to such a level. With this it became clear that an independent working class revolutionary party, small though, had come into being standing on its on legs and challenging the bourgeois leadership. This constituted the meaning of the growth of the Party at this stage.

III. NEGOTIATION ATTEMPT THAT FAILED

Although the Communist Party made great strides during the Quit India struggle as compared to the earlier period, it could not bring about any substantial change in the political situation in the country. The Congress leadership continued to be the symbol of people's aspiration for freedom. Although the struggle failed, the freedom loving people put it on a still higher pedestal. Politically, the Muslim League and other caste and communal parties continued to be the forces capable of effectively challenging the Congress. As a consequence, the post-war Indian politics was again centred around negotiations among the Congress, the British rulers, and the caste-communal parties including the Muslim League.

Even when the Quit India resolution was adopted, Gandhi and other Congress leaders had thought that things might move in that direction. This explains the attempts made by them to establish contact with the League leaders in the days immediately preceding the adoption of the resolution. It may be recalled that the Congress President Azad and Gandhi himself had made it clear that the Congress would not be troubled even if the Muslim League formed a government at the Centre, provided it contained the essence of freedom. It was, in fact, leaving the door open for neogiations on this basis that the Quit India resolution was adopted by the Congress. Furthermore, Gandhi had announced in his speech before the AICC that he would try to keep in touch with the Viceroy as authorizeed by the resolution before launching the struggle.

But the government arrested the Congress leaders en masse without providing them opportunities for starting such negotiations. It was followed by a communique issued by the government justifying these actions. The communique was designed to create hatred towards the Congress among all those, particularly the foreigners, who wanted to see that the fascist forces were defeated and those who felt disturbed at any action which was likely to become an obsrucation before the war efforts. It sought to create the impression that what was envisaged in the name of Quit India struggle was destructive activities and if the Congress was allowed to carry on these activities, it would doom the anti-fascist war efforts of the Allied Powers.

The charges levelled against the Congress and the repressive actions resorted to by the government provided Gandhi another opportunity to attempt to open negotiations. Thus, on 22nd September, hardly a month and a half after the mass arrests, Gandhi wrote a letter to the Viceroy in which he repudiated the charges levelled against the Congress. He sought to establish that neither he nor the Congress could be held responsibie for the destructions that had taken place in the country. Gandhi expressedly stated that the

Congress did not approve of the destructive activities which could have been avoided if the Congress leaders were left free to lead the struggle. The people turned violent, according to Ganthi, because the government, in addition to rejecting the national demand raised by the Congress, arrested the leaders en masse and brutally attacked the people who were agitated over the arrests of their leaders.

Gandhi's letter was not released for publication by the government until the middle of February 1943. A few months later, the Congress charged the Viceroy and other officials with deliberately withholding the contents of the letter from the press. Basic to this allegation was the thinking that if it had been released to the press soon after it was received, those who were cooperating with the programme of destructive activities thinking that it was in accordance with the instructions of the Congress, would have withdrawn their cooperation which would render the reason for their continued imprisonment invalid. Interestingly, this charge was raised only after Gandhi undertook a fast from 10th February. The fast was undertaken on the ground that the reply he had received to his letter of 22nd September and to the subsequent letters was not not satisfactory. Only two days after launching the fast did the government reveal it to public. The correspondence exchanged between Gandhi and the Viceroy was released to the press by way of explaining the position of the government.

The letter exchanged between Gandhi and the Viceroy revealed that the Congress represented by Gandhi had no sympathy at all either to the socialists who were venturing to give a revolutionary character to the Quit India struggle, nor to Bose who had been striving to liberate India with the military assistance of Japan. The call for the struggle was given as part of the usual pressure factics to bring the authorities once again to negotiations which were broken off as a result of the failure of the Cripps mission.

The government took a rigid attitude to this struggle as they did in the case of the 1932 civil disobedience movement.

They were determined to use all forces against the Congress. The entire government machinery was brought in, including the police and the military, in such a way as had never been witnessd since the 1857 revolt. So Gandhi had to find a way out of the crisis and the letter of 22nd September was a first step taken in that direction. Further, this was another example to show that bourgeois politics could be handled cleverly under the veil of spirituality. On the sole issue of the repression let loose by the government all over the country, Gandhi launched upon a twentyone-days fast on the ground that the only weapon in the hands of a *satyagrahi* facing violence was "self-affliction". And in the explanation given to this action lay hidden an extremely clever bourgeois political strategy.

Gandhi's statement that he and his colleagues could not be held responsible for the destructive activities could be interpreted to mean a denunciation of the destructive activities themselves and based on this interpretation, the government could release the Congress leaders from prision and start negotiations with them as envisaged by Gandhi. But this was possible only if the government was willing for that. Alternatively, Gandhi's statement could be interpreted in another manner which did not require denunciation of the destructive activities. That is, the people who were agitated and provoked by the brutal repression let loose by the government simply gave expression to their natural feeling in a way which was different from the Congress method of agitation. In other words, negotiate with the authorities if opportunities are open for it; otherwise, go along the way of popular sentiments as far as possible and keep the people under their sway without denouncing the violence on their part—this was the strategy.

However, the rulers too played bourgeois politics. As indicated earlier, even Winston Churchill who was known to be a hard-core defender of imperialism had come to the conclusion that Britain would have to leave India after the war. But, since they were not willing to do so in the midst of the war,

they were determined to preserve their authority and rule through organized repression, while the Congress was striving to demonstrate and enhance its popularity among the people through the 'Quit India struggle'. That was why the Congress leaders were arrested en masse soon after the A I C C meeting. And for the same reason, the rulers made it clear from the beginning of the exchange of letters between Gandhi and the Viceroy that they were not prepared to let up the repressive actions. In a letter wrote to Gandhi before the commencement of fast, the Viceroy stated:

> ....but you many rest assured that the charges against the Congress will have to be met sooner or later and it will then be for you and your colleagues to clear yourselves before the world, if you can. And if in the meanwhile you yourself, by any action such as you now appear to be contemplating, attempt to find an easy way out, the judgement will go against you by default.[2]

The meaning of this passage is evident. The Viceroy was making an open declaration in unambiguous terms that the government would not do anything to avert a possible danger to the life of Gandhi as a result of the prolonged fasting. It also constituted a warning to the effect that the military had been kept ready to face the repurcussions of Gandhi's possible death in detention.

Luckily, nothing untoward, as the Viceroy expected, happened. The fast, though precarious at times, passed off its stipulated period. It ended with both parties holding their respective positions firm: the authorities in their policy of repression and Gandhi protesting against the repression.

Meanwhile the Congress President Azad, who came to know of the fast from the newspaper, wrote a long letter to the Viceroy in which he repeated what Gandhi had explained in his own letters to the Viceroy. It became clear that the line of argument with regard to the destructive activities was not of Gandhi alone, but it was the line of the Congress

2. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol 6, p 192.

leadership as a whole. Thus, everyone understood that, like Gandhi, the entire leadership of the Congress was searching for a way out of the situation created by the incidents that took place following the events of 9th August.

Utilizing the situation, Rajagopalachari who had left the Congress a few months before the Quit India struggle, and the liberal leaders like Sapru began attempts to bring the Congress and the government together for negotiations. These attempts received support from a wide spectrum of political opinions in different countries including England and the United States. Suggestions began to come up that since the Congress had authoritatively stated to be not in favour of destructive activities, there was no justification for the continued imprisonment of the leaders and that the stage should be set for the formation of governments at the Centre and in the provinces with the participation of the Congress and the Muslim League and for preparing a constitution acceptable to all political opinions in the country. An atmosphere conducive to negotiations began to appear.

There was, however, one pre-condition for the success of these efforts: the release of the Congress leaders from prison. The British were not prepared to do that. Having known for sure that they would have to leave India after the war, the British rulers decided to keep Gandhi and other Congress leaders in prison until the war was over. They did not even permit the leaders to exchange letters between them and the leaders like Jinnah who were outside the prison. The Congress leadership had no alternative other than remaining in prison until the war was over.

IV. AN ALTERNATIVE BOURGEOIS LEADERSHIP

The principal reason for the failure of the attempts made by the Congress to start negotiations was the fact that the British rulers were able to utilize the bourgeois leadership

which had emerged in the meantime as an alternative to the Congress, against the Congress and other organizations of the movement for national independence. This bourgeois alternative was the Muslim League which had started functioning as an organized political force raising the central slogan of 'Pakistan'. It rendered valuable assistance to the British authorities in facing the Quit India struggle. In place of the Congress slogan of 'Quit India', Jinnah raised the slogan of 'Divide India, and Quit'.

Apparently, this slogan was against both the Congress and the British rulers. The League was equally interested in the British leaving the country, but not in the manner as demanded by the Congress. The League did not want to see the Congress rising to the position of leading a united India. Consequently, just as the Congress slogan 'Quit India' inspired the Indian people in general, so the League slogan 'Divide India, and Quit' inspired the Muslim masses.

We have already explained the general background in which the Indian politics had reached this state. Ever since the national demand for *Swaraj* came to be raised and the agitational programmes including boycott launched to back up this demand, the British rulers were able to set the Muslim community against the Congress-led national movement. However, in those days the Muslim leaders had not been successful in bringing the entire community under one organization. Many of them were with the Congress. A change in the situation came only in 1937 when the Congress ministries came to power in some of the provinces. The Muslim League under the leadership of Jinnah gained considerable strength through agitations against the Congress ministries. It was as a continuation of this struggle that the League adopted the Pakistan resolution in 1940.

Even at this stage, the League could not claim to be the sole party representing the Muslim community. The League had little influence on the ministries in those provinces where the Congress was a minority in the legislature. As we have seen earlier, for example, the Fazlul Haq

government in Bengal and the Sikandar Hyat Khan government in Punjab were independent of the Muslim League. In the Muslim majority border provinces of Sind and Assam, ministries of the Congress or under the influence of the Congress were in power. Besides, when the Congress ministries in the provinces resigned in 1939, the Muslim ministers in some of these provinces functioned in ways which were opposed to the policies of the League. The Sind Chief Minister Allah Baksh issued at the initial stage of the Quit India struggle a statement holding the British authorities responsible for the crisis, as a consequence of which he was removed from office.

The situation changed as the people began to line up behind the respective slogans of the Congress and the Muslim League. The influence of the League on the elected Muslim members in the legislatures increased and the ministries of Bengal, Assam and the NWF Province passed into the hands of the League. In Punjab the influence of the League increased after the death by the end of 1942 of Sikandar Hyat Khan who was firmly opposed to the League demand for Pakistan. In spite of this, an official Muslim League did not come up in Punjab.

The political changes that occurred in the months immediately following the launching of the Quit India struggle were skilfully utilized both by the British government and Jinnah. They proceeded by creating the impression that the entire Muslim community was solidly behind the League. They also created the impression that there were other minority communities and the depressed sections among the Hindus which, although did not entirely agree with the League's demand for Pakistan, were generally in support of the League's anti-Congress stance. The elites among these communities were opposed to the slogan of 'Quit India' and to the struggle called for by the Congress. It was, in fact, relying on the sympathy and support of the masses behind these elites that the British rulers resorted to repressive actions to suppress the Quit India struggle. It was the same

that emboldened the British authorities to ridicule the efforts made by Gandhi and Azad in prison to start negotiations.

Gandhi and other Congress leaders had known well that this had created a serious situation. They were also were concious of the fact that it was impossible to reach a settlement with the British ignoring the Muslim League and its slogan of Pakistan. That was why they had tried to establish confact with the League leadership before adopting the Quit India resolution. It was for the same reason that Gandhi wrote a letter to Jinnah from the prison, which the authorities refused to deliver to him. They had on doubt that the unity between the Congress and the League was a precondition for the success of any negotiation that they would have to start with the British rulers in the post-war days.

Thus, by 1942-43 the question of the British leaving India had ceased to be a controversial one. Instead, the question now was whether they would leave an undivided India handing over its administration to a government with the participation of the Congress, the League and other organizations, or they would create two independent nations—a Hindu India and a Muslim India—and transfer power to their respective leaders.

Besides, the question also emerged as to whether the princely states numbering about 600 would be an integral part of an undivided India, or to which country would each of them align itself, or would they remain independent sovereign countries.

We shall deal in later chapters with the details of the intense arguments, uncompromising proposals, private and open discussions among the leaders of the people, and the like that took place before and after the end of the war. Here we shall deal only with certain general things relating to the understanding which formed the basis of these arguments and discussions.

As we had referred to earlier, from the time when the idea occurred that India must become independent, two parallel views began to gain ground on the meaning of

'independence', One section thought that independence meant revival of the ancient (Hindu) kingdoms and empires and of the sociolcultural life that prevailed in those periods which were regarded as the 'golden period of Indian civilization'. Another section thought, on the other hand, that independence meant a re-establishment of the reign of the Badshahs of Delhi which was the capital of India in the medieval period. The former may be called Hindu revivalists and the letter Islamic revivalists.

From Jinnah's 'two-nations theory' it can be understood that the League was the organization of the latter. Jinnah argued for the creation of two independent sovereign countries on the plea that India was not one nation but two nations, the Hindus and the Muslims. The Muslim League slogan of 'Divide India, and Quit' was a transformation of this argument. They accused the Congress which opposed this slogan that they stood for 'Hindu domination'.

It may be argued that there is an element of truth in it. From the early *sanyasi* revolt of Bengal to Tilak's *Ganesh Puja* and Gandhi's *ashram* life, one could see the influence of of Hinduism in the history of Indian national struggle. Yet the slogans they raised were those of modern (bourgeois) notionalism. Not only freedom and democracy but also reformation of communal and ritual practices and cultural modernization were part of the freedom movement represented by the Congress. And similar movements of reformation and modernization had spread among the leaders of the Muslim community. Each of the Muslim social and political movements right from the Aligarh movent led by Sayyed Ahamed Khan to the Muslims Leaguge led by Jinnah gave expression to the aspirations of the bourgeoise emerging from among the Muslims. Until 1937-38 Jinnah himself had appeared as a nationalist raising the slogan of modernization and nationalism against Islamic revivalism.

Basically, the Congress and the Muslim League thus represented the same (bourgeois) class. The leaders of both the parties wanted this class to develop; they wanted to create

conditions (political power) for a reorganization of the society on capitatist lines. Yet, there were contradictions and rivalries characteristic of capitaist society between them. The dispute between them was over the sharing of political powere which was to be acquired and the sharing of the gains resulting form the reorganization of the society on capilalist lines making use of this political power. It was this dispute that manifested itself in the form of the slogans of "Quit India" on the one hand, and "Divide India, and Quit" on the other.

From the beginning the British rulers were trying to take advantage of this rivalry to protect their own imperialist interests. When 'Quit India' and the 'two-nations theory' came to the fore, the 'divide and rule' tactics of the rulers revealed its real character. They utilized the 'two-nations theory' and the demand for Pakistan against the slogan of 'Quit India'. It was a political necessity of the British to expose the claim made by the Congress that it was the sole representative of the Indian people. But they, at the same time, claimed that they wished India to remain undivided. Both Lord Linlithgow who was the Viceroy at the time when the demand for Pakisthan was raised and Lord Wavell who succeeded him expressed the desire that "India should remain one entity for geographical and political reasons". And Lord Mountbatten who at last performed the division tried to impress upon the people that he did it reluctantly.

Having understood the tactics of the rulers, the Congress leaders tried to devise certain counter-tactics. But the political situation that prevailed was such that any such attempt was bound to end in failure. One of the reasons for this was the fact that the views held by most Congress leaders including Gandhi contained elements of Hinduism. But what was more important was that the British rulers were able to utilize the Islamic views which had exerted considerable influence on the Muslism communal leaders against India's national demands. A modern secular political leadership had not yet emerged capable of countering the Hindu and Islamic

varieties of the revivalist movements and their possible repercussions on the Indian political life. And the frightening consequences of this situation manifested themselves in 1944 and thereafter.

V. THE CRISIS

Gandhi's fast and the attitude of the authorities towards it put the Congress in a serious crisis. When the Quit India struggle was launched the Congress leaders expected a mass upsurge to take place compelling the authorities to seek negotiations. That did not happen. On the contrary, the authorities were determined not to enter into negotiations with the Congress, even if Gandhi was to die fasting in prison. The Congress leaders reached a dead end finding no way out of the dilemma created by this situation.

The British rulers too were in a dilemma. Although they had bosted that they had succeeded in suppressing the Quit India struggle and were able to carry with them the different organizations like the Muslim League, the mass support to the Congress was increasing. A new generation was emerging in India drawing inspiration from the underground organizations which had been created following the suppression of the Quit India struggle and from the activities of the I N A. Although keeping aloof from the Quit India struggle, the Communist Party which had been organizing popular agitations for the release of the Congress leaders and for other demands of the people was also growing. The different streams of anti-imperialism were steadily gaining strength.

In the political field, certain developments took place in the early months of 1943 which were likely to produce long-term results. During and after Gandh's fast, the liberal leaders and certain former Congress leaders like Rajagopalachari came out with the sugguestion to start talks between the Congress and the Muslim League in order to find a asolution to the political problems. Presiding over a conference held

in 1943, the League President Jinnah wondered why Gandhi who had been continually writing letters to the Viceroy was not writing to him. In response to this Gandhi wrote a letter to Jinnah which the government rufused to deliver to him causing a storm of protest inside and outside the country. Different sections of the people in England openly accused the government of thawrting all attempts to find a solution to the political problems.

To cap it all, a famine broke out in India, particularly in Bengal, in 1943. Several thousands of people starved to death under a government which was claiming itself to be "functioning efficiently". The rulers and their agents tried to make it out that the famine was caused by drought, which was accentuated by uncontrolled increase in the population. But any knowledgeable person knew that famine, rather than being the result of nature's failure, was man made.

Democratic minded people pointed out that the famine and the general price rise were due to hoarding and blackmarketeering being practised extensively by big landlords, moneylenders and wholesale merchants utilizing the war-time situaction. Public opinion rose high againt the authorities who instead of taking actions against these anti-people elements, were giving all protection to them. The demand came from the people that the government should immediately release the national leaders from prison and seek their cooperation in the controlled distribution of food grains and other essential articles.

The role played by the Communist Party in this regard deserves particular mention. The Party's attitude towards the food problem as also towards the war and the problems that arose out of the war was different from that of the British rulers, on the one hand, and that of the organizers of the Quit India struggle, on the other. It was linked with the solution to the day-to-day life problems of workers, peasants and other sections of the common people.

As distinct from the organizers of the Quit India struggle, the Party had extended cooperation to the government

in matters relating to the control of the price and distributation of food grains and other essential commodities. The Party had campaigned against sabotage causing obstruction to these activities. The Party had participated actively in the work of the procurement and distribution of essential commodities by cooperating with the authorities and by setting up separate organizations for the purpose. The Party had organized workers and peasants to get them engaged themselves fully in the work of increasing industrial and agricultural production.

At the same time the Party emphatically stated that it was impossible to control scarcity and price increase without preventing profiteering by big landlords, wholesalers and other vested interests. It put forward practical suggestions to take over the stocks from big landlords and others and to distribute them amang the people. It not only demanded actions to prevent food grains being transported from the famine stricken areas but also formed volunteer organizations to undertake this work where the authorities were not prepared to do it.

The activities of peasant organizations engaged in these jobs and the trade unions agitating against the capitalists who were standing in the way of increased production in factories became more wide-spread. Besides, the Party's political campaigns went on emphasizing that the government would not be able to solve these problems as long as they kept the popular national leaders in prison.

The propaganda campaigns and the relief work organized by the Party at the all-India level with regard to the Bengal famine created a small ripple in Indian politics. It was true that a considerable section of the people in the country did not show favour towards these activities on the ground that they were being organized by a party which was opposed to the Quit India struggle. They even opposed these activities. However, it created considerable impact on those non-communist democrats who did not share the Quit India politics. The approach of the Party during the campaign in connection with Bengal famine was to serve the people under

any circumstance and under any condition and expose the anti-people forces, and to state openly that the greatest obstruction on the path of putting the anti-people forces in their proper place was the policies of the British rulers. Although keeping itself aloof from the Socialist Party and other groups engaged in giving an organized character to the Qiut India struggle after its suppression and from the Congress leadership which called for the struggle, the Communist Party had been building a movement against the exploitation by the landlords, wholesalers and other vested interests and against the anti-people character of the British rulers who were abetting these expolitors.

Although famine, price rise and starvation death were acute in Bengal, they were common throught India. In each province they showed up in accordance with its own characteristics, but the crisis of the socio-eeonomic system manifested itself everywhere. Both the social life that continued to exist for centuries and the administrative system that had been there for decades were crumbling. The famine and price rise were the outward manifestations of the deep crisis that had affected all aspects of human life. The progressive, anti-imperialist minded people had no doubt that the solution to this problem was to change India's existing socio-economic system after ending the British rule. There was no difference of opinion on the point that this task had to be accomplished as soon as possible. The differences were on how to accomplish this task. In the opinion of the Communist Party the immediate task was to turn the people against the vested interests and the rulers by rendering all assistance to the victims of famine, price rise and starvation taking help from the government for this purpose. In the views of other nationalists, there was no question of seeking the help of the Government for the famine relief activities until the foreign rulers left the country. There were sharp conflicts between these to view-points all over the country.

This situation created its impacts outside India also. The famine stricken Bengal and other provinces demonstrated the fact that the rulers were "efficent" only in keeping

the Congress leaders in prison and not in the procurement and distribution of the essential articles to the people. It became also clear that the government lacked the willingness to seek the cooperation of the people and their leaders and also cabitlity to solve the problem without their cooperation and that the continuance of this situation was dangerous to the war efforts of the Allied Powers. In these circumstances, an important change took place in the government. Viceroy Linlithgow relinguished his post and his position was taken over by Lord Wavell who was the Commander-in-Chief of the British armed forces in India.

Apparently, this was only a change of the individual. Lord Wavell was a party to all the decisions taken by Lord Linlinthgow as the Viceroy. In fact, it was only because of the obstinate attitude of Lord Wavell that the suggestion (which was acceptable to the Congress) to form a government at the Centre handing over the power of all the departments including the defence to Indians was finally rejected during the talks with the Cripps mission. So, the change in the person who occupied the viceregal position was of no consequence.

However, the circumstance under which Linlithgow had to relinguish the position is noteworthy. Durga Das had stated in his memoirs that the American Presidential Representative in India, W. Phillips, had told him that President Roosevelt had suggested to British authorities that only a person more imaginative than Linlithgow would be able to solve the Indian problem. In an interview allowed to Durga Das before quitting office, Lintithgow was reported to have stated that India need not wish for independence for another fifty years and that since the parliamentary system would not grow in India, the British officers would have to remain in India permanently.

It had become clear to the authorities in England and to their foreign friends that it was unwise to try to solve the Indian problem by keeping such a person at the top of the administration in India. In the existing political conditions

it was inevitable to create the impression that a change in the situation was needed.

It was true that the situation did not change fundamentally even after Lord Wavell became the Viceroy. That was why when effective talks had to be started with regard to the transfer of power in 1946-47, the Labour government which was then in power sent Lord Mountbatten as the Viceroy. But Wavell's appointment helped to create the impression of a change at least for the time being. Certain steps he had taken immediately after assuming office were in accord with this impression. For instance, he visited the famine stricken areas in Bengal. Beside, he ordered for the release of Gandhi on 6th may, who had been ill in the prison since Apirl 1944. Other political leaders who were detained along with Gandhi in the Aga Khan Palace were also released.

26

THE CONGRESS-LEAGUE RELATION

I. THE FAILURE OF NEGOTIATION ATTEMPTS

The political situation changed as Gandhi and some of his associates were released from detention. It became clear that negotiations between the Congress and the government would start soon. The leaders at the lower levels who remained outside the jail started organizational work of different kinds. The question came up whether Gandhi and the Congress approved of the "violent activities" that took place as part of the Quit India struggle. The British authorities adhered to the position that Gandhi and his colleagues were responsible for the troubles and that they would not enter into talks with them unless they renounced the programme.

The leaders outside the jail denied the charge and ragued that the programme they envisaged in 1942 was non-violent

as it was the case with all the earlier struggles. However, the ordinary activists who were active during the 1942 struggle did not agree with this. They belived that whatever incidents occurred in connection with the struggle, including those which were called "violent" were correct and were fully in accord with the call given by Gandhi.

This problem acquired added importance in the eyes of the people after Gandhi's release from detention, since both sides presented their arguments invoking his name while he was in the jail. Now since he had come out of the jail, he himself had to make it clear what the fact was. And he did make clear a few days after his release. Gandhi stated unambiguously that he had adhered to non-violence when the August resolution was adopted by the Congress. He emphasized that since his call "do or die" was not meant for a violent struggle, he had no sympathy at all to the violent activites that took place as part of struggle. However, Gandhi was not prepared to condemn those who were engaged in these activities, for what led to the outbreak of violence on the part of the people was the brutal repression let loose by the government. Thus Gandhi rejected the demand of the authorities either to condemn those who indulged in the violent activities or to approve of these activities. While keeping those who were engaged in activities which may be called "violent" with the Congress, Gandhi rescued the Congress from the responsibility for the violent activities.

Gandhi was facing yet another serious problem. The August struggle had been suppressed and there was no question of its revival. Hence, it had become necessary to start negotiations with the authorities in one form or another. At the same time, the struggle could not be formally withdrawn in the background in which quite a large number of activists including the entire Working Committee were in jail. In the circumstances the question arose as to how the second anniversary of 9th August should be observed. Gandhi advised the Congressmen: "....mass civil disobedience cannot be offered now. But mass disobedience is one thing and individual

action in the sense of self-respect and liberty is wholly another. It is a universal duty for all time, the discharge of which requires no sanction, save that of one's own conscience." Further, he advised those who had gone underground to "discover themselves... by infoming the authorities of their movements and whereabouts." He also enjoined every one to spin and carry out other constructive activities on 9 th August. Thus Gandhi's policy was to maintain the popular support which was required to conduct negotiations with the authorities.

Meanwhile, he had started moves in the direction of negotiations. Soon after he was released form detention he held discussions with congressmen at the different levels and wrote a letter to the liberal leader M.R. Jayakar on 20th May in which he said:

> The country expects much from me. I am not at all happy. I feel even ashamed. I should not have fallen ill. I tried not to, but failed at length, I feel that they will imprison me as soon as I am declared free from the present weakness. And even if they do not arrest me, what can I do? I cannot withdraw the August Resolution. As you have very properly said, it is innocuous. You may differ about the sanction. It is the breath of life for me.[1]

This letter was not intended for publication, but it was published. The rulers properly utilized Gandhi's statement that he could not withdraw the August Resolution. They interpreted that Gandai was determined to continue the Quit India struggle.

But that was not the truth. Gandhi only indicated that he could not withdraw the resolution and the struggle in his individual capacity and that it had to be collectively decided by the Congress. in some of the letters he had sent from the jail he had expressed his eagerness to take a collective decision in this regard. But none of them turned out to be effective. Now he was trying to find if it was possible to start

1 D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma* Vol. 6, pp. 250-251.

negotiations through the liberal leaders like Jayakar and Sapru. When this effort also became ineffective, he wrote directly to the Viceroy on 17th June:

> Though there is little cause for it, the whole country and even many from outside expect me to make a decisive contribution to the general good. I am sorry to say my convalescence threatens to be fairly long. Even if I am quite well, I could do little or noting unless I know the mind of the Working Committee of the Congress. I pleaded as a prisoner for permission to see them. I plead now as a free man for such permission. If you will see me before deciding, I shall gladly go wherever you want me to, as soon as I am allowed by my medical advisers to undertake long distance travelling.[2]

Gandhi was undoubtedly knocking at the door of the authorities again to start negotiations with them. Similar efforts made on earlier occasions had often been friutful and often fruitless. The present attempt also turned fruitless. The Viceroy Lord Wavell in his reply dated 22nd June stated: "I feel a meeting between us at present could have no value and could only raise hopes which would be disappointed. If after your convalescence and on further reflection, you have a definite and constructive policy to propose for the furtherance of India's welfare, I shall be glad to consider."[3] Wavell also wrote that the same considerations also applied to Gandhi's request for permission to meet the members of the Working Committee. He reminded Gandhi of his "recent declaration of loyalty to the Quit India resolution" which he considered both unjust and impracticable. Thus the negotitation attempt failed once again. The Viceroy's letter was an expression of the government's attitude that the rulers were not prepared to have a discussion with Gandhi as long as he was not ready to unconditionally withdraw the Quit India resolttion. Nor would they allow a discussion between Gandhi and Congress leaders. In this

2. *Ibid*, p·251
3. *Ibid* p 251

exchange of correspondence can be found a continuation of the moves made by both the sides immediately before and after the adoption of the Quit India resolution. Gandhi maintained that it was impossible to take a decision either on the resolution or on the struggle in any manner other than as a first step of a negotiation which may be decided upon collectively by the Working Committe. The Viceroy maintained, on the other hand, that there was no question of a negotiation without first withdrawing the resolution and the struggle. These positions were irreconcilable with each other. However the Viceroy was conscious of the fact that the path of negotiation had to be taken eventually. That was why he expressed readiness to consider a "definite and constructive policy" that Gandhi might propose "on further reflection for the furtherance of India's welfare".

Behind the differences of opinion which found expressed in the letters exchanged between the two sides lay the evaluation of the political realities of those days made by each side. Gandhi had come to realize that since the Quit India struggle had been suppressed, negotiations would have to be conducted with the authorities and the struggle withdrawn as part of the negotiations without negatively affecting the organized strength of the Congress. The course of the war had also turned in favour of Britain and the final defeat of Germany and Japan had started to appear immanent. In the circumstances, the 1942 approach of starting a struggle to prepare the ground for negotiations had lost its relevance.

As for Britain, even if victory was achieved over Germany and Japan, India could not be takan back to the pre-war situation. When the war ended, a new situation would emerge which would make a negotiated settlement with Indian leaders including Gandhi and other Congress leaders inevitable.

In other words, both Gandhi, the spokesman of the bourgeois leadership represented by the Congress and the Viceroy, the representative of the British rulers, were preparing grounds for an imminent bargain. Gandhi made his own

moves to conduct the bargain in a situation most favourable to the leadership of the Indian bourgeoisie which he represented. Lord Wavell, on the other hand, was striving to protect as best as possible the British vested interests in the process of the transfer of power which was imminent. Each side proposed immediate steps necessary to preserve its own interests in accordance with its long-term perspectives.

In additian to the British rulers and the Congress, there was also the Muslim League on the political scene upholding the interests of the minority communities in general and those of the Muslim community in particular. The League which was only one among the Muslim organizations before the war had now transformed itself into a party representing a majority of the members of the Muslim community. The British rulers readily came forward to accept at least partly its demand for the formation of Pakistan and its 'two-nations theory'. It was in recognition of this reality that Gandhi tried to establish contact and negotiate with the League even while he was exchanging letters with the British authorities. To some extent these attempts were successful. Gandhi met Jinnah and personally held discussions with him. But as we are going to see in the section that follows, these discussions did not turn out to be successful.

II. GANDHI-JINNAH TALKS

We have noted earlier that while in prison, Gandhi had expressed the desire that the Congress and the League must consult with each other and take a unified stand on the future of India. Since the government had stood in the way of his efforts to contact Jinnah, he had to wait till his release from prison to proceed in that direction.

Meanwhile, Rajagopalachari had launched an extensive campaign placing emphasis on the need to arrive at an understanding between the Congress and the League. He had also put forward a certain proposal conceding the

League's demand while maintaining the fundamental unity of India to the extent possible. Gandhi's release from prison and the failure of his efforts to establish contact with the Viceroy had naturally led him to think the way Rajagopalachari had been visualizing.

In addition to Rajagopalachari, many organizations unrelated to both the Congress and the League and certain eminent individuals had also suggested talks between Gandhi and Jinnah. It was, in fact, the main contention of the Communist Party in its campaigns. All of them were of the opinion that a solution to the Indian problem could be found only if Gandhi and Jinnah came to an understanding with each other. Accordingly, on Gandhi's initiative they met in September 1944. Gandhi initiated the talk on the basis of Rajagopalachari's proposal which in effect conceded the demand raised by the League. The main features of the proposal were as follows.

After the end of the war, a commission would be set up to determine the contiguous districts in North-West and North-East India in which the Muslims were in an absolute majority and in the areas thus demarcated a plebiscite of all adults would decide whether or not they should be separated from Hindusthan. If the people in these areas decide to remain as a sovereign country separate from India, that decision would be brought into force. But, the people in the border districts will have the right to decide which country they should join.

Although this proposal was in effect an acceptance of the demand of the League, it did not satify the League leaders, because the right to secede from India was subject to a plebiscite. Besides, the plebiscite was to be held not in the Muslim majority *provinces* but in *districts*. Furthermore, the people in the border districts would have the right to join either country as they liked.

There was another noteworthy provision contained in Rajagopalachari's proposal. It was proposed that in the event of a division of India, the two countries would sign a

pact with regard to defence, commerce, transport and other essential services, meaning thereby that the governments of the two countries would function in cooperation with each other even after the partition. This provision was allergic to the League. For these reasons, the League demounced the proposal in strong terms. Jinnah described it as "the shadow and outer shell of Pakistan; a wounded, mutilated and moth-eaten Pakistan". The mouth-piece of the League, the *Dawn*, suggested that the principle of two independent sovereign countries should first be accepted and that once it was accepted, the borders should be demarcated by including in Pakistan as much areas as needed to make it economically viable. Thus arose a situation in which direct talks between Gandhi and Jinnah were not likely to bring about a settlement.

Yet the Indian people looked upon the talks with great expectations. The masses, though divided into the different communities, hoped that these two great leaders would together give shape to the future of India based on Hindu-Muslim unity. The Gandhi-Jinnah talks were given wide publicity by the newspapers, without understanding the meaning of the contents of the talks though.

However, the talks ended in great disappointment. The leaders ended where they began. The differences between them did not narrow down at all; they, in fact, widened. The target of Jinnah's criticism was not the contents of the proposal but Gandhi's efforts to maintain the unity of India. Gandhi's contention was that India had an individuality of her own and that she was a big family of which the Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and so on were members. Jinnah was fundamentally opposed to this idea and held that the Muslims did not only constitute a minority community, but they were a separate nation. Based on what was known as the 'two-nations theory', he visualized Pakistan as a completely independent and sovereign country.

Afther the talks broke off, Gandhi said that he was not at all agreeable to India's partition. Jinnah was, on the other hand, jubilant. He told a press correspondent that Gandhi

had "taught him the meaning of Pakistan". He said that to Gandhi's question if the defence and foreign policies of Pakistan would be opposed to India's, he had to simply say "yes".

Another important issue came up in the midst of the talks: Whom did Gandhi and Jinnah represent? Gandhi argued that he represented the Indian people as a whole and even a considerable section of the Indian Muslims. Jinnah, on the other hand, argued that he was the sole representative of the Muslim community and that Gandhi represented only the Hindus. This created a big commotion in the country. The masses rallied behind the Congress, Hindu Maha Sabha and other organizations believed that Jinnah and the Muslim League were an obstruction before Indian independence. Campaigns to this effect were carried on extensively throughout the country. The Muslim masses rallied behind the League blamed Gandhi who refused to accept the demand raised by the League and Jinnah for the failure of the talks. Thus, the talks which ought to have led to communal unity prepared the ground for communal frictions.

Rajagopalachari and others who spoke of the need to have talks between Gandhi and Jinnah went on repeating the same. They desired the differences to be narrowed down and a settlement reached between them. But things did not move in that direction. On the contrary, the differences led not only to the partition of India but also to communal clashes which took the lives of several thousands.

How did things come to such a pass? Since different answers have been given to this question, it is necessary to recapitulate the developments that took place ever since the emergence of the question of Muslim communal representation as described in the preceding chapters.

1. The ideologies and movements of modern nationalism developed in India with the growth of the bourgeoisie in the country. The Indian National Congress emerged and developed as an organization representing these ideologies and movements.

2. In the development of the bourgeoisie, the Muslims as a community was backward as compared to other communities. However retarded its growth, it also gave shape to ideologies and organizations of bourgeois nationalism with its specific characteristics. Thus, a few decades after the formation of the Congress, a political organization of the Muslim community, the Muslim League, emerged.

3. In the progress of Indian politics following this, the Congress and the League developed in parallel. The League rose as an organization capable of consoldating the Muslim community by challenging both the British government and the Congress in proportion to growth of the capability of the Congress to fight for Indian independance by challenging the British.

4. The provincial ministries constituted after the 1937 elections and the war which broke out in 1939 strengthened both the Congress and the League. The Congress ministries that remained in office for about two and a half years and the agitations conducted following the resignation of the ministries which culminated in the Quit India struggle broadened the mass base of the Congress. Similarly, the continuation of the League-led ministries in certain provinces after the resignation of the Congress ministries and the agitations for Pakistan which went in parallel with the Quit India struggle increased the strength of the League several folds. When the Quit India struggle was suppressed and the efforts of Gandhi to move in the direction negotiations failed, the balance of power between the Congress and League turned in favour of the latter.

5. As a result of all this, in 1943-44 the League was politically in a more favourable position than the Congress. Rajagopalachari's proposal and the talks Gandhi held with Jinnah on the basis of this porposal were,in fact, a recognition of this political reality. Jinnah tried to make the best use of this favourable position to achieve his objective.

6. The economic reality that underlay the political growth of the League needs particular mention. The bourgeois class

which emerged within the Muslim community continued to grow at an accelerated pace during the war. The formation of ministries led by the League in Bengal in which was situated one of the important industrial centers, and in the strategically important province of Punjab helped the growth of the bourgeoisie among the Muslims. Having thus tasted political power in the provinces, they became convinced of the absolute need to have a central government under their control. They began to perceive that a sovereign state including the full control over defence and foreign policies was necessary for their further development, rather than two states cooperating with each other as proposed by Rajagopalachari.

7. Muhammad Ali Jinnah was the real symbol of the growth of this new bourgeois class. Started as a liberal in the early days of Indian politics, he, unlike other leaders of the Muslim community, worked for the interests of the entire Indian bourgeoisie until the Round Table Conferences. This liberal political leader who was the most ardent nationalist of all the leaders of the Muslim community finally turned himself into the best representative of Muslim sectarianism, who gave the call for a direct action on its behalf. This change in Jinnah's political life can be evaluated only in the light of the constant growth of the bourgeois section among the Muslims and the resultant conflicts between the Muslim and non-Muslim bourgeoisie.

Many eminent personalities like Rajagopalachari and political parties like the Communist Party did not take into consideration this historical reality while looking upon the Gandhi-Jinnah talks as a devine cure for the Congress-League conflicts. That was why the talks held with great expectations disappointed them.

III. PAKISTAN AND THE NATIONAL PROBLEM

Although the Communist Party was among those who wanted Gandhi and Jinnah to reach a settlement between

themselves, the approach of the Party towards the demand for Pakistan was different from that of others. Leaders like Rajagopalachari thought that since it was impossible to confront the British rulers without a settlement between the Congress and the League, it was necessary to accept in part the League's demand and create an atmosphere for cooperation between the two sectors into which India might be divided. It was because of this that Rajagopalachari proposed to hold a plebiscite in the contiguous districts and to make provisions for co-operation with regard to the administration of defence and so on in the event of a division of the country. The aim was to solve the political problems arising out of Hindu-Muslim disputes.

The Communists were not examining the future of India within the narrow confines of the Hindu-Muslim problems. They had understood that the fact that the people of India belonged to different religions was only one aspect of the political reality of India. They drew the attention of the people to an equally important fact, the fact that the population of India was composed of different nationalities speaking different languages, each with its own specific socio-cultural life and that each such nationality was further divided into different religions and castes. This was the political reality to which the Communist Party pointed.

The Indian National leadership had accepted this reality at least to an extent. Consequently, as the Congress began to develop as a mass movement, the provincial Congress committees were organized on the basis of provinces demarcated on linguistic considerations, rather than on the basis of the provinces artifically created by the British rulers. These considerations had reflected on their understanding with regard to the future Indian administrative set-up. However, their approach in this regard was partial and inadequate. If the idea of linguistic province had to be brought into practice, the distinction between British India and native (princely) states had to be eleminated and the people speaking the same language had to be brought into one province. This entails

an uncompromising fight against the authocratic rules in the princely states and redistribution of the composite provinces like Bombay and Madras and the princely states like Hyderabad on linguistic basis. The Congress was prepared to do neither of these. The Communits, on the other hand, demanded implementation of the concept of linguistic provinces in its full sense. In this the Communists were aided and led by the Leninist perspective of nationalities. As explained by Lenin and Stalin, development of capitalism leads to the development of nationalities with linguistic and cultural homogeneity and economic and political identity. The old composite states and empires disintegrate and in their place emerge new nationalities with their own states and nations.

This was what had happend in the 19th century Europe and the same process would take place in India and in other Asian countries in the 20th century. The tendency of the formation of linguistic provinces as an integral part of the bourgeois national movement in India and the encouragement it received from the Congress were perceived by the Communists as a manifestation of this historical reality.

Viewed form this perspective, it can be seen that neither the League's demand for Pakistan, nor the slogan of indivisibility of India raised by the nationalists including Gandhi and Rajagopalachari were in correspondence with historical realities. It would be clear that both Jinnah's theory that Hindus and Muslims constituted two nations and the argument of Gandhi and others are untenable. The problem can be solved neither by the formation of two nations of Hindusthan and Pakistan as demanded by Jinnah nor by preserving the indivisibility of India as demanded by Hindu nationalists. The Communists pointed out that the concept of Indian independence would be complete and clear only if it was accepted that in India there were different nationalities each of which, divided among different religions though, was united in linguistic and social life and that the future administrative set-up of India had to be devised by offering opportunities for the free development of each of these nationalities. They also

pointed out that the Indian people composed of different nationalities were politically united for historical reasons. United, artificially though, under the British rule, the struggle against the British rule consolidated the national unity of the Indian people. The continuance of the national unity which emerged through the anti-imperialist struggle would help the further progress of the people after independence. Standing united in the post-independence national reconstruction, in builduing a new democratic progressive India, would help the develoment of each of the nationalities.

However, if the national unity which began to get strengthened during the freedom struggle had to be consolidated, the concept of linguistic province had to be provided with a new revolutionary content. The existing provinces and princely states had to be reorganized into linguistic provinces with maximum autonomy. The Communists analyzed the political future of Indian on this perspective while a clash was taking place between Jinnah's 'two-nations theory' and the 'one-nation theory' of the non-Muslim nationalists. They presented the problem in the form of a solution to the problems that arose out of this clash. So, the people naturally thought it as one that supported the demand for Pakistan.

The political set-up visualized by the Communists was, in fact, fundamentally different from the idea of Pakistan. They refused to distinguish between "Hindu India" and "Muslim India" on the basis of religion. They pointed to the fact that even if India was to be divided as demanded by the Muslim League, the resulting two countries would have to face complex nationality problems.

Later events have proved the correctness of this analysis. Pakistan which was considered indivisible was divided into two resulting in the emergence of a separate sovereign republic. In the residual Pakistan, the Beluchis, Pathans and the Sindhis began to fight against Punjabi domination. In India fierce clashes took place on the questions of official language and languages of education. In both India and Pakistan the problems of nationalities created explosive situations.

This, however, does not mean that the approach of the Communist Party towards Pakistan was free form errors. For one thing, the Communist had been campaigning in those days in such a situation as would have helped, at least indirectly, the argument of Jinnah that the Hindus and Muslims were two nations. The Party did not endeavour to expose sufficiently forcefully and uncompromisingly the League stand that borders between the two countries should be determined on the basis of religion. This enabled the opponents of the party to make propaganda that it helped the demand of the League for Pakistan and the subsequent partition of India. The impression spread even among the friends of the Party that Pakistan was the manifest form of the Leninist theory of nationalities.

The Party's approach had suffered from another and a more serious weekness. It failed to imbibe the truth in its full sense that Rajagopalachari who prepared the ground for the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, Gandhi who initiated the talks on the basis of his proposals, and Jinnah who skilfully utilized these talks and the series of events that followed were all bourgeois political leaders striving to bargain with the British rulers and protect their own class interests. The Party's campaigners and journals tried, as Rajagopalachari and other national leaders did, to present the Gandhi-Jinnah talks as a devine cure for the desease that had afflicted India. The Party failed to expose the politics of bargain practised by the leaderships of both the Congress and the League by strengthening the morale of those among the ranks of the independence movement who were opposed to compromise and by unifying them. The Party also failed to give sufficient warning to the people on the political developments that were to take place in the next few years.

In a few years after the Gandhi-Jinnah talks two mutually contradictory forces appeared on the Indian political scene, the revolutionary social forces fighting uncompromisigly against the British rulers and the autocratic rulers of the princely states and against all other vested interests on the one

side and the native bigwigs trying to protect their own class interests by continuously bargaining with the British government and the different political parties in India on the other. The communists ought to have firmly stood with the former forces. It was the demand of the latter that Gandhi and Jinnah must together find a solution to India's national problems. The main weakness of the approach of the Communist Party was that without sufficiently understanding the full import of this demand, it supported in effect the approach of the politicians of compromise.

Nevertheless, the Communist Party made invaluable contribution to Indian politics by campaigning among the people that India was a multi-national country and that the unity of India could be maintained only under the condition of free development of all the nationalities. The activities of the Communists in that period led later to the emergence of powerful movements like the 'Aikya Kerala', 'Vishala Andhra', 'Samyukta Maharashtra', etc., for the redistribution of provinces and the princely states on linguistic basis.

It must be stated that in each of these movements there emerged different views and tendencies, as a result of which contradictions developed in them. Each of these movements had been considerably influenced by narrow bourgeois nationalism leading to clashes and disputes over borders between neighbouring nationalities. The Communists were able to stand firmly against these wrong tendencies because they had been trying right in 1944-45 to examine the problems of nationalities in India as a fight against imperialism and feudalism and for democracy. The theoretical and practical work conducted by the Party in those days laid the seeds to a number of movements and struggles like the *tebhaga* movement in Bengal, the Telangana struggle in Andhra, and the Punnapra-Vayalar struggle in Kerala in the later years.

IV. THE DESAI-LIAQUAT TALKS

The failure of Gandhi's attempt to start negotiation with the Viceroy and the Gandhi-Jinnah talks that went parallel to it had brought the Indian politics to a dead end. In the meantime, the World War had reached its final stage. With the Soviet counter-attack from the east and that of the Anglo-American forces from the west, Germany had been moving to the final defeat. After the defeat of Germany, Japan would not be able to hold out for long. The question came up before the Viceroy's government in India and the British government in England as to what had to be done after the war came to an end. The situation was such that something had to be done without waiting for the end of the war.

Viceroy Lord Wavell and the Secretary of State L.S. Amery were in full agreement over the point that while steps would have to be taken to transfer power to Indians soon after the termination of the war, the interests of the British capitalists in India and those of Indian bourgeois-landlord classes had to be protected to the extent possible and that in preparing the plan to transfer power, the Hindu-Muslim problems and the Congress-League conflicts had to be skilfully utilized. But where to begain? On this question there were two opinions.

Wavell suggested that a government be constituted at the Centre with the participation of the Congress and the League and the ministries in the former Congress majority provinces be revived. If this was done first then only the final stage of the war could be fought effectively. He also suggested that this was necessary to deal with the famine and other economic problems in the country. The government which would thus be constituted should also create the necessary set-up for framing the future constitution of India. The Wavell Plan also envisaged equal representation for Hindus and Muslims and one representative each for the Scheduled Castes and the Sikh community in the Central

ministry. The Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief would also be members of the ministry,

The Secretary of State for India, Amery, did not agree with this plan. Would the League have the right to nominate all the Muslim members? What was meant by equal representation for the Hindus and the Muslims? He also doubted if the ministry would not get paralyzed if members of mutually irreconsilable parties were nominated to the ministry. Amery therefore suggested the formation of a body with representation to all parties except the Congress and the League to frame the future constitution.

Wavell, on the other hand, was of the opinion that any scheme by excluding the Congress and the League would not correspond with reality. Meanwhile, Amery suggested that the British government should declare that since the Dominion Status had been granted to India, the British Parliament would no longer enact legislation for India. This was in a way an acceptance of the slogan of 'Quit India'.

However, neither Wavell's or Amery's scheme was accepted. On account of the difference of opinion between the two, the British government remained indifferent.

During the same period, a committee had been appointed by a number of non-party political leaders under the leadership of Sapru and with the backing of Gandhi to examine the problems relating to India's future administrative set-up. In April 1945, the committee submitted its report in which it proposed: formation of a national government at the Centre, creation of a constitution-making body with equal representation for Muslims and Hindus except the Scheduled Castes, general constituencies for all communities in place of separate constituencies for Muslims, Christians and others, refrain from partitioning India, implementation of only those decisions of the constitution-making body which obtained a three-fourths majority.

These proposals became the target of opposition from both the Muslim and non-Muslim political leaders. The opposition of the League was against the provision for general

constituencies.The non-Muslim political leaders opposed the provision for equal representation for Hindus and Muslims.

While the deliberations of the Sapru Committee were going on, another important development was taking place. We are refering here to the talks held between the Leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly Bhulabhai Desai and Liaquat Ali Khan, the Deputy Leader of the Muslim League Party in the Central Assembly, and to the proposals that emerged from these talks. The talks took place in such a way that it was difficult to say exactly what had happened. The Congress and League spokesmen had different stories to say. The then General Secretary of the Congress stated:

> At the instance of the Viceroy, in January 1945, it is believed Bhulabhai had talks with Liaquat Ali to find ways and means to end the deadlock and pay the way for the formation of an interim national government consisting of the members of the Congress and the League in the Central Assembly. Bhulabhai met Liaquat Ali and they discussed the proposal for forming the national Government under the 1935 Act, consisting of an equal number of members of the Congress and the League. The representatives of the minorities would be inducted into the Cabinet by mutual consent. Though such a Government, when formed, would function within the framework of the 1935 Act, it was to be clearly understood that any measure not passed by the Assembly would not be enforced by the Governor-General under his special powers. But if the Governor-General sought to interfere, the Government would resign. Bhulabhai asked Liaquat Ali if this agreement had been seen and approved by Jinnah. He answered in the affirmative. Gandhiji has cautioned Bhulabhai to be careful and to get everything in black and white and signed. However, Bhulabhai in his eagerness to bring about a settlement did not quite take these precautions. The result was that, though there was a draft of the agreement, it was afterwards discovered that Liaquat Ali had not initialled the copy that was with Bhulabhai. Later,

Liaquat Ali declared that there was no agreement and that he had not consulted Jinnah. Thus this effort failed.[4]

Liaquat Ali had another story to tell. According to him, Bhulabhai Desai met him after the winter session of the Central Assembly and informally discussed with him the economic and other problems being faced by the people in the war-time situation. In the midst of this talk, Desai asked him what the League's opinion would be towards forming an interim government at the Centre. Liaquat explained the attitude of the League in the light of the resolutions adopted by the League from time to time and told him that the League was prepared to examine any proposal that might come with a view to resolve the complex problems of the day. Desai met him again in January and handed him certain draft proposals with regard to the formation of an interim government at the Centre. Desai asked him to keep the proposals strictly confidential and told that efforts would be made to make changes in the structure of the Central government on the basis of the draft proposals. According to Liaquat Ali, Desai told him that he would meet the Viceroy and Jinnah in this connection. In Liaquat's opinion, these proposals were worth forming the basis for a discussion, but in order to proceed in that direction, Gandhi himself had to handle it or it should have his approval and open support, because in the absence of the Working Committee, he was the only person who could speak on behalf of the Congress. Liaquat made it clear that this was his personal opinion and not that of the League. He advised Desai that if he felt that he could speak authoritatively on behalf of the Congress, he should meet the League President, Jinnah.

Despite these divergent versions, it is clear that both the Congress and the League were in a state of mind to utilize every opportunity to arrive at a settlement between themselves. Gandhi was not opposed to the efforts being made

4. J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi His Life and Thought*, New Delhi, Publication Division, Government of India, 1970, pp. 221-222.

by Bhulabhai Desai. He only wanted things to get a definite shape in the form of a clearly worded document signed by the parties concerned. In the eyes of Kripalani, the fault of Bhulabhai was that he did not follow the advice of Gandhi in this regard. Liaquat, on the other hand, only wanted either Gandhi or Bhulabhai himself representing the Congress to meet Jinnah. He advised Bhulabhai that a formal discussion between the Congress and the League should be conducted by the authentic spokesmen of the respective parties. In other words, the difference of opinion was not on the contents of the draft proposals presented at the discussions, but on the procedure of the discussions. Both sides were eager to find a solution to the political deadlock.

Generally speaking, the proposals which attracted the leaders of both the Congress and the League and which they wanted to handle carefully were based on the proposals suggested by Lord Wavell. For these proposals also included a new interim goverment at the Centre with equal representation for the minority communities like the Scheduled Castes and the Sikhs, membership of the Commander-in-Chief in the Cabinet and so on. It was also proposed that as soon as the formation of the ministry, members of the Congress Working Committee should be released from prison. The essence of the proposals was that the Congress and the League were prepared to participate in the proposed set-up.

The leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League understood that these proposals, if accepted and implemented, would increase their strength. The Congress would not only regain the ministries in the provinces which it had lost following the outbreak of the war but also would become a partner in the Central ministry. For the League, it would gain the recognition as a party equal to the Congress, which could be utilized to work more vigorously to achieve Pakistan.

However, neither of them could accept these proposals, for each of them wondered how the other side would utilize the new situation in the event of implementing these proposals.

Gandhi suspected if this was not the first step towards the formation of Pakistan. The League leaders, on the other hand, suspected Bulabhai Desai conducting the negotiations while Gandhi remaining in the background. Above all, both sides suspected if the proposal would be of any use in the background in which a majority of the Congress Working Committee members remained in jail and the British attitude towards Indian problems remained unchanged. This was how the talks broke off.

27

THE WAVELL PLAN

I. THE SIMLA CONFERENCE

Within four months after the Desai-Liaqat talks broke off, Germany surrendered to the Allied forces. With this the argument of the British that conceding India's demand for independence during the war would defeat the British war efforts became irrelevant. In the circumstance, they realized the need to give up their adament attitude and to take the initiative to resolve the political crisis in India. In Britain, the war-time coalition government collapsed and the Conservative and Labour parties started competing with each other for political power. It was in this situation that the Viceroy was called to London. Since the war was still going on and also since there was a difference of opinion between the conservative and Labour leaders on Indian problems, decisions were delayed and as a consequence, the Viceroy had to prolong his stay in London. Finally, wavell's earlier plan was accepted in a new form.

The next problem was how to form a government at the centre as envisaged in the Wavell Plan.

It was decided to convene a conference of the principal political parties and communities in India as a preliminary to the formation of the government as soon as Wavell returned to India. Accordingly, the British government made an announcement that a conference would be held in Simla on 25th June 1945 to discuss matters relating to the formation of a government at the Centre.

Among those to be invited to the conference would include the Chief Ministers of the existing ministries in the provinces and the last Chief Ministers who were in office in those provinces in which the Governor's rule was in force. That is, since the Chief Ministers in the provinces in which ministries were existing were either League leaders or non-League Muslim leaders and all the former Chief Ministers in the provinces in which Governor's rule were Congressmen, these two parties would be represented in the conference. Others would include the leader of the Congress Party and the Deputy Leader of the League Party in the Central Legislative Assembly and also Gandhi and Jinnah, the supreme leaders of the Congress and the League, respectively. In addition, there would be one delegate each representing the Sikh community and the Seheduled Castes. As soon as the announcement on the conference was made, the members of the Congress Working Committee were released from prison.

However, Gandhi wrote to the Viceroy informing him that in place of himself, the Congress would be represented by the Congress President, Abul Kalam Azad and that he and the members of the Congress Working Committee would be present at Simla during the conference. This change was, in fact, the beginning of a dispute which was repeatedly raised later in the proceedings of the conference.

Jinnah's argument was that the Congress did not represent the Indian people as a whole and that it was the organization of Hindus and that too, of caste Hindus. If Azad attended the conference, this argument would be falsified and

consequently it was necessary for the League to make out that the Congress was represented by Gandhi in the conference. The design of the British was to weaken the position of the Congress as ever before by conceding the claim of the League. Wavell's proposal was part of this design. But, as Gandhi made it clear that neither he nor the Working Committe was ready to accept this proposal, Wavell was compelled to invite Azad as the President of the Congress. Besides, there was Dr. Khan Sahib from the NWF Province among the former Chief Ministers. Punjab Chief Minister Khizr Hyat Khan was not a League man. Thus, Jinnah had to participate in a conference to which these non-League Muslim leaders were also the delegates.

However, the Congress was unable to consistently adhere the stand taken by Gandhi. Although Azad as Congress President represented the organization, it deputed Pandit Pant to hold private negotiations with Jinnah outside the conference. Gandhi and other Congress leaders knew that Azad holding private negotiations with Jinnah as Congress President would do more harm than good.

The same problem was brought up in the formal session of the conference in a different from. According to Jinnah, the Congress was the representative of ninety percent of the Hindus, while there were ninety percent or more Muslims in the League. Therefore, he insisted that there should be no non-League Muslim ministers in the proposed ministry. In the list submitted by the Congress to the Viceroy the names of Abul Kalam Azad and Asaf Ali were included. The first session of the conference ended without arriving at a decision.

In order to break the deadlock, the Viceroy proposed a new formula. He would prepare a list of names whom he considered necessery to be included in the ministry and show the relevant part of the list to the leader of each party. A final decision would be taken after holding discussions with all concerned. Since there was no alternative left, this proposal was accepted. But the list prepared by the Viceroy was not acceptable to Jinnah. For, although the names of

Azad and Asaf Ali did not figure in the list, it contained the name of a representative of the Unionist Party of Punjab. As such, if the list was accepted by Jinnah, it would invalidate his claim that the League was the sole representative of the Muslims. Finally, when the last session of the conference was held on 14th July, the Viceroy declared that the discussions had failed for the time being. He added that he would not blame any party which had participated in the conference except himself for the failure.

The role played by the Viceroy and the leaders of the Congress and the League throughout the conference had been criticized by many quarters. In Britain itself the Viceroy had been blamed for his unwillingness to continue discussions on the basis of his own list when Jinnah rejected it. These critics pointed out that had Wavell stood firm on his position, Jinnah would have climbed down. There were indications to the effect that the influence of the League in the NWF Province, Punjab and Bengal was weaker as compared to the non-Muslim majority provinces and that certain top Muslim leaders like Liaquat Ali Khan were opposed to Jinnah's adament attitude.

The approach adopted by the Congress following the failure of the Simla Conference is noteworthy. President Azad disagreed with the statement of the Viceroy owning the responsibilty for the failure of the Conference. He and other Congress leaders stated that the League and Jinnah were responsible for its failure. Gandhi, on the other hand, stated that since the gulf between the Congress and the League and between Hindus and Muslims had become unbridgeable, the mediation of the British was necessary. Although this statement created surprise and anger among the people including Gandhi's followers, none of them entertained any hope about the future of India. They felt helpless before the obstinacy of Jinnah and Britain's encouragement to it.

The critics of Wavell including the leaders of the Congress and other non-Muslim organizations believed that if Wavell had stood firm on his proposal, the partition of

India could have been avoided. They reasoned that if the League had to remain without sharing power while the Congress remained in power, a sense of helplessness would have spread among the leadership and ranks of the League leading it to accept the proposal of Wavell.

This cannot be dismissed as meaningless. A section of the Muslim leaders in Punjab and Bengal had felt apprehended that if the slogan of Pakistan was to come into effect, their provinces would be partitioned as part of partition of India. Therefore they had been trying to keep their provinces away from the agitation for Pakistan. If there had been an indication that the British would not accept any demand raised by Jinnah, the Unionist Party in Punjab and the Krishak Praja Party in Bengal could have opposed more vigorously the demand for the partition of India. The very existence of a Congress ministry in the Muslim majority NWF Province was a weak point for the League.

However, as we have indicated above, the Indian politics had, in general, been divided into two. Although there were large sections of people in the Muslim majority provinces opposed to the partition of India, the demand of Pakistan had started to be raised all over India. A new (bourgeois) class interested in this was growing among the Muslims. The League leadership had been able to fan the fire of anti-Congress feelings among the masses to protect the interests of this class.

It is not difficult to find that even if it was possible to create a Muslim political leadership parallel to the League, the British rulers would have been the real beneficiaries of such an exercise. The Muslim leaders, whom the people knew were attached to the British, appearing on the scene against the Muslim League would not affect the strength of the League. The purpose of Wavell's proposal to form a government with representation to the Unionist Party was, in fact, to bring such people to the scene. Instead of exposing this as part of an imperialist design, the Congress leaders were praising the "neutrality of Wavell". This was what was

meant by the statements of Azad and Gandhi that the person responsible for the failure of the conference was Jinnah and not Wavell and that the British would have to mediate in the dispute between the Congress and the League.

II. "COMMUNISTS IN THE OTHER CAMP"

With the release of the Congressmen from prison before and after the Simla Conference, the Congress which had been remaining inactive for the past three years became active again. Jawaharlal Nehru provided the Congress workers with a new theme for political propaganda, the theme that while the Congerssmen were engaged in a grim fight against the British government, the communists were in the other camp. This strengthend the anti-communist feeling which was widespread among the ranks of the Congress who had been conducting secret campaigns while their leaders were in jail. Thus, Nehru who unambiguously proclaimed a decade ago that there were only two paths open before the world, the paths of communism and fascism, and that he chose the path of communism, now turned himself into a top ranking leader of anti-communist propaganda. The "crime" committed by the communist was that they adhered to the stand adopted by Nehru and Azad until the adoption of the Quit India resolution by the Congress and accordingly carried on political activities during the Quit India struggle with the view that nothing should be done which might be helpful to the Japanese and German aggressors! This may sound strange.

But, if one examines the class content of Nehru's "left-wing" politics, it can be seen that there is nothing stange about the transformation Nehru had undergone in a decade. As Gandhi before the Lahore Congress and Birla and other big capitalists immediately after the Lucknow Congress had shown, Nehru was a bourgeois leader prone to be "tamed" by Gandhi and capitalists like Birla. Nehru's

"left-wing" politics was helpful to draw workers and other toiling people to the bourgeois politics of the Congress.

Besides, the Congress Socialist Party under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan was a "socialist" party functioning within the general framework of the descipline of the Congress. The Communist Party which had just been reorganized after freeing itself from the repercussions of repressions for a long time and from inner party rivalries had not yet been a strong party. Thus, in the 1930s when a strong left movement was not in existence, Nehru's "left-wing" politics would not pause danger either to the economic interests of the capitalists or to the political leadership of Gandhi and other right-wing leaders. Consequently, Nehru, who was subservient to Gandhi's leadership, did not feel that the Communist Party was a dangerous force.

But the growth the Communist Party had achieved during the last couple of years was contary to the expectations of Nehru and other leaders. Despite the fact that it had to face strong opposition from a majority of the non-communist anti-imperialists at a time when it had to swim against the popular current of the Quit India struggle, the Communist Party had risen to the position of a party standing firmly on its own. The Communist Party had acquired the status as the only party enjoying popular support widely in Kerala, Andhra and Bengal, and locally in many other provinces, as a party which deserved to be considered as a political force capable of challenging the Congress in future. The growth of the Party which had considerable influence among the different sections of the people like workers, peasants and students had become a threat to the Congress.

It must be specifically stated that in addition to this political propaganda carried out aganist the communists, they also took certain organized actions. It was in this period that efforts were made by them to establish trade unions and student organizations subservient to the Congress politics as against the mass organizations like the AITUC and AISF in

which the communists had a leading role. Efforts made to establish their own organizations by disrupting these mass organizations which were dealing with problems of life of the people above party politics and accepting the general outlook of national independence, democracy and socialism brought the Congressmen later to maintain without any compunction that class organizations of workers, peasants and other sections of the masses were the "feeder organizations" of the Congress. The disunity which we find today in the trade unions and other mass organizations is the evil results of the efforts being made by other parties to establish their own "feeder organizations" following the footsteps of the Congress.

This is undoubtedly a political approach which is against the interests of the working class and other toiling masses. If trade unions, peasant organizations and other mass organizations had to function as feeder organizations of this or that political party, the entire mass organizations would become subservient to bourgeois-petty bourgeois politics. For this reason, communists have always raised the slogan of one union in one industry. The formation of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) under the leadership of Sardar Patel in 1945-46 constited the first act of cutting at the roots of this principle.

We have noted earlier the formation of a peculiar kind of workers' association in Ahmedabad a quarter of a century prior to this directly under the leadership of Gandhi. It was formed as an 'apolitical' organization dealing only with the economic problems of the workers. But even the Congress leaders in other places were not prepared to accept this theory. On the contrary, many prominent Congress leaders had played important roles in the formation and growth of the AITUC which was an organization based on an anti-imperialist and pro-socialist political approach. By 1935-36, Nehru himself came up with the proposal to strengthen the Congress by giving the independently functioning mass organizations like trade unions and peasant organizations

collective affiliation to the Congress. At this stage the right-wing Congress leaders raised the argument that such mass organizations should function subject to the discipline of the Congress. We have described earlier the clash which took place between the right and left wings in the Congress in the 1930s on this issue.

By the end of the Second World War and of the Quit India struggle, the Communist Party with an independent working class outlook and a programme of action challenging the political leadership of the Congress had spread all over the country along with a number of mass organizations on which the Party had considerable influence. It became clear that forming apolitical mass organizations as did Gandhi in the earlier years or bringing under the leadership of the Congress the mass organizations handling left-wing politics as Nehru tried to do later was impracticable. The Congress leaders feared that mass organizations with leftist orientation, in the activities of which had Congressmen also participated, was dangerous to the political existence of the Congress. Thus the Congress leaders came forward to form the INTUC and the National Students Organization.

The political background of the formation of these organizations is notable. The historical role played by the Soviet Union in the Second World War had helped to spread the ideology of socialism. Among the younger generation who had entered the Quit India struggle responding to the call given by Gandhi and Bose, there were wide-spread feelings of sympathy to communism and hatred towards communists in India. The Congressmen with these feelings as well as the communists were working among the masses in accordance with their respective outlooks.

The economic situation that developed soon after the end of the war was such that it provided opportunities to all political parties and groups to carry on their activities extensively. The famine which broke out during and after the war, the increase in the prices of essential articles, the decrease in the real income of wage eaners and similar other

hardships gave impetus to organized struggles of workers and middle class employees. The food scarcity that prevailed during the war became acute in 1945. According to the estimate of the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, about 100 million people were affected by scarcity. At the same time, a small minority consisting of landlords and wholesale merchants made enormous profits by hoarding and black-marketing. People in thousands staged demonstrations and resorted to other forms of agitation in protest against scarcity, price rise and black-marketing.

The existence and the activities of trade unions and other mass organizations which, though above party politics, had been considerably influenced by the left political forces, would no doubt bring about a political situation unfavourable to the bourgeois leadership of the Congress and to the economic interests of the bourgeois-landlord classes. The only way for the Congress to avoid such a situation was to stand in the forefront in giving shape to this mounting mass protests. The INTUC created by Sardar Patel and other Congress leaders and the rhetorics of Nehru that hoarders and black marketeers should be hanged on the lamp post were intended to serve this purpose.

In carrying out this scheme it was convenient to concentrate attacks on the communists. This was because the socialists who had earned prestige through their participation in the Quit India struggle and other leftist Congressmen who were the followers of Subhas Bose were most revengeful towards the communists and any political offensive against the communists would be welcomed by them. The Congressmen would get the support of these leftists in forming rival trade unions and mass organizations against those under the leadership of the communists.

The anti-communist political campaign started by Nehru and other top Congress leaders with the support of the socialists and the supporters of Subhas Bose and their scheme to split mass organizations created difficulties for the communists comparable to those they had to face during the Quit

India struggle. Once again they were facing a situation in which they had to move against the current of anti-imperialist sentiment of a considerable section of the people led by the Congress.

However, there was a difference in the conditions then and now. Then the Congress was engaged in an open anti-imperialist struggle. The communists had to work in those days by keeping themselves away from that struggle and cautioning the people that entering into that struggle would be suicidal. That was not the situation now. The Congress now was engaged not in an anti-imperialist struggle but in an effort to negotiate with the imperialists and achieve something less than full independence. Nehru who was shouting that the "communists were in the other camp" and rallying the people against them was now proceeding from there straight into the viceregal palace in Simla. All the prominent Congress leaders including Gandhi were engaged in a bargain with the representatives of the British government.

The fundamental contradiction between the socialists and the supporters of Bose who could not emotionally adjust with the politics of bargain, on the one hand, and the Gandhi-Nehru group, on the other, could not but surface before long. The communists, on the other hand, were in a position in which they could involve themselves fully in the rising mass upsurge. The repercussions of this could not but appear in Indian politics in the near future.

II. SECOND EDITION OF WAVELL PLAN

The Simla Conference broke off at a time when important developments were taking place in the world. As we have noted, the conference was held after the defeat of Germany. Before long Japan too surrendered marking the complete defeat of the fascist and militarist powers in the Second World War. In Britain, one of the anti-fascist powers, the

Labour Party came to power defeating the conservatives in the elections.

As for India, this political change in Britain did not produce any immediate effect. Attlee's Labour Party had all along been with Churchill's conservative Party in dealing with the Quit India struggle, in calling the Simla Conference and in all the policies and approaches towards India. But it was generally regarded that the Labour Party's policies were relatively more favourable to India. Therefore, the Labour Party had the obligation to live up to the expectation arising out of this general belief. Consequently, the British government took steps to restart negotiations with Indian political leaders soon after the end of the Simla Conference, Lord Wavell was called to London and after consultations with the British government he made a declaration on 18th September. One new element contained in the declaration was the government's intention to immediately hold elections to the Central and Provincial Assemblies.

The elections to the existing Central Assembly were held in 1935 and to the Provincial Assemblies in 1937, and the life of these legislative bodies were extended considering the war-time situations. Therefore the decision to hold elections now was quite natural. However, the election contemplated now was not an ordinary routine one; it was, rather, considered as a means to find a solution to the constitutional problems on which the Simla Conference failed to take a decision. In the declaration, Wavell stated that it was the intention of the British government to constitute as soon as possible a constitution-making body. Soon after the elections, discussions would be held with the representatives of the provincial legislatures to ascertain their opinions in this regard. Discussions would also be held with the representatives of the princely states to find out in what way they would be able to participate in the proposed constitution-making body.

Wavell said that the government was going to examine the question of signing a pact between Britain and India. There

were also the problems relating to the day-to-day administration of the country in the midst of making arrangements for transfer of power and India's participation in promoting a new international order. For these purposes, actions would be taken soon after the declaration of the result of elections to provincial legislatures to constitute an Executive Council at the Centre.

Clearly, this was a continuation of the negotiations conducted by Cripps in 1942 and by Wavell in June-July 1945. Here also there are two central problems for which solutions had to be found. First, what should be the nature of India's future constitution and what would be the status of the different communities including the Hindus and Muslims in it? Second, what should be the form and structure of the government which should be in existence in India while framing the future constitution?

While the major problem that stood in the way of finding a solution to these questions during the Cripps mission was the difference of opinion between the British government and the Congress, it was the difference of opinion between the Congress and the League that led to the failure of the Simla Conference. There was serious difference of opinion between the Congress and the League with regard to the proposals making a distinction between Hindu majority provinces and Muslim majority provinces and specifying their respective roles in the constitution-making processes. There was a wide gap between the Congress which was trying its utmot to keep India undivided and the League which was trying to ensure that the constitution-making process would proceed in such a way as would lead to the formation of Pakistan. Similar difference of opinion on the question of the formation of the interim government as well as on the share which each party should get in it. These were the differencess that led the Simla Conference to break down.

Now the government had come up with the proposal to hold elections as a solution to this problem. The result would test the popular support of the Congress and the League.

Besides, the next series of discussions on constitution-making would be held not with the leaders of the Congress and the League but with the representatives of provincial legislatures which would come into being following the elections to the legislatures of the Muslim and non-Muslim majority provinces. Consequently other parties and political forces would also be able to exert influence in the discussions on constitution-making. If the Muslim League had the support of ninety percent of the Muslim masses, as it claimed it did, then the League would be able to carry matters in such a way as would lead to the formation of Pakistan through the representatives of the Muslim majority provinces. On the contrary, if the claim made by the Congress that it enjoyed the support of a considerable section among the Muslims, it would be able to preserve the integrity of India with the help of the representatives of the Muslim majority provinces. Thus, the questions of framing the future constitution of India and the formation of an interim government were defered to a later time after the elections.

As for the Congress, this was a totally unsatisfactory and deplorable step. According to Pattabhi Sitaramayya, the Viceroy's declation had not recognized India's independence. For another six months ministries in the provinces would not be formed. Nor would the government at the Centre be reorganized. A corrupt admistration would continue when the country was passing though a critical situation. Although it was promised that the elections would be based on a carefully prepared voters' list, there was widespread discontent on the mode of preparation of the list.

In September 1945, the AICC met at Bombay to evaluate the new political situation and formulate the Congress policy. Although the government had debarred many prominent Congressmen from contesting the elections, the AICC decided to contest the elections. A seven-member sub-committee was appointed for this purpose. The AICC prepared a manifesto which reflected the prestige the Congress had been able to gain during and after the Quit India struggle

as well as the revolutionary spirit of its ranks. The manifesto had placed particular emphasis on the fundamental rights of the citizens demanded through a resolution at the Karachi Congress, the need for the reconstruction of Indian economy which had remained stagnant under the foreign domination for the past one and a half centuries and the importance of a programme to solve the problems of life of the poor, particularly the problems of land relations. Through the mainitesto the Congrees claimed itself to be the organization representing the whole India people and that it was striving to lead India to mdependence and democracy. Reminding the people that the election was only a beginning of the coming mass struggles, the manifesto called upon the people to support the Congress in the elections as well as in the forthcoming struggles.

The manifesto did not overtly criticize other political parties. But, as we have indicated earlier, the Congress leaders had unleashed an aggressive political campaign against the Communist Party. Similarly, the Congress campaigners mounted a powerful attack on the League. Briefly, the Congress got engaged in a campaign to run all other parties down by accusing them of being the tools of the British rulers.

The Muslim League, on the other hand, utilized the election campaign to rally the entire Muslim community behind the slogan of Pakistan and to demolish the claims of the Congress. To suit this purpose, the League refrained from opposing other minority communities and organizations in order to widen the gulf between them and the Congress. It got engaged in the efforts to enhance its prestige and to weaken the Congress to the extent possible in order to consolidate its position in the interim government at the Centre and in the ministries in the provinces which would be formed after the elections.

In brief, the principal issues which were raised at the Simla Conference and the claims made by the Congress and the League were presented before the voters. The election provided the opportunity for the formation of two mutually

opposing camps around these issues. It transformed itself into an open clash on the question of the share the Congress and the League should get in the power to be tranferred and in the interim government which was going to be formed after the elections.

Without joining either of these camps and independent of them, the Communist Party came forward to approach the people in keeping with the interests of the working people, holding aloft the banner of real democracy. It was for the first time that the Party was contesting elections on a wide scale on its own programmes and demands. This was a pointer to the future.

However, the main forces in the election arena were the Congress and the League. The programmes and the slogans of the Communist Party could not gain country wide recognition over and above the contests between the Congress and the League. That is, the Communist Party did not come to the stage as a force capable of playing an effective role in the process of constitution-making.

The elections ended by creating a political atmosphere which was likely to accentuate the problems that came up before the Simla Conference, rather than solving them. The millions who rallied behind the Congress and the League stood more resolutely behind them and the demands raised by the leaders of these parties received added strength. There were indications to the effect that if the British government refused to accept the demands raised by them, they might launch a mass struggle to achieve them. Briefly speaking, the second edition of the Wavell plan, like the earlier one, proved futile.

28

THE REVOLUTIONARY MASS UPSURGE

I. THE BEGINNING OF A STORM

Although the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League were striving to win Indian independence and Pakistan through bargains with the British, the feelings of the Indian people were against this approach. Theirs was, in general, the revolutionary approach of ending the British rule through uncomprising mass struggles as distinct from the bourgeois class approach of bargain and compromise.

Worker's strikes and people's agitations for food which broke out on a massive scale soon after the war led to frequent clash between the people and the police and military forces. In August 1945, 17 demonstrators were killed and about 2,000 were arrested in Varanasi. In Bombay, an atmosphere of revolt prevailed following a strike in September.

However, the efforts made by reactionary politicians and the rulers to give it the character of a tension between Hindus and Muslims succeeded to an extent. In this dozens of people were killed several hundreds injured.

There were indications of the resurgence of people's anti-imperialist feelings which were ramaining in a subdued state during the war. Though with a semblance of Hindu-Muslim frictions resulting from the propaganda of the indivisibility of India conducted by the Congress and that of the need to form an independent Sovereign Muslim nation (Pakistan) conducted by the League, these constituted undeniable evidence of the intense desire of the people to end the British rule. While in many places an atmosphere of tension and clash between Hindus and Muslims was created, almost everywhere demonstrations were taking place with the participation of the entire people above religious considerations.

As distinct from the earlier anti-imperialist mass upsurges, the people participating in them now were considerably influenced by the fighting organizations of workers and other labouring masses as well as the leftist parties which provided a revolutionary perspective to them. The Communist Party which developed as a revolutionary mass Party challenging the Congress leadership during the war and the Quit India struggle, the socialists and other leftists who had provided an organized leadership to the Quit India struggle were able to play significant roles in the post-war anti-imperialist mass upsurges. Although all of them except the Communist Party were under the ideological influence of the right-wing Congress leadership, they were unable to imbibe emotionally the approach of the Congress leadership. They felt sure that the opportunity had come to wage an uncompromising struggle against the British imperialist domination for a final victory and consequently were unable to adjust themselves with the compromising policy of the Congress leadership. Although identified themselves fully with the Congresss leadership in their attempts to

"isolate the communists" accusing them of having "betrayed the Quit India struggle", these forces having been caught in the high tide of strikes and anti-imperialist demonstrations began to cooperate with the communists to impart strength and militancy to these movements.

Two events which took place towards the end of 1945 played a significant role in raising post-war anti-imperialist storms: the INA trial and the decision of the government to send Indian soldiers to Indonesia, Indo-China and other South and South-East Asian countries. In organizing huge demonstrations against these acts, communists, socialists as well as the ranks of the Congress and the League played active roles.

With the defeat and surrender of Japan, the INA consisting of about 20,000 officers and men came under the control of the British. The British governent charged them with failure to fulfil the obligation of loyalty to the British and decided to try them for treason. As indicated earlier, the Communist Party or even the prominent Congress leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru had no sympathy to the decision of Subhas Bose to help the advance of Japan by forming the INA. But none of them questioned the sense of patriotism of Bose. In fact, anti-imperialists had greatly appreciated the cooperation extended by the former army officers and men to Bose and other patriots who were led by the great objective of liberaling the country from the British. Therefore, when Col. Shanavas, Capt. Dhillon and Capt. Sahgal, who played most significant rolse in the INA, were tried and sentenced to a long period of imprisonment. The people considered it as an attack on the anti-imperialist movement. Demonstrations against the sentence were held throughout the country and the government resorted to all respressive methods including firing to disperse the demonstrators. But, braving these repressive actions, the people surged ahead. These protest actions took the highest form in Calcutta where workers struck work for several days bringing the electric powar stations, transpcrt, water supply, etc., to a standstill.

People raised barricades in the southern parts of Calcutta and set fire to military vehicles. The Governor of Bengal deployed the military to bring the situation under control.

Despite these repressive measures, there was no letup in the people's actions until Sarat Chandra Bose, brother of Subhas Bose and a top Congress leader, gave a call to stop all demonstrations. Bose assured the people that the I N A officers who had been sentenced would be released and that the Congress would strive to gain national independence through "lawful and non-violent means".

Anti-imperialist demonstrations demanding the release of the I N A leaders were also held in many other places like Bombay, Mathura, Delhi, Meerut and Peshawar. In the clashes that occurred in the course of these demonstrations, 40 people were killed in Culcutta and 23 in Bombay. Several hundreds were injured in police actions all over the country.

Disregarding the people's actions in protest against the I N A trial, the British authorities went ahead with their decision. In February 1946, Capt. Abul Rashid was tried, which again led to a wave of protest demonstrations in Bengal. This time the appeal to stop the demonstrations came from the newly elected Chief Minister of Bengal, H. S. Suhrawardy.

While the leaders of the Congress and the League were engaged in the bargain with the British rulers to achieve their respective demands, the people were expressing their protest against the government's decision to send the Indian troops to Indo-China and Indonesia on the pretext of completely liberating the Japanese occupied countries after Japan's defeat in the war. In each of these countries the people had already set up their own national revolutionary government in place of the imperialist rulers who had fled before the Japanese invaders. Communists like Ho Chi Minh and comrades in Indo-China, and non-communist nationalists like Dr. Sukarno in Indonesia and Aung San in Burma were leading these revolutionary governments. The British government was trying to use the Indian troops to suppress these revolutionaty governments and restore the British imperialist

dominance in Burma, Malaya, and Singapore, the French in Indo-China and the Dutch in Indonesia.

Demonstrations in protest against this were held all over the country. Port workers in Bombay and Calcutta refused to handle the shipments of military supplies and food to the troops in Indonesia. The leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League openly protested against the government's actions. The Congress leaders called upon the people to observe 25th October as 'South-East Asia Day'.

It may be stated that this was a beginning of the policy of Asian friendship adopted by the bourgeois leadership of the Congress after independence. By observing the South-East Asia Day the Congress was making the claim that they were not only fighting for independence of their own country but also of the neighbouring countries and that they were striving to sent out all imperialist powers from Asia along with the British from India. It laid the foundation of the active role played later by the bourgeois leadership of the Indian government in the Bandung Conference and in other Asian developments.

During the same period also appeared another aspect of the Congress policy which revealed itself later, the policy of "cooperation instead of confrontation" with the imperialists. An incident occurred which pointed to these two aspects of the same policy pursued by Nehru as the Prime Minister of Independent India. Nehru expressed the desire to visit Burma, Malaya and Indonesia to meet the national leaders of these countries and to study the conditions of the Indians living there. The British authorities in Malaya gave him permission to enter the country subject to certain conditions. But Nehru was not prepared to accept those conditions. Lord Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander of South-East Asia, realized the possible consquences of refusing permission to Nehru who was likely to be prime minister of Free India in the near future to visit these countries and cancelled their earlier order imposing conditions. He made arrangements for receiving Nehru at the airport with

all official courtesies and for facilities for his visits. This was the first link in the chain of events leading to Mountbatten, as the last Governor General of British India administering the swearing in of Nehru and Jinnah, the former as the Prime Minister of India, and the latter as the Governor General of Pakistan.

This was the beginning not merely of the friendly relation that developed between Nehru and Mountbatten; it was also the beginning of the final effort to be made by the bourgeois leadership of the Congress to achieve their class objective by coming to terms with the imperialist rulers, while, at the same time, giving shape to anti-imperialist feelings of the people and remaining in the forefront of the mass upsurge that gave expression to these feelings. This effort being made by the Congress leaders including Nehru later gave rise to a number of contradictions.As we are going to see in the following chapters, it led to the creation of a gulf between a section of top Congress leaders including Gandhi, on the one hand, and Nehru, Patel, Rajagopalachari and certain other leaders, on the other. But immediately it helped to enhance the popularity of the Congress. It also helped them to create the impression that it was the Congress that was standing in front of the people who were opposed to the trial of the INA men and to the deployment of Indian troops to South-East Asia. It turned out to be an instrument which could be effectively used in its election campaigns.

II· THE NAVAL MUTINY

The Indian soldiers and young officers of the British armed forces in India were not entirely free from the impact of the mass actions in protest against the trial of the INA men. Its impact took the highest form in the mutiny in the Royal Indian Navy in Bombay in February 1946. A month before that the Indian airmen in the Royal Indian Air Force mutinied and went on a strike in protest against recial discrimnaion in the air force. The same feeling of discrimination

was present among the Indian members in all branches of the British armed forces in India. But none of them reached the form of the February Naval mutiny which was historically the most important incident in the post-war anti-imperialist upsurge.

Fundamental changes had taken place during the war in the structure of the army, air force and navy as well as in the feelings and emotions of those who had joined these branches of the armed forces. During the war, members of the armed forces were not recruited from the so-called "martial races" in selected provinces in India, as was the case with the recruitments in the earlier periods. Now several thousands of young men belonging to all castes and religions from all provinces had joined the British armed forces in India. Besides, there were now Indians in the armed forces who performed technically skilled jobs which required specialized training.Consequently, unlike the soldiers recruited earlier, they were not prepared to submit themselves as mercinaries and refused to put up with discrimination and injustice. But there was no change in the views and behaviour of the British officers of higher ranks towards the Indian soldiers. They behaved as if they were born to rule India and every Indian was obliged to submit himself before them. Another thing that irritated the young Indian officers and men was the racial discrimination meted out to them in regard to pay, accommodation, food, demobilization benefit and other service conditions. The Indians who often excelled the whites in the jobs which required technical skill were lower than the whites in rank. If anyone protested against this, the white officers would shower abuse on them.

The younger officers and men were no longer prepared to tolerate this situation. For, those who had occasions to fight shoulder to shoulder with the British in foreign lands had often witnessed incidents of the British soldiers of the 'omnipotent' imperialist rulers fleeing before the enemy action, while the Indian soldiers stayed and fought the enemy courageously. Besides, a section of Indian soldiers had

acquired a broader outlook as a result of the close contact they had occasion to get with the Allied forces, particularly the Soviet armed forces. They had developed an attitude against fascism and in favour of freedom, democracy and socialism. Above all, the Quit India struggle and the formation of INA and the advance it had made in the initial stages had exerted considerable influence on the Indian soldiers. They had dreamt of the time when leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Bose would wield political power in India. They were eagerly looking for the the opportunity to serve under the national leaders. In other words, the tide of national consciousness had considerably influenced them.

Unfortunately, no significant attempts have been made to make a detailed and deep study of this process. The kind of efforts to collect and publish historical facts with regard to the 1857 revolt have not yet been made in the case of the naval mutiny and the related incidents. B. C. Dutt, who had played a leading role in the RIN mutiny, stated:

> All the relevant records pertaining to the Royal Indian Naval Mutiny are in the archives of the Defence Ministry. A comprehensive account of the Mutiny can be written only at the instance of the Government of India. No official history, however, has as yet been attempted nor has any private initiative been encouraged. Someday, perhaps, the historian of a future generation, free from the prejudices and pressures of the present, will want to record the full and unbiased story of the freedom movement. It is quite likely that he will be both interested and enlightened enough to appreciate the fact that there were many ways of being an Indian patriot in those days before Independence. When he comes across the story of the RIN Mutiny he may not be inclined to dismiss the motive behind the upheaval as just a violent agitation for a better quality rice-and-daal ration, as was given out to the people.[1]

[1] B C. Dutt, *Mutiny of the Innocents*, Bombay, Sindhu publications, 1971, p.13.

In his book, Dutt describes the formation of a secret organization called the 'Azad Hind' to work in a self-sacrificing manner in accordance with the national sentiments kindled by the INA movement and also the several incidents which took place with its initiative.

The developments in HMIS *Talwar* began with the carefull organized demonstration on the Navy Day of 17th December. Slogans like 'Quit India', 'Down with Imperialism', etc., were inscribed on the *Talwar*. Although the authorities were able to wipe off these slogans, they failed either to discover the organized force behind it or to eleminate it. That force was advancing step-by-step culminating in the mutiny of about 20,000 naval ratings in all the ships stationed in Bombay. The mutiny soon spread to the port cities like Vishakhapatnam, Calcutta and Karachi. In Bombay, workers went on strike and the people observed *hartal* in sympathy with mutineers. The encounter that followed between the workers and the police and military forces in the streets of Bombay on 22nd February is well-known. This was the highest form of the post-war revolutionary upsurge.

The very title of Dutt's book, *Mutiny of the Innocents*, is significant in that it indicated the lack of correspondence between the political reality and the inspiration they had drawn from the Quit India struggle and INA. They entered in the mutiny on the belief that the role they were playing in the struggle for Indian independence would be decisive and as such they believed that the national leadership would bless them and render all assistance to them. Dutt's compliant was that they did not get any assistance from the national leadership as they had anticipated. The essence of Dutt's evaluation was that they had not understood that the national leaders were not striving at ending the British rule by driving them out of the country but at sharing the power through negotiations with the British rulers. S.Natarajan, then editor of the *Free Press Journal*, a Bombay newspaper which gave wide publicity and assistance to the mutineers, stated in the preface to Dutt's book:

> I was greately amused at one stage to receive a message from Mr. Asaf Ali who was in Bombay on a short visit. His host dropped in one evening...and taking me aside said very solemnly: "Asaf Ali has told me to remind you that Indians will soon be in power. It will be very difficult for the Defence Minister if the strictest displine is not upheld now." There was more of this, with the suggestion that Asaf Ali was expected to be the Defence Minister himself....It was indicative of the new attitude of Congressmen who feeling that Independence was at hand feared that the last delicate negotiations would be upset by anything the British disapproved.[2]

Natarajan blamed the Congress and the League, the two main elements of the national leadership, for neglecting the naval mutiny. Basing themselves on the British propaganda that the naval ratings were engaged in a struggle to "improve the ration of rice and *dāal*", the leaders of the Congress and the League gave them the assurance that these problems would be solved. They refused to recognize the fact that the naval mutiny was a revolutionary struggle against racial discrimination and for 'Quit India' and other demands. They failed to imbibe the feelings of the ratings and the young officers who were engaged in such revolutionary acts as taking up arms and arresting the senior officers. The national leadership was not prepared to promote it to the level of a general armed revolt of all-India scale by spreading the naval revolt and the strike that took place in Bombay in connection with it to the ranks and young officers of army and air force.

Dutt did not exclude from criticism Aruna Asaf Ali and other left-wing Congressmen who had risen to the leadership of the left revolutionary movement through the Quit India struggle or the Communist Party which was regarded as the symbol of revolution. At the same time, he did not deny the fact that they, as distinct form the leaders of the Congress and the League, expressed themselves in favour

2. *Ibid*, p. 7.

of the mutiny through their statements. They however, took the attitude that only the national leadership was able to carry forward the revolutionary movement which started with the naval mutiny. That is, Dutt accused the leftists as well as those known to be revolutionaries that their activities were dependent on those leaders who had adopted the method of negotiations, rather than the method of revolution.

It must be admitted that there is an element of truth in this accusal. Aruna and her colleagues of Quit India fame looked upon themselves as leftists within the Congress. They never had the perspective of creating a revolutionary leadership as opposed to that of the Congress. Although the Communist Party had been working during the war challenging the Congress leadership, it was of the view that a struggle based on the unity of the leaders of the Congress and the League was the only solution to the national problems of India. In other words, although both the left Congress leaders like Aruna and the Communist Party had visualized the path of revolution, they considered either the Congress alone or the Congress-League unity as the main instrument for revolution.

However, it would be wrong to maintain that leftist Congressmen or the socialists or communists were indifferent to the naval mutiny. The strike of the workers in Bombay was not a spontaneous action. The left Congressmen, socialists and communists had worked in an organized manner behind it. In the clash that took place between the striking workers and the armed forces of the government many of them had sacrificed their life. The truth was that they could not raise the struggle to the level of an all-India revolutionary movement or to spread the mutiny to the other branches of the armed forces.

Either the leaders of the Congress and the League give up the path of negotiations and adopt the path of revolutionary struggles, or the communists, socialists and the leftist Congressmen gain sufficient strength to challenge the leadership of the Congress and the League and organize mutiny

in the other branches of the armed forces and also to combine it with the higher forms of struggle of the workers, peasants and other working masses—one of these conditions should be present for raising the naval mutiny to an all-India revolution.

Indian politics was proceeding before and after the war in a manner in which it was impossible to realize either of these conditions. The leaderships of both the Congress and the League had already adopted the method of negotiations. The left including the Communist Party, on the other hand, had not risen to the position of the national leadership of the Indian people including the members of the armed forces, although they had risen to the position as the leader of the working class in certain places like Bombay and Calcutta. It is significant to note that the leaders of the mutiny were looking upon the leaders of the Congress and the League, not upon the leftists, with expectations. Therefore, although the naval mutiny became a great event in the history of Indian revolution, it did not become the forerunner of Indian revolution as expected by the organizers of the mutiny.

III. THE FATEFUL ELECTIONS

The elections to the Central and provincial assemblies were going on in parallel to the naval mutiny. Since it had been declared that actions with regard to constitution-making would be taken through the legislatures which would be formed following these election, they were considered to be of great importance.

The country-wide strikes and demonstrations in protest against the INA trial which took place after the announcement of elections, had brought about a new political atmosphere in the country. The British government which was convinced that they would not be able to carry on for long by denying the national demand of India, decided to send a group of Members of Parliament to India. Since the visit of

the Parliamentary delegation visited when the leaders of the Congress and the League were engaged in a vigorous election campaign, much attention was not paid to it. But with the outbreak of the naval mutiny in the midst of the election campaign, the government realized the need to resume discussions with the participation of the Congress and the League.

As soon as the naval mutiny broke out, the British government decided to send a Cabinet Mission to India. This was a clear indication of their realization that they would not be able to bring the situation under control without creating an impression among the people that efforts were being made to start serious negotiations on the transfer of power. Accordingly, the three-member Cabinet Mission included the Secretary of State for India, Pethick-Lawrence, as the leader, and Stafford Cripps who was known to be connected with India in different ways. With this the British government appeared as determined to see that this mission did not meet the fate of the earlier Cripps Mission and the Simla Conference.

This move on the part of the government gave rise to expectations among all the political parties that elected people's governments would be formed at the Centre and in the provinces and problems with regard to constitution-making solved soon after the elections. Moreover, the claim being made by the Congress that it represented the entire Indian people including the Muslims and that of the League that it was the representative of the Muslims were going to be tested. Further, the character of the future Central and provincial governments and that of the future constitution would be dependent on the results of these elections. Political parties participating in the elections and others looked upon it in that way.

With the announcement of the election results, both the Congress and the League came out to argue that their respective claims had been confirmed. However, the election results also contained certain facts that could be utilized by each of

them to make out that the other's claims were untenable. Consequently, arguments and counter-arguments were forcefully raised by both of them. The post-election political situation in the country was such that the British would be able to utilize these contoversies to protect their own interests.

The Congress won a majority of seats in the Central legislature (57 out of 102). The Muslim League annexed most of the seats reserved for Muslims. The Nationalist Party which was influential among Hindus and the Unionist Party in Punjab which was popular among Muslims failed to get representation in the Central Assembly. Using the election results, Jinnah continued the argument that the Congress was the Party of Hindus and that the League was the only party of the Muslims.

The situation in the provincial legislatures was different, Demolishing the claim of the League that it was the sole representative of Muslims, the Congress won a majority of seats and formed its own ministries in the Muslim majority provinces of NWF Province and Assam.

In Sind and Bengal, the League failed to command a majority in the legislature. But they were able to form ministries there which could be sustained only with the support of European members. Similarly, in Punjab, the League failed to command a majority. But unlike in Sind and Bengal, it was unable to form a ministry of its own there. Consequently the Unionist Party formed a ministry headed by Khizr Hyat Khan with the support of the Congress and the Sikhs.

With the formation of the ministry in Punjab, an important change came about in the political situation in Punjab and other provinces. The British had, in fact, tried to foster the Unionist Party as a Muslim party independent of the League but loyal to the British. It may be recalled that at the Simla Conference, Viceroy Wavell had included a representative of the Unionist Party in his list of members in the proposed Central Executive Council and that Jinnah had strongly opposed his proposal. The League put up a

determined fight to defeat the Unionist Party in the elections in Punjab. Thus, the League won 79 out of 86 Muslim seats leaving the remaining seven Muslim seats to the Unionist Party which with three non-Muslim seats it had won formed a ministry with the support of 22 Akali Sikhs and 51 Congress members. With this also failed Wavell's plan to foster the Unionist Party as a counter to the claims made both by the Congress and the League.

This new situation raised a question before the rulers: which party they should favour now? The Cabinet Mission was devided over this question. Wavell was of the opinion that, since the Unionist Party had no future, their favour should go to the League. But Cripps was in favour of the Congress. The leader of the Mission, Pethick-Lawrence supported Cripps, while the third member of the Mission, A. V. Alexander, favoured Wavell. This difference of opinion reflected in the entire work of the Mission.

There was a similar difference of opinion within the Congress leadership also. There emerged the opinion that considering the proved influence of the Congress throughout country and that of the League in the Muslim community, it would be wise to form Congress-League coalition ministries in all the provinces. The other opinion was that since it had been proved that the League was weak even in those Muslim majority provinces which it claimed to form part of Pakistan, the right way was to utilize all anti-League political forces and destroy League's influence among the Muslims.

Even if Congress-League coalition ministries were to be formed, the League would not allow non-League Muslim ministers in the cabinet. Since this was not acceptable to the Congress, attempts made to form coalition ministries in Sind and Punjab failed.

Clearly, this was the continuation of the controversy which was raised at the Simla Conference. But the situations then and now were different. Wavell then tried to induct a non-League non-Congress Muslim into the ministry disregarding the claims made by both the Congress and the

League. But now even Wavell could not make such of attempt. Consequently, he had now moved to the position of accepting the stand taken by the League. Even Cripps could not make him change his stand. Thus, Congress ministries were formed in the Muslim majority provinces of NWFP and Assam, while in two other Muslim majority provinces of Bengal and Sind the League formed ministries which depended entirely on the European members for their existence. In Punjab, although the League won in a majority of the Muslim constituencies, a ministry opposed to the League was formed with the participation of the Congress in it. This made the Congress-League conflict sharper.

Gandhi who understood that this would take the country to a dangerous situation began to think in terms which were not likely to be appreciated by his collegues. He felt not only that the gulf between the Congress and the League was widening but also that the British rulers were utilizing the situation to endanger the future of independent India. With a view to avert such a situation, Gandhi suggested in his first interview with the Cabinet Mission that Jinnah should be invited to form an interim government at the Centre. Gandhi was prompted by the consideration that Jinnah, on assuming the position of Prime Minister, would have to deal with problems with a sense of responsibility and would be compelled to adopt an attitude of conciliation. Herein lay hidden the source of the difference between Gandhi and his Congress colleagues which surfaced when the Congress accepted office in accordance with the Mountbatten plan in August 1947.

A majority of the members of the Working Committee who were known to be disciples of Gandhi were eager to take office as soon as possible by forming an interim government. To suit that purpose they were prepared to accept, at least to an extent, the claims made by Jinnah. It was this eagerness that influenced them in the discussions first with the Cabinet Mission and later with Mountbatten.

As for Gandhi, there was no eagerness to take office. He thought that the claim made by Jinnah was not an

independent and isolated phenomenon and that there was a strategy of the British rulers behind it. He was of the opinion that if Congressmen yieded to schemes which would water down the national stand of the Congress without perceiving the designs of the rulers, it would lead to widespread communal riots. Gandhi repeatedly cautioned his colleagues against its consequences.

Whatever be the merit of Gandhi's approach, it suffered from a weakness on the practical plane. The political power which a majority of the Working Committee members were eagerly awaiting would not pass into the Congress. Instead, he was suggesting that power should be passed into the hands of Jinnah whom the Congressmen considered to be adopting all methods to destroy the Congress. Consequently, the Working Committee rejected Gandhi's proposal and conducted negotiations with Jinnah and the Cabinet Mission on sharing power.

Now, imagine that the Congress leadership had accepted Gandhi's proposal. Then, would it have been acceptable to the Viceroy and Jinnah? Supposing that it was acceptable to them, then to what end Jinnah would have used the new political power which had passed in his hands? What repercussions it would have created among the non-Muslim communities in the country? It is impossible to answer these questions.

Gandhi himself had not examined the problems in details. Finding no alternative in ending the tensions in the relationships between the Congress and the Muslim League on the one side and those among the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities on the other, which were deteriorating day by day, Gandhi put forth the proposal on a "let-us-try" basis.

This, however, did not create any impact eithor on Jinnah or any other political party. For, while making the suggestion to invite Jinnah to form an interim government at the Centre, a government with the participation of the Congress had already been formed in Punjab excluding the League which had won a majority of Muslim seats. The attempts

made in provinces to form Congress-League coalition governments had failed on account of the controversies with regard to the political character of the Muslim ministers. As such none considered Gandhi's proposal as of practical importance.

29

NEGOTIATIONS AND COMMUNAL RIOTS

I. THE BEGINNING OF PARTITION

The Cabinet Mission arrived in India in March 1946. In the next three months there were hectic discussions between the Mission and the representatives of varion political parities and groups, particularly with the leaders of the Congress and the League. Though not as part of the Congress leadership, Gandhi also actively participated in the discussions.

The talks were centred round a long-term scheme to frame a constitution for India as well as a short-term scheme to form an interim government at the Centre to carry on the administration of the country till the adoption of the constitution. From 1st to 17th April, 182 discussion sessions were held involving 472 political leaders. This many sessions had to be arranged because separate interviews had to be

held with a number of organizations, apart from the Congress and the League, claiming to represent different interests, including several small parties without any appreciable popular support and even organization which remained only on paper.

The members of the Mission left for Kashmir on 17th April to evaluate the different views presented before them during the interviews. Soon after their return on 24th April, Pethick-Lawrence as the leader of the Mission addressed separate letters to the Congress and the League suggesting one more attempt to obtain an agreement between these parties. He also invited the representatives of the Congress and the League for a conference at Simla with a view to discussing the possibility of agreement upon a scheme based upon the following "fundamental principles".

"The future constitutional structure of the British India to be as follows: A Union Government dealing with the following subjects: the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Communications. There will be two groups of provinces, the one of the predominantly Hindu provinces and the other of the predominantly Muslim provinces, dealing with all other subjects which the provinces in the respective groups desire to be dealt with in common. The provincial governments will deal with all other subjects and they will have all the residuary sovereign rights."[1]

Soon after receiving this letter, the Congress President Azad sent a reply stating that the scheme was acceptable to him and hoped that it would be acceptable to his Party too. However, the members of the Congress Working Committee were unaware of such a reply having been sent by Azad. Consequently, the Working Committee in a resolution stated that it was difficult for the Congress to accept the scheme suggested by the Cabinet Mission. The resolution also specified its objections with regard to the scheme. The Mission thereupon clarified that acceptance of the scheme was not a condition for participation in the proposed conference. On

1. D G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, vol. 7, New Delhi, Publications Division Government of India, 1962, p. 106.

the basis of this clarification, the Working Committee decided to participate in the Conference. The League also decided to participate reserving the "freedom to accept or reject the proposed scheme".

Accordingly, a week-long conference was held at Simla. The Mission had already introduced certain changes in the light of the earlier discussions to meet the objections raised by the Congress and the Leauge. It was this revised scheme that was presented before the conference, However, even this revised scheme was not acceptable either to the Congress or to the League. It was decided to hold consultations between Nehru and Jinnah to find if it was possible to leave matters on which there was difference of opinion to arbitration and in that case who should be the arbitrator. Since these consultations also failed, the Second Simla Conference broke down.

The Viceroy and the Mission claimed that they were trying to bring conciliation between the Congress demand of freedom and sovereignty for an undivided Indian and the League demand of two separate constitution-making bodies for Pakistan and Hindustan.

It may be recalled that the Communist Party had pointed out that the only practical soluation to the problem was to set up a system with wide autonomy to the people speaking different languages by treating them as separate nationalities and a federal government at the Centre to deal with a limited number of subjects like foreign relations, defence, communication, etc. The nationalists at that time accused the party of encouraging "disintegration" of the country. However, when confronted with the problems of framing a constitution for the country, the Congress was forced to move along the same way. The Congress leaders made it clear that they were not against the Cabinet Mission's proposal for dividing the provinces into groups. But they forcefully opposed the attempt to the forcible merger of a province in either of these groups against its will. They demanded that after the adoption of a constitution for India, each province should be given the right to join either group of its choice.

The League was totally opposed to it. They wanted a separate constitution-making body for the Muslim majority provinces of NWFP, Sind, Baluchistan, Bengal and Assam to frame a constitution for a federal government of Pakistan.

In other words, the Congress stood for a federal constitution for India with autonomous provinces and for the right of the Muslim majority provinces within the Indian federation to framc a common group constitution if they so desired. The League, on the other hand, demanded the formation of Pakistan comprising the Muslim majority provinces with the right to any province to keep away from it only after the adoption of a constitution for Pakistan. It was due to the irreconsilability of these demands of the Congress and the League that the Second Simla Conference broke down.

Soon after the conference, the Cabinet Mission announced its own proposals without introducing any basic change in the proposals presented by the Mission before the conference. These proposals included the following.

"1. There should be a Union of India, embracing both Brith India and the States, which should deal with the following subjects: Foreign effairs, Defence, and Communications; and should have the powers necessary to raise the finances required for the above subjects.

2. The Union should have an Executive and a Legislature constituted from British Indian and State's representatives. Any question raising a major communal issue in the Legislature should require for its decision a majority of the representatives present and voting of each of the two major communities as well as a majority of all the members present and voting.

3. All subjects other than the Union subjects and all residual powers should vest in the Provinces.

4. The States shall retain all subjets and powers other than those ceded to the Union.

5. The Provinces should be free to form groups with Executives and Legislatures and each group could determine the provincial subjects to be taken in common.

6. The Constitutions of the Union and of the groups should contain a provision whereby any Province could by a mojority vote of its Legislative Assmebly, call for a reconsideration of the terms of the constitution after an intial period of ten years and ten yearly intervals thereafter."

If item 5 above was brought into operation, it was obvious that the NWF Province and Assam which did not accept the leadership of the League could opt out of Pakistan. But there was another provision contrary to this included in the scheme. It was provided that the Muslim majority provinces of NWFP and Assam would be included in two different "Sections" comprising the Muslim majority provinces in the west and the east, respectively, "which shall proceed to settle the Provincial Constitntions for the Provinces included in each section, and shall also decide whether any Group Constitution shall be set up for those provinces...." and that the provinces would have the power to opt out of the groups in accordance with the provinsion that "such a decision shall be taken by the new legislature of the Province after the general election under the new constitution."

The Congress opposed these provisions and argued that any province should have the right not to participate in the meetings of the sections and that no province should be forcibly brought under a group. The Working Committee pointed out that the scheme prepared by the Cabinet Mission was ridden with contradictions in that in one clause it provided the provinces with the right to opt out of groups while in another it forcibly included them in groups. Therefore the Working Committee gave the interpretation that the provinces had the right not to participate even at the first meeting of the sections. Accordingly, the Committee informed the Cabinet Mission that its scheme was acceptable subject to this interpretation. However, the Cabinet Mission pointed out that this interpretation was wrong and clarified that the provinces were bound to participate in the initial proceedings of their respective sections.

In the light of this clarification, the Working Committee of the League accepted the scheme of the cabinet Mission on the ground that in the very provision which was criticized by the Congress lay the foundation of Pakistan. As soon as the League declared its acceptance, the Cabinet Mission announced that both the Congress and the League had accepted the scheme. But the Congress had accepted the scheme only subject to its own interpretation of the provision as stated above, which was, however, rejected by Mission. The General Secretary of the Congress J. B. Kripalani has put it in record that his aragument that the Mission's announcement of the acceptance of the scheme by the Congress was contray to facts was rejected by other members of the Working Committee.

This was, in fact, the beginning of Gandhi and a section of his disciples taking an attitude against the opinion of the majority of the Congress Working Committee. The latter were guided by the fear that unless the long-term scheme was accepted, the short-term sheme would not come into operation. They feared that if the Congress did not participate in the formation of the interim government, the anti-Congress forces including the League would form the government creating a political situation which would be most dangerous to the Congress. Consequently, they were prepared to deviate a bit from their own principled stand with regard to the long-term scheme to avoid this danger. Gandhi's disciples were of the opinion that this amounted to presenting the provinces like the NWFP and Assam and also the entire national Muslims througout the country who had been resisting the pressures from the British rulers and the League and opposing a demand of Pakistan, as a gift to the Muslim League. They were not afraid of the anti-Congress forces forming a government, because they had with them the instrument of *satyagraha* which could be used in all circumstances. It was with this view that Gandhi proposed to the Cabinet Mission to invite Jinnah to form a government at the Centre.

If Gandhi and his disciples had gone ahead with this stand challenging the majority of the Congress Working Committee and rallied the people against the scheme of the Cabinet Mission, it would have changed the course of Indian politics. For, an anti-imperialist people's upsurge which was conducive to this change was taking shape in the country since the end of the War. This upsurge of revolutionary struggles had been steadily gaining in strength while the discussions with the Cabinet Mission were going on. Large sections of the people including workers, peasants, the intelligentsia, students and the youth, and the people of the princely states were entering in these struggles with great enthusiasm. These broad sections of the people were not affected either by the Congress-League conflicts or the quarrels between the Hindus and Muslims. If Gandhi and his followers were prepared to lead these people, a broad mass upsurge would have developed throughout the country on an unprecedented scale.

But Gandhi and his followers were not prepared for it. As ever before, they were led more by the neglect and opposition on their part to revolutionary struggles than by anti-imperialism. Consequently, they left the majority of the Working Committee alone by merely expressing dissent to the decisions taken by them.

II. LEAGUE TOWARDS 'DIRECT ACTION'

Both the Congress and the League tried equally well during the discussions with the Cabinet Mission to turn the short-term aspect of the scheme (i.e., formation of an interim government) to their advantage, while adhering to their respective stands on the framing of the future constitution.

The Cabinet Mission declared that the Viceroy would take steps to form an interim government with the participation of the representatives of the Congress and the League with powers of all the subjects including Defence, if these two

parties accepted the long-term aspect of the scheme with regard to constitution-making. That is, acceptance of the long-term aspect of the scheme was an essential condition for the participation in the interim government. That was why the Congress accepted the scheme with their own interpretation and by the League with out any interpretation of their own. Accordingly, the Cabinet Mission and the Viceroy decided that it was time to start discussion on the interim government.

In the third week of June the Viceory asked the Congress to suggest the names of six Hindus, including a representative of the Scheduled Castes, and the League to suggest the names of five Muslim members to the proposed interim government. He had also imformed them that, in addition to these 11 Hindu and Muslim members, there would be three more members in the government representing the Sikh, Christian and Parsi communities. Accodingly, the Congress and the League submitted their lists and the Viceroy accepted the list of the League but struck off the names of Sarat Chandra Bose, Dr. Zakir Hussein and Rajkumari Amrit Kaur from the Congress list. Since the latter two belonged to Muslim and Christian communites, he refused to accept them in the Congress list. The Viceroy insisted that all the representatives of the Congress including the Scheduled Caste representative should be caste-Hindus.

This was objected to by the Congress. It also took objection to the inclusion of Abdur Rab Nistar who had been defeated in the 1946 elections in the League list which was accepted by the Viceroy. The Congress was also opposed to N.P. Engineer, who was the public prosecutor in the I N A trial, being included in the list representing the Parsi community.

Gandhi was clearly opposed to Congress participation in such an interim government. In a letter drafted by him on behalf of the Congress Working Committee and intended to be sent to the Viceroy, Gandhi placed particular emphasis on the following points.

1. Since the League was openly a Muslim organization, no non-Muslim should be included in the League list of members of the interim government.

2. Since the Congress was a national organization, its list could include Muslims.

3. Except in the case of five members alloted to the League, it should not have the right to express opinion on the selection of any one else.

4. The interim government should be responsible to the elected members of the Central Assembly.

The Working Committee, however, did not even consider this draft letter. Although the Working Committee was not in agreement with the list prepared by the Viceroy, it was not willing to reject it. The Committee thought it possible to eliminate the ill-effect of the alterations made by the Viceroy in the Congress list.

But the Working Committee had a firm opinion with regard to the right and status of the interim government. The Congress was not prepared to make compromise on the principle that the interim government should be able to function as a government of a free, sovereign country without interference from the Viceroy. On 30th May, President Azad wrote a letter to the Viceroy to this effect. Azad received a favourable reply from the Viceroy stating that the interim government would be treated with considerations given to a Dominion government. With this, the Working Committe on 18th June took a tentative decision to accept the proposal of the Cabinet Mission with regard to the interim government. It did not, however, communicate this decision to the Viceroy.

The decision to accept the proposal with regard to the interim government, however, widened the difference that had existed within the Congress leadership. For example, Kripalani has stated that Sardar Patel had become angry when he said that, whatever be the decision of the Working Committee, he would resign his position in the Congress, if it approved of the scheme to compulsorily merge some of the

Muslim majority provinces in Pakistan against their wishes. On 19th June, Gandhi told the members of the Working Committee in clear terms that if the Committee gave approval to a list which did not include a national Muslim and which included N. P. Engineer, he would have nothing to do with it.

In the meantime, an incident took place which was likely to wreck the entire decision of the Congress with regard to the acceptance of the scheme of the Cabinet Mission. The contents of a letter which Jinnah had sent to Wavell appeared in the *Statesman*. In that letter Jinnah sought from Wavell a number of assurances with regard to the interim government, which were not at all acceptable to the Congress. Soon after, the Congress President demanded from the Viceroy a copy of Jinnah's letter as well as his reply to Jinnah. The reply contained an assurance that no change in principle in the list of members of the interim government would be made without the approval of both the Congress and the League. The meaning of this was clear. A national Muslim should not be included in the Congress list without the permission of the League. Besides, the selection of the representatives of the minority communities including the Scheduled Castes would also require the approval of the Congress and the League.

In addition to giving this assurance to Jinnah, the Viceroy informed the Congress President on 22nd June that it was not possible to include a national Muslim in its list. Thereupon the Congress Working Committee decided against participation in the interim government subject to this condition. It may be stated that Maulana Azad did not agree with this decision—another instance to show that the difference within the Congress leadership was getting sharpar.

The Congress decision against participation in the interim government brought the work of the Cabinet Mission to a deadlock. As the final effort to resolve the crisis, the Mission invited Gandhi and Sardar Patel for a talk. During the talks, differences of opinion between Gandhi and Patel

surfaced even on the question of the approach the Mission had adopted in the talks.

Gandhi emphatically stated that he was suspecious about the Mission's long-term and short-term schemes and that he was not in agreement with the acceptance of the schemes. Following, the Working Committee declared its rejection of the Viceroy's proposals with regard to the interim government, but stated at the same time that it accepted the long-term scheme of the Cabinet Mission with its own interpretation.

According to Jinnah, this meant rejection of the Cabinet Mission's long-term scheme by the Congress. Since his Party had accepted the scheme, he expected the formation of an interim government without the Congress. But the Cabinet Mission maintained that if the Congress and the League were not prepared to join the interim government, the entire scheme for constitution-making would fail. Besides, the Mission interpreted the decisions of the Congress and the League as if both had accepted its proposals unconditionally.

As the Congress has rejected the proposal with regard to the formation of an interim government, the Cabinet Mission decided not to proceed with its scheme and left India leaving the Viceroy to hold discussions on the formation of the interim government and to take steps to form the constitution-making body. This made the League leadership highly discontented. They demanded that since the question of forming the interim government had been deferred, the steps being taken to form the constitution-making body also should be put off. When the British Cabinet refused to concede this demand, Jinnah accused the Cabinet of "bad faith". The League also decided to withdraw its acceptance of the Cabinet Mission's scheme and to resort to "direct action" to achieve its objective of Pakistan.

Now it was the first time in the history of the League that it was renouncing the constitutional method of struggle and contemplating direct action. This had far-reaching consequences in Indian politics as can be seen in the following chapters. Here it is worth noticing the fact that hitherto

only one section of the Indian bourgeois leadership (i.e., the Congress) had resorted to the method of open mass agitation as an integral part of the politics of bargain. For the Congress, the final form of direct action was reached in 1942. They were now engaged in the final stage of the bargain making use of the popular support they had gained in the 1942 struggle. It was at this stage that another section of the bourgeois leadership (i.e., the League) was resorting to the method of direct action. While the Congress had been engaged in direct action to achieve *swaraj*, the League was now resorting to direct action to achieve Pakistan. The League also decided to observe 16th August as 'Direct Action Day' which together with the events that followed the observance the Day changed the entire course of the political history of India.

III. KASHMIR

While the Congress and the League leaders were engaged in discussions with the Cabinet Mission, the problem of the place of the princely states in the future constitution of India had started coming to the fore. The attitude of the British government towards this problem was thoroughly undemocratic. The relationship between 'British India' and the princely states was governed by a treaty entered into between them. Consequently, in the event of the British relinguishing power in India, the princely states would become free. The British government had been maintaining that the states had the right to decide their own future.

The League had never openly expressed an opinion about it. Their only concern was the place of the Muslims as a community in India's future constitutional set-up. The attitude of the Congress was different. They wanted to establish democratic rule in the princely states as well as in British India. This was not merely because they were more committed to democracy than the League; establishment of

democracy in the princely states was essential for them to keep in their proper place those forces which were opposed to them in the future constitutional set-up of the Indian Union. If the representatives of the Maharajas of the states happened to go to the Central Assembly and the cabinet, there was a possibility of them joining hands with the representatives of communal and caste politics facilitating the British vested interests to continue their dominance in a new form. It was therefore natural for the Congress to extend its support to the demand for ending the autocratic rules in the states.

However, as we have seen earlier, the Congress was never prepared to help without reservation the struggles for responsible governments in the princely states and to give these struggle a revolutionary character. In the earlier days, the Congress kept away from these struggles in accordance with the policy of "non-interference in the internal affairs of the princely states". Later, when organizations like *Praja Mandals* and state Congress started emerging in the states, Congressmen came forward to occupy leadership positions in these organizations. However, they looked upon the mass agitations in the states as a mean to bargain with the rulers of the states.

The discusssion on India's future constitutional set-up which started with the First Simla Conference gave an added strength to the agitations for responsible governments in the princely states. The movements in certain states like Travancore, Cochin, Hyderabad and certain states in Orissa were under the leadership of leftists. Even in those states where they were not in leading positions, their influence in the movement was evident. Particular mention must be made in this connection of Kashmir in which a majority of the population was Muslim and the Maharaja a Hindu. Consequently, the early form of the movement for responsible government in Kashmir had the characteristics of Muslim politics. Started in the name of 'Kashmir Muslim Conference', the movement transformed itself into 'National Conference', via 'Muslim Conference'. Its leaders like Sheikh Abdullah

and G. M. Sadiq came under the influence of left-wing nationalism and socialist-communist ideologies. They engaged themselves in the task of rallying the people irrespective of their religious affiliations against autocracy and landlordism. Thus, the National Conference became part of the left front comprising communists, socialists and left-wing Congressmen in British India.

These developments before and during the war influenced the post-war politics in Kashmir, strengthening the movement for responsible government there. Following the slogan of 'Quit India', the National Conference raised the slogan of 'Quit Kashmir',meaning thereby that the Maharaja should quit Kashmir and transfer power to the people.

The democratic movements in no other Indian state had raised such a radical slogan with far-reaching consequences. The demand raised in most other states was confined to the establishment of a government responsible to an elected legislative body with the Maharaja remaining as the formal head of the state. The significance of Kashmir was that, as distinct from this, a native organization representing bourgeois nationalism came forward to raise the demand of ending the rights of the Maharaja.

An equally significant feature of Kashmir was the communal character of the leadership of the National Conference. It was a mass organization comprising people of all communities with a leadership composed of the representatives of all communities under the overall leadership of Sheikh Abdullah who belonged to the Muslim community. The very existence of such an organization constituted a challenge to the League's 'two-nations theory'. The only organization matching to this was the mass movement led by Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the NWF Province, which was a source of constant irritation to the League. Consequently, the democratic movement in Kashmir appeared as a problem which was in a sense connected with the discussions at the Simla Conference and with the Cabinet Mission.

The Kashmir problem worsened when the talks with the Cabinet Mission were in progress. The League leadership made an attempt to get the National Conference merged in the League with a view to strengthen their bargain with the Congress and the Cabinet Mission. But it did not succeed. Like the Khan Brothers in the NWF Province and the national Muslims elsewhere in the country, the National Conference took a firm stand against Muslim sectarianism. As its slogan was 'Quit Kashmir', the Maharaja and his government started taking actions against it. Leaders of the National Conference, including Sheikh Abdullah, were arrested. TheSheikh was arrested while he was on his way to Delhi to meet and hold discussions with Nehru who was then the president of the All-India States People's Conference. This provoked Nehru who proceeded to Kashmir, but he was also arrested on his entry into the state. The situation was brought under control by the intervention of the Viceroy and the Indian government, on the one side, and the Congress Working Committee, on the other.

This was a shining example of the attitude of the British government and that of the rulers of the princely states as well as the leaders of the Congress and the League towards the problems of the states. The Maharaja tried to suppress the democratic movements in the state by putting under arrest even Jawharlal Nehru who was widely known to become the prime minister of the country within the next few weeks. Neither the Viceroy nor the British government did anything worthwhile to dissuade the Kashmir government from taking such repressive actions. The Viceroy who suggested the Kashmir government to avoid Nehru's arrest and to postpone the trial of Sheikh Abdullah received a reply from the Maharaja offering to "abdicate and his prime minister to resign if the Government of India compelled them to take no action against Jawharlal". Thereupon the Viceroy withdrew his suggestion. It was only after the arrest of Nehru that the trial of Sheikh Abdullah was adjourned and Nehru brought back to Delhi at the instance of the Viceroy, the Cabinet Mission and the Congress Working Committee.

It is worth noticing that the Muslim League was completely indifferent to the Kashmir issue. The National Conference accepting the general political outlook of the Congress and under the leadership of a national Muslim who had been maintaining relations with Nehru, had been irritating to the League and its leader, Jinnah. But they were helpless. They were placed themselves in a position in which they were unable to protest against the actions taken even by a'Hindu ruler' against such an organization like the National Conference and its leaders. On the other side, the leaders of the Congress which had been characterized by the League as a Hindu political party had been coming forward to protest against the repressive actions of this Hindu ruler. Although this was contrary to the 'two-nations theory' of the League, it could not have taken any other stand in the background of the bargain with the British and the Congress in which it had been engaged.

On the other hand, although the Congress and Nehru acted in a manner helpful to the National Conference, they found that the only way to solve the Kashmir problem was through consultations with the Viceroy and the Cabinet Mission. Nehru's biographer has stated that on hearing the news of the arrest of the Sheik "his (Nehru's) first impulse was to leave Simla to Kashmir to support his friends, but he curbed himself so as to give the Viceroy a chance to intervene and not to worsen the situation by disobeying any restraining order which might be served on him. ....By the middle of June, Jawaharlal felt he had waited long enough and decided to enter the State...." [1] He added that "it was the adjournment of the trial of Sheikh Abdullah and the insistence of the Working Committee which led Jawaharlal to return to Delhi on the clear understanding that he would be back in Kashmir"[2]

1. S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, vol: I, Bombay, Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 322.
2. *Ibid* p. 323.

The Kashmir incident was only one of the events which had been taking place in the princely states all over India. Following the efforts made by the leftist organizations to link the mighty struggles of workers, peasants, government employees and other sections of the people that were going on across the country with the people's movements in the princely states, these movements had begun to take a revolutionary form. Some of these movements took a still higher form as that of Punnapra-Vayalar and Telangana.

The movement in Kashmir under the leadership of the National Conference also had taken a revolutionary form. The 'Naya Kashmir' programme formulated by the National Conference had been considerably influenced by the ideologies of communism and socialism. However, the partition of India and the developments that followed caused the democratic movement in Kashmir to deviate from this path and made it a problem preparing the ground for disintegration of India. The British rulers, the Muslim League (later the rulers of Pakistan) and the Hindu communalists all alike utilized the democratic movement based on secularism and the 'Naya Kashmir' programme as part of the Hindu-Muslim problem which was later turned into an India-Pakistan problem.

The Congress, though it had adopted an approach relatively more domocratic and secular, regarded, on the other hand, the problems of the princely states, including that of Kashmir, as a part of its bargain with the government and the Muslim League. The dreadful results of this attitude adversely affected the future not only of Kashmir, and other princely states but also of the entire country.

IV. BEFORE AND AFTER THE CALCUTTA RIOTS

We have noted earlier that the League had unconditionally accepted the long-term scheme of the Cabinet Mission.

They regarded the provision contained in the scheme to group the provinces into sections with the right to every section to decide by majority votes the future of the provinces included in the respective sections would lead to the formation of Pakistan. The Congress, on the other hand, accepted the long-term scheme subject to its own interpretation of this provision. The League leaders maintained that the acceptance of the scheme by the Congress with interpretation was, in fact, a rejection of the scheme and accused the Cabinet Mission of hiding this fact.

As we know, the essence of the short-term scheme of the Cabinet Mission was the formation of an interim government at the Centre with the representatives of the parties accepting the long-term scheme. Thus, the leaders of the Muslim League thought that the interim government would be formed including the representatives of the League which had accepted the long-term scheme but excluding the Congress which had rejected the scheme. They also thought they would be able to utilize such a political situation to strengthen their activities for the formation of Pakistan. But the Cabinet Mission's declaration that both the Congress and the League had accepted its long-term scheme believed their hope.

When the problem of the formation of interim government came up, it became necessary for the Congress to introduce certain changes in the organization. Nehru took over the presidentship from Azad. Subsequently, the AICC which met at Bombay in July ratified the Working Committee's resolution accepting the long-term scheme of the Cabinet Mission with the interpretation that the provinces irrespective of which section they were placed in would have the right of autonomy. Besides, in the speech he made as the Congress President, Nehru rejected League's interpretation and declared that neither the British government nor the Cabinet Mission had the right to impose limitations on the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly. This angered the League leaders. The efforts made by the British government to appease them also failed. The Council of the League which met

at Bombay on 27th July decided to resort to the method of 'direct action' in protest against the attitudes of the Congress and the British government. A resolution adopted by the Council called upon the Muslims to renounce forthwith the titles conferred upon them by the "aleign government". In the words of Jinnah, "never have we in the whole history of the League done anything except by constitutional methods and by constitutionalism. But now we are obliged and forced into this position. This day we did goodbye to constitutional methods." Jinnah said that the British and the Congress had been holding pistols in their hands, the former the pistol of authority and arms and the latter that of mass struggle and non-cooperation. "Today we have also forged a pistol and are in a position to use it."

The council directed the lower units of the League to organize processions and public meetings as part of the observation of the 'Direct Action Day' on 16th August to explain the League stand on the scheme of the Cabinet Mission. Although it was suggested that the observance of the Protest Day should be peaceful, it turned out to be the beginning of terrible the events (Hindu-Muslim riots) to come.

Meanwhile, certain developments took place before the observation of the Direct Action Day, which agave it an added impetus. The Viceroy had been taking steps with regard to the formation of an interim government in accordance with the short-term scheme of the Cabinet Mission. He presented before the Congress President Nehru and the League President Jinnah a proposal to form a 14-member interim government with six Congress members (including one Scheduled Castes member), five League members and three representatives of other minority communities including one Sikh. But since the League had withdrawn its acceptance of the long-term scheme of the Cabinet Mission when it decided to resort to direct action and also since the Congress had already declared acceptance of it, the British government had taken a decision to form the interim government without the representation of the League. Accordingly, the Viceroy sent

a letter to the Congress President Nehru inviting him to form an interim government. In the same letter the Viceroy indicated that he would appreciate Nehru reaching an agreement with Jinnah and asked him to consider whether he should discuss the matter with Jinnah before submitting his proposals in this regard. In reply to this Nehru stated that he would approach the League and urge their cooperation if a public announcement was made to the effect that he had been invited to constitute an interim government and that he had accepted the invitation. Accordingly, an announcement was made on 22nd August.

This announcement naturally angered the League leaders. Consequently they carried out vigorously the observation of the Direct Action Day. The observation of the Day in Calcutta deserves particular mention. The League government of Bengal declared 16th August a holiday. In the background of extremely provocative speeches and other forms of agitation adopted by the League, the action of the provincial government created a situation of great tension in Calcutta. The observation of 'Direct Action Day' culminated in mass killings and other acts of violence. Although an accurate account is not available, it has been generally admitted that about 5000 people were killed and 15,000 seriously injured. Human corpses piled and blood spilled all over the streets. Among the killed were women and children. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were all among the victims of violence.

Even while these brutal acts were going on, the provincial government did not take any action to put down the violence. The Governor who was particularly responsible for the maintenance of law and order did not move either. He stuck to the attitude that he would not do anything unless asked by his ministers. The military was called in only after the massacre which lasted for about 48 hours. And within a few hours after that all violent activities were stopped and the situation brought under control.

This brief description of events clearly demonstrates the role played by the Muslim League and the British

authorities in the outbreak of the Calcutta riots. Through the "direction action day" observation, the League tried to create the impression that it was capable of creating the kind of 'mass force' that the Congress was able to forge through consistent efforts made during the past quarter of a century. And the League ministry of Bengal tried to convert it into the beginning of the politics of communal riots. The British Governor was not prepared either to dissuade them from this, or to curb the riots with the help of the military. It was a warning to the effect that, like the Congress, the League also was capable of forging the weapon of 'direct action' and that if the League ventured to do it, the entire country would be thrown into a civil war.

The League organized these riots against the Hindus and the Congress. At that stage, the victims were mostly the Hindus. As it was found that the ministers and the Governor who were responsible for putting down the riots were not acting in that way, the Hindus and the Sikhs also started resorting to violence. Among those who were killed and injured at the stage, there were many Muslims. The riots spread to other places too. In Noakhali (now in Bangladesh) the victims of the riots were the Hindus, while in Bihar and other places the victims were the Muslims. Thus the Calcutta riots led to a series of communal riots in many parts of the country.

These riots were reflected in the moves being made to form the interim government. The Viceroy who had taken steps to form an interim government under the leadership of Nehru, now started exerting pressures on him to reach an agreement with Jinnah with a view to bring the League in the interim government. He reminded Nehru that the exclusion of the League from the interim government would only help to spread the communal riots all over the country.

Meanwhile, a new ministry (Executive Council) had taken office on 2nd September. On the very next day, Sir Shafaat Ahmad Khan, a member of the cabinet, was stabbed. The attack on him was an expression of wrath of the followers

of the League for allowing his name to be included in the list of Congress members in the proposed ministry. This further worsened the situation and also helped the Viceroy to exert more pressure on Nehru to placate the League and change the composition of the ministry. Finally, on 15th October, Sharat Chandra Bose, Shafaat Ahmad Khan and Syed Ali Zaheer resigned from the ministry to make room for the League nominees in the ministry. Subsequently, Liaquat Ali Khan, Chundrigar, Abdur Rab Nishtar, Glazanfar Ali Khan, and Jogendra Nath Mandal joined the ministry representing the League. Mandal, belonging to the Scheduled Castes figured in the League quota because Azaf Ali, a Muslim, was included among the Congress nominees in the ministry! Thus, the entry of the League in the ministry sharpened the Congress-League quarrel.

The explanation offered by the League for deciding to join the ministry is significant to note. They considered that the entire Central administration remaining under the control of the Congress was detrimental to the interests of the Muslim and other communities. Further, the presence of certain individuals in the ministry who did not command the confidence and respect of the Muslim community would have serious repercussions. Jinnah wrote to the viceroy that the League was joining the ministry to avoid these problems.

In other words, the entry of the League in the ministry was a continuation of the communal riots raging on the streets of Calcutta and in the villages in Noakhali, Bihar and other places. Two mutually competing parties in the government and two communities cutting the throat of each other in the streets and in the fields—this was the situation. The entire Indian politics had entered a new and more dangerous stage.

V. THE "GREATEST TEST"

The Conflicts that occurred inside the interim government as well as those outside before its formation marked

the beginning of the process of partition of India. All these were known to the public. Certain other developments also were taking place not so publicly during the same period. Although most people could not perceive the significance of these developments at that time, they had a lot to do with the politics of Indian Union which emerged out of the partion.

We have noted earlier that Nehru had taken over the Congress presidentship from Azad while the discussions with Cabinet Mission were in progress. Consequently the Viceroy invited Nehru as the Congress President to form the interim government. However, evidence had come to light later to indicate that things might have developed in a different way. J. B. Kripalani, then the General Secretary of the Congress, stated:

> The Working Committee meeting held in Calcutta from December 7 to 11, 1945 decided to hold the session of the Congress in the first week of April 1946. Proposals were invited by the A I C C office for the election of the president. ...Three names were duly proposed by the provinces—those of Sardar Patel, Pattabhi and mine. Jawaharlal's name had not been proposed.
>
> Gandhiji had earlier expressed a wish that at that juncture Jawaharlal should be the President. What reasons impelled Gandhiji to recommend his name were not mentioned, so far as I remember. The final date of the proposals to be received by the A I C C was drawing near. Only fifteen members of the All-India Congress Committee are required to propose the name of the President. A meeting of the Working Committee was being held in Delhi a few days earlier. I sent a paper round, proposing the name of Jawaharlal. The members of the Working Committee signed it and also some local members of the A I C C. It was thus that the name of Jawaharlal was proposed for the presidentship. The others thereupon withdrew their names. It was certain that if Jawaharlal's name had not been proposed, the Sardar would have been elected as the

President. The Sardar did not like my intervention. I have since wondered if, as the General Secretary, I should have been instrumental in proposing Jawaharlal's name in deference to Gandhiji's wishes in the matter. But I did not think that the matter was of very great importance. The President of the Congress is the Chairman of the Working Committee. He is first among the equals. No important issue can be decided except by the Working Committee. Also, I do not think that independence, in whatever form it might come, was round the corner. I thought that we had many more struggles ahead. But who can forecast the future? On such seemingly trivial accidents depend the fate of men and even of nations.[1]

Kripalani indicates that if he had not proposed Nehru's name to the presidentship at the instance of Gandhi, Sardar Patel would have been called upon to form the interim government as the Congress President. Although Patel and other members of the Working Committee, as the loyal colleagues of Gandhi, approved of Nehru outwardly as the head of the interim government, they were unable to approve of this choice at heart. As the League ministers left the interim government following the partition, the friction between Nehru and Patel became intense. It continued till the death of Patel.

This was hardly a problem of rivalry between Nehru and Patel alone; it was the beginning of factionalism and conflicts at the top level of the Congress. The faction fight appeared again when a new president had to be elected following the resignation of Nehru as the president consequent upon his selection as the head of the ministry in the interim government. Azad, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Kripalani were the candidates to fill the post of the president. When it appeared that Kripalani was most likely to get elected to the liking of Gandhi and Patel, many Congress leaders, including Nehru, approached Gandhi requesting him not to

1. J. B. Kripalani, *Gandhi, His Life and Thought*, New Delhi, Publications Division, 1970, pp. 248-249.

approve of Kripalani's candidature. Nevertheless, Kripalani was elected president of the Congress.[2]

Briefly speaking, while a wild controversy was raging between the Congress and the League on the question of India's partition, a serious factional fight was developing within the Congress itself. The contents of both these conflicts were of the same nature. The main question underlying the Congress-League conflict was whether India should be kept united or should be divided into two in order to share the political power which was going to be obtained in the near future. The conflict within the Congress, on the other hand, was over the question of who should occupy the top position in the Congress which was going to wield political power.

Although this was a new development at the Central leadership level in the Congress, it was not a new phenomenon in the Congress organization taken as a whole. Right in 1937 when Congress ministries took office in the different provinces, disputes started at the provincial level over berth in the ministries. The war and the Quit India struggle put an end to these disputes for the time being, But when the Congess ministries again came to power in the provinces following the elections in 1946, the disputes reappeared in the provinces. When the gulf between the ministerial and organizational wings widened on the one side, disputes arose on the other side as to who should be the leader of each of the two wings. The developments that took place in the second half of 1945 only showed that this dispute spread to the Central leadership when the time came to form the interim government.

These developments naturally perturbed Gandhi. But more perturbing developments were taking place in the different parts of the country. The communal riots which started in Calcutta spread to Noakhali and from there to Bihar. Details of the attack on the members of the minority Hindu community in eastern Bengal had been coming in. In one of

2. *Ibid*, pp 250-251.

his prayer meetings, Gandhi announced that Congress President Kripalani would go to Noakhali and stated that if necessary he himself would visit Noakhali and die there. Accordingly, Kripalani accompanied by his wife, Sucheta Kripalani, and a group of Congress leaders left for Noakhali. They collected details of the ghastly happenings and consoled the victims of these acts and rendered them different kinds of assistance. Following, Gandhi himself left for Noakhali.

Meanwhile communal riots had spread to the Hindu majority province of Bihar. While the Noakhali killings were organized to avenge the attack on the Muslims at a certain stage during the Calcutta riots, the attack on the Muslim minority in Bihar was organized to avenge the attack on the Hindu minority in Noakhali. Pained deeply by these happenings, Gandhi wrote to Patel: "My non-violence is being tested here in a way it has never been tested before."

As reports from Bihar started pouring in, Gandhi felt the desire to leave Noakhali and go to Bihar. He felt that being a Hindu it was his duty to leave Noakhali where the Hindus were being attacked and go to Bihar where the Muslims were facing the same fate. However, certain Muslim leaders advised him that his presence in Bihar was not an urgent necessity since other leaders from Delhi had arrived there and that it would be better if he continued his work in Noakhali. So, he stayed back.

This was the beginning of the activities in which he was going to engage himself in the next several months. Gandhi had been staying in the capital city of Delhi to assist other Congress leaders in their discussions with the British authorities on the transfer of power. He felt deeply disturbed by the fact that the Congress leaders who were considered to be his loyal disciples were not working according to his advice. He saw for himself that Nehru, Patel, Rajagopalachari and other top leaders were eager to get hold of power by any means. Further, they were fighting among themselves over the sharing of the political power after its transfer to

the Congress. Above all, there was the problem of the country-wide communal riots. He described this as "the most complex and difficult problem which he had to face in his life."

The (Congress) organization which he was able to build through consistent efforts for a quarter of a century had begun to crack. The leaders who had been engaged in selfless service to the people had now begun to engage themselves in factional struggles over the sharing of power. On the other side, the Hindu and Muslim communities were brutally attacking each other in such a way as it appeared impossible to ever realize the goal of Hindu-Muslim unity and friendship which he had been consistently advocating. In the circumstance, Gandhi thought that his place of activities was not the capital city but in the villages of East Bengal and Bihar where people belonging to the two communities were killing each other and that his work was not to advise and assist the Congress leaders in their discussions with the British government on the transfer of power, but to solace and assist those who fell vistim to communal riots. Thus, while Nehru, Patel, Rajagopalachari and other disciples of Gandhi began to wield power as ministers, Gandhi took up the work of saving the people from the horror of communal riots as the last mission of his life.

As we shall see in the following chapters, the gulf between Gandhi and the leaders who were known to be his disciples was widening. Two groups were emerging: a ministerial group playing all kinds of tactics with a view to acquire political power as early as possible, on one side, and Gandhi and his closest associates feeling disturbed by the sight of these manoeuvres and engaged themselves in implementing constructive programmes, including communal unity.

How did this happen? How did the Congress which was considered to have been built on the principles of nonviolence and self-less service to the people turn itself into a centre of rivalries for political power? How did the ideology of communal unity ceaselessly propagated for about a quarter

of a century get destroyed in this manner? Gandhi was unable to find answers to these questions. But he had recognized the truth that such a situation had emerged. This was what distinguished him from other Congress leaders.

30

LAST DAYS OF THE WAVELL REGIME

I. STRIKES AND PEASANT STRUGGLES

The arguments and counter-arguments centring around the formation of the interim government and the communal riots that followed did not complete the picture of Indian politics in the later half of 1946 and in 1947. While the tragic drama of communal riots was being enacted in the different parts of the country, and in parallel to it, certain other developments also were taking place.

We have dealt earlier with the mass upsurge which had emerged throughout the country following the end of the war. Strikes by workers, demonstrations and other forms of protest action by workers, students and other sections of the urban masses were widespread in the country. These were linked with political agitations, too. This was how agitations embracing all sections of the people developed

against the trial of the INA leaders. It was in the same atmosphere again that people in thousands came out in support of the naval mutiny against imperialist domination.

It was, in fact, to stem the tide of this mass upsurge that the British imperialists devised the evil design to prepare the grounds to intensify the Hindu-Muslim conflicts leading them to communal riots, while, at the same time, creating the impression that efforts were being made to transfer power to Indians. As a result, communal feelings began to get strengthened among the poor sections of the people like workers and peasants leading the less class conscious among them to actively participate in the communal riots. However, the rulers could not completely stem the tide of strikes and peasant struggles as evident from the following.

In August-September 1946, workers of the South Indian Railway went on a strike. The authorities let loose cruel repressions against the striking railwaymen as a result of which nine were killed and more than a hundred injured in the police firing. Over 400 workers were arrested. The AITUC gave a call to observe 18th September as a day of solidarity with the striking railwaymen. In response to this call, rallies and demonstrations were held in the different parts of the country and funds collected to help the workers on strike. The strike which brought the railway traffic to a standstill for about a month was withdrawn only after Asaf Ali, the Minister of Railways in the interim government, gave assurances to the workers on their demands.

Workers of the North Eastern Railway also launched a strike almost during the same period. As was the case with the strike in the South Indian Railway, communists and the AITUC were in the forefront of this strike. Although there was a union led by the Muslim League in the NW Railway, the union led by the Communists was able to surge ahead of all other unions, including the one led by the League. Later, workers under its leadership courageously fought against the communal riots in the north western region until the partition of the country.

Among the strikes launched in other sectors during the 1946-47 period, the strikes of the textile workers in Bombay, Nagpur and Kanpur and those of the workers of the coal mines in Giridih in Bihar, workers of the Kolar gold mines in Mysore, the port workers of Calcutta deserve particular mention. In many of these strikes several workers were killed and several more injured in police firing.

A notable feature of the series of strikes launched during the post-war years was that a large section of middle class employees including government servants had entered in the strike movement. The country-wide strike of the employees of the Post and Telegraph Department was, in fact, the forerunner of the strikes of the goverment employees in Madras and in other provinces. Neither the trade union workers nor the government employees had ever thought that it was possible to link the agitations and struggles of the government employees with those of the organized working class. The special feature of the 1946-47 strike movement was that it marked the beginning of the efforts in that direction.

It was an upsurge of the working class embracing the movements in the princely states more extensively than ever before. The strikes which were launched by the working class in the states like Travancore, Hyderabad, Mysore, Indore, etc., were linked with the political movements being conducted by the democrats in the respective states. Working class struggles in Travancore and Hyderabad had played significant roles in the development of the movements of Punnapra-Vayalar and Telangana, respectively, which represented the highest form of the people's struggles in the princely states.

A revolutionary spsurge was witnessed also among the peasantry during the same period. In April 1945, immediately before the end of the war in Europe, a conference of the All-India Kisan Sabha was held in the Netra Kona Village in the Mymansingh district of East Bengal (now in Bangladesh). In the conference and also in the meetings of the Kisan Council that followed, the problems affecting the

peasants as well as the common problems affecting the people were discussed elaborately and a call was given to build a broad based mass movement with a view to find solutions to these problems. These developments prepared the ground for mass based peasant struggles in all the provinces side by side the working class strikes.

Even before the Netra Kona session of the Kisan Sabha, the peasants in Bengal had been raising the slogan of reducing the share of the landowners (*jotedars*) to one-third instead of the existing one-half of the crops raised by the cultivating peasants (share-croppers). The resulting movement known by the generic name of the *Tebhaga* movement received a new impetus from the Kisan conference. Thus, while the discussions with the Cabinet Mission and other political developments were taking place, the tide of the *Tebhaga* movement in Bengal was rising high.

Peasant struggles based on similar partial, immediate demands of the peasantry were going on in many other provinces. But the *Tebhaga* movement was distinct from the peasant movements in other parts of the country on two counts. First, in all other provinces the peasant movement was confined to certain regions, whereas in Bengal the movement was spread all over the province. For example, in Kerala the movement of the peasants to establish their right to pay the rent to the landlord in cash was confined to the northern part of the erstwile Malabar district. Similarly, in Andhra, the peasant movement (except the Telangana movement) was largely confined to the Krishna, Guntur and Godavari districts. Again, in Maharashtra the peasant movement was purely confined to the centres of the Warli peasants embracing one or two taluks.

Second, peasants in both the Muslim majority East Bengal and the Hindu majority West Bengal equally participated in the struggle. It may even be stated that the movement in the East was someweat more powerful than in the West. It may be noted that the entire peasantry, irrespective of religious affiliations, were fighting against the

jotedars in the Muslim majority region of a province in which a political party (the Muslim League) functioning on the basis of the argument that the Muslims are a separate nation, was in power. And it was the Muslim League ministry which resorted to repressive actions against these struggles with a determination to suppress them. The Hindu and Muslim *jotedars* who were quarrelling with each her on the issues of future constitution and the interim government extended full support to these repressive actions of the League government.

The *Tebhaga* movement and the Kisan Sabha played a unique role in resisting the communal riots in Bengal and Bihar. It may be specifically noted that the riots did not break out in those areas in the Noakhali-Tippera districts of Bengal in which the Kisan Sabha had considerable influence. In such areas the Kisan Sabha and the activists of the *Tebhaga* movement organized relief camps for the refugees from the riot affected neighbouring areas. Similarly, in Moghpur in the Monghyr district of Bihar, the Communist Party, Kisan Sabha and other mass organizations organized relief activities to protect the people in the riot stricken areas and to provide relief to the victims of the communal riots. In the urban areas, the trade unions and students organizations were active in the relief operations. Both in the rural and urban areas the Communist Party was in the forefront in giving leadership to these activities.

This and the activities of Gandhi in Noakhali were apparently the same. Both were pained by the sight of people, who ought to have lived as brethren, cutting each other's throat and both expressed their intense desire to stop it. However, they were poles apart on the answer to the question as to how such a situation came about and how to get out of it. The Communist Party regarded that the way to stop all quarrels and to forge unity among the different communities was to wage an uncompromising struggle against the British rulers and organized struggles of workers and peasants against capitalists and landlords based on their

grievances and demands. Gandhi, on the other hand, had been engaged in giving advice and directions to the Congress leaders in their negotiations for a compromise with the British government. He had no sympathy towards workers' and peasants' struggles.

But the atmosphere of communal riots did not cease to exist, as desired by Gandhi and the Communist Party; on the contrary the conflicts were getting sharper day by day. Finally, in the midst of the worst kind of human tragedy, two independent countries, Indian Union and Pakistan, emerged.

Could this have been avoided? It is difficult to answer this question. But the Communist Party, one among those which tried to avoid it, was not powerful enough to effectively challenge the policies pursued by the leaders of the Congress and the League. Gandhi without being conscious of the need to challenge these policies was, on the other hand, blessing the politics of compromise of the Congress leaders. The political approach of the top bourgeois leadership of the Congress and the League, including Gandhi, and the policy of disintegration pursued by the League leadership together with the efforts made by the British rulers to utilize both these factors to preserve their dominance made Indian partition and the widspread communal riots inevitable.

Gandhi could not do anything other than feeling pained to have to see the mission of his life failing. The Communist Party, on the other hand, was not strong enough to bring into action what it thought correct and clear. Thus, Indian politics which had been the plaything of the British rulers as well as of the leaders of the Congress and the League moved from one crisis to another.

II. PUNNAPRA-VAYALAR AND TELANGANA

The struggles in Punnapra-Vayalar in Travancore and in Telangana in Hyderabad represented the highest from of the post-war revolutionary struggles. In many respects, these

struggles were similar in nature. For example, both Travancore and Hyderabad were princely states and in both the states agitations for responsible government were making great strides. In both the states there was a developed Communist Party. The princely rulers of both the states were striving to safeguard their status in the background of the discussions being held among the representastives of the British government, the Congress and the League. The Communist Party which had been playing a decisive role in developing popular agitations against these manoeuvres had been able to enhance its influence among the non-communist democrats in both the states.

In many other respects these struggles were also dissimilar. In Travancore,the ruler and a majority of the population were Hindus whereas in Hyderabad the ruler was a Muslim and a majority of the population were Hindus. The Muslim League had been trying to include Hydrabad in Pakistan in the event of Indian partition. Whether it joined Pakistan or it was maintained as an independent state, a state of Hydrabad which was not part of India would constitute a danger to the security of India. Therefore, the Congress wanted to make Hydrabad a part of India. That is, Hyderabad occupied a vital place in the conflicts between the Congress and the League. As for Travancore, there was no question of joining Pakistan. But the rulers declared their intention to remain an 'independent' country without joining Hindustan, either. Based on this, an "Independent Travancore" movement had come into existence there. Besides, in place of the democratic demand of a responsible govnment in the sense that it should be responsible to an elected legislature, the rulers of Travancore raised the issue of establishing a constitutional system with a government not responsible to a legislature which may be an elected one. Since the contemplated system was on the model of the presidential system of America, it was named "American Model".

If the contemplated system of "Independent Travancore" in the "American Model" was to come into force, it

would be extremely dangerous to the entire bourgeois democratic movement, for the "American Model" was a negation of the democratic objective which the freedom movement had been upholding from its very inception. In addition, the existence of an independent country with a long sea coast at one end of India would bring danger to India's security. Therefore, a state-wide agitation arose against the ideas of 'Independent Travancore' and 'American Model' with the Communist Party in the forefront.

Another factor which distiniguished Travancore and Hydarabad from one another relates to the social organizations and class relations existing in the two states. In Travancore, there was a fairly organized working class. Right from the agitations for responsible government in 1938, the working class had effectively used general strike, a weapon characteristic of that class. As the strike helped the agitation for responsible government, the agitation in turn helped the growth of the working class. In Travancore, the Communist Party was born in the background in which democratic struggles of the people and the independent workers' struggles were helping and relying on each other. Consequently the Communist Party in Travancore was the political party of the working class as well as the vanguard of the democratic movement in the full sense.

That was not the position in Hyderabad. True, there was a kind of trade union developed in the capital city of Hyderabad and there were militant strikes immediately before the beginning of the Telangana struggle. But the Communist Party had no influence in the trade union movement to any considerable extent. The main strong-holds of the Party were in the rural areas and that, too, in the Telugu speaking Telangana region. Although there were democratic movements against the princely rule in the Marathi and Kannada speaking regions in the state, these movements were under bourgeois leadership. The influence of the Communist Party was weak in these movements. Thus, the Party in Hyderabad was confined to the Telugu speaking region of

Telangana relying mainly on the peasantry. The peasant unions and the Andhra Mahasabha were the mass organizations involved in the Telangana struggle.

The distinction between Travancore and Telangana in regard to the class relations that had existed amongst the people and the mass base of the Communist Party may be found reflected in the nature and development of the Punnapra-Vayalar and Telangana struggles. The coir workers in the Ambalappuzha ane Sherthalai taluks with a fighting tradition of over a decade and their fighting organizations together with the repressive actions taken by the rulers to suppress the workers constituted the political background which led to the Punnapra-Vayalar struggle. In Hyderabad, on the other hand, the discontent of the Telugu speaking peasantry towards the feudal elements, called the Deshmukhs, and the aspirations of the Andhra nationality led to the Telangana struggle.

Although the workers in Alleppey and the Communist Party in the whole of Kerala had taken part in the mass upsurge against the feudal-*jenmi* elements in the Ambalappuzha-Sherthalai taluks only weeks before the outbreak of the Punnapra-Vayalar struggle, the Communist Party there could not rise to the position of the leader of the peasant masses.(In Kerala, the peasant movement emerged and peasant struggles fought in the erstwhile Malabar district of Madras and its influence did not extend to Travancore.) In contrast to this, the working class had no direct role in the Telangana movement, although the communist movement there, like elsewhere,was based on working class ideologies and outlook.

There was also a difference in the course of these two struggles. The Punnapra-Vayalar struggle developed rapidly into a coflict between the armed volunteers of the working class and the state army and got suppressed—all in the matter of a few weeks. The Telangana struggle, on the other hand, was a peasant revolutionary struggle lasting for about five years during which more than 4000 communists and peasant activists were killed and over 10,000 communists and

workers of mass movements were thrown behind the bars for long periods. As a result of this long drawn out struggle, 'Gram Raj' was established in 3000 villages covering an area of 10,000 square miles with a population of about three million. The people's oranizations and the volunteer force seized about a million acres of land from the landlords and distributed them among the peasants. Minimum wage of agricultural workers was fixed and they were liberated from the social-feudal oppressions. Such a long drawn out revolutionary movement with far-reaching effects of this kind had never taken place anywere in India before. What was expressed in these two struggles was the efforts made by the princely rulers of these states to sustain their autocratic rule in the background of the negotiations on the future constitution being carried on by the leaders of the Congress and the League and the protests of the democratic minded people against these efforts. Consequently, the impact of the Punnapra-Vayalar struggle remained in the politics of Travancore even after it was suppressed. Although the armed conflict had ended, the democratic minded people in the state, inspired by the struggle, continued their political struggles raising the slogans of "End the Dewan Rule", "Dump Independent Travancore and the American Model in the Arabian Sea", etc. Until the rulers, isolated from the people, retraced their steps, the politics of Punnapra-Vayalar remained relevant in the state.

The rulers of Hydrabad held on for about another year after the establishment of a responsible government in Travancore. Finally, the Indian army had to intervene to force the rulers to surrender, following which Hyderabad joined the Indian Union and a responsible government established there. The political situation changed after these developments. As the bourgeois democrats withdrew their support to the movement following these developments, the Telangana movement lost the popular support of an important section which had remained behind the movement until the surrender of the Nizam.

From this brief description, it will be clear that Punnapra-Vayalar and the Telangana struggles formed an integral part of the post-war revolutionary upsurge in India. Therefore, as the Indian political situation which formed the basis of this revolutionary upsurge underwent a fundamental change with the establishment of a bourgeois democratic system at the centre and in the provinces including the princely states, the political base of these struggles disappeared.

Since the Communist Party had been playing a leading role in both these struggles, the march to the revolutionary future as visualized by the Party became more unhindered. The bourgeois parliamentary elections held after these two struggles demonstrated the premier position of the Communist Party in the Andhra districts including the Telangana region and in the districts of Kerala including the Ambalappuzha-Shethalai taluks. It became clear that the Communist Party was one of the foremost political parties that emerged in the post-independent Indian political scene.

We have explained earlier the circumstance which led to the suppression of the naval mutiny of February 1946. The same can be applied to the Punnapra-Vayalar and Telangana struggles as well. The different streems of people's actions and feelings like the discontent among the ranks of the British Indian armed forces, the wide-sparead workers strikes and peasant struggles of 1945-46, the agaitations of the people in the princely states throughout the length and breadth of the country and the preparedness of the people to carry on armed struggles as witnessed in the Punnapra-Vayalar and in Telangana—each of these streams passed throgh little channels and finally petered out, rather than joining together to make up a mighty turbulent river of revolution. Each of these struggles was isolated and suppresed as and when it occurred.

The leftist parties including the Communist Party were not strong enough to unifiy them and convert them into a single comprehensive revolutionary upsurge. The burgeois leadership of the independence movement, on the other

hand, adopted the course of bargain and compromise, instead of revolutionary struggles. The result? The British rulers could convert the popular feelings into Hindu-Muslim riots.

III. CRISES IN THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT

For over six months after the formation of the interim government, Wavell remained as the Viceroy. This period was marked by constant conflicts between the Congress and the League, on the one hand, and between the Congress and the British authorities, on the other. As a result, the functioning of the interim government often came to a standstill. The events that took place during this period were such that everyone was convinced that a united independent India was impossible to realize.

At the provincial level, in Sind and Bengal where League ministries were in power, the Viceroy and the Governors were in full cooperation with the provnicial ministries and the ruling party, whereas in the provinces ruled by the Congress, they were indifferent if not hotile to the ministries. The Viceroy even ventured to prevent Nehru's protest note being forwarded to the Secretery of State and openly defended the Governors of the League-ruled provinces. A more important incident was the attempt made by the British authorities to prevent Nehru's visit to the NWF Province after the formation of the interim government.

The subject of tribal affairs in the interim government was directly under Nehru and the NWF Province was ridden with tribal problems. As such, no one could object to his visiting the province. But his visit to the NWF Province had a political significance. Although the Muslims constitute 97 percent of the population of the NWF Province, the League was polled less than 30 percent of the votes. In the circumstance, his vist to the province would not remain purely official; it would change into a political visit challenging the claims made by the League. Therefore, the Governor

himself proceeded to Delhi to request Nehru to defer his plan to visit the province. When this became of no avail, the British officials encouragd the League in organizing anti-Nehru demonstrations during his visit. Later, in a letter to Mountbatten, Governor Olaf Caroe blamed Nehru's holding the portfolio of tribal affairs for the whole trouble.

This was by no means an isolated incident. This and similar other incidents were part of the scheme consciously devised by the British authorities to put as much obstructions as possible before the Congress after the formation of the interim government. They fully utilized the anti-Congress feelings of the League for this purpose.

With the entry of the League in the interim government, the problem of distribution of portfotios came up. Wavell supported the League in its claim either to external affairs or to home, which were being handled by Nehru and Patel, respectively. When the Congress refused to part with either of these subjects, it was feared at one stage that the entire plan of Wavell would break down. Finally the League had to be contented with the finance protfolio. What provented the interim government from breaking up at that stage was the thinking among the League leaders that to have a share in the government was far more important than getting hold of this or that portfolio, lest the Congress be the sole ruling party in the country.

When the League joined the government, the Congress-League conflicts were extended to the level of administration also, providing opportunity for the Viceroy to act as an arbiter. In order to avoid it, it was suggested that the ministers meet informally and arrive at an understanding and based on this understanding take decisions formally at the Cabinet meeting. But this arrangement did not work. Instead, the Congress and League ministers met separately in groups. It may be noted that the ministers who did not belong to either of the parties attended the Congress group meetings. Thus the interim government turned into a scene of conflicts between these two camps. The Viceroy got the opportunity to

sharpen the conflicts between the Congress and the League by functioning as an arbiter between the two.

The League had made it clear earlier that they were joining the interim government as it would facilitate the formation of Pakistan. And they adopted an approach towards the Constituent Assembly suited to service this purpose. They argued that the members elected to the Constituent Assembly from the west should be grouped into two sections and the members in these two sections should frame the constitution for their respective sections and that the provinces belonging to these sections would be bound by the decisions taken by the sections by a majority vote. According to the League, this was the essence of the scheme prepared by the Cabinet Mission.

This was not acceptable to the Congress. They demanded that each province belonging to these sections should have the right to decide its own future. They further demanded that any dispute arising out of this should be referred to the Federal Court for its decision.

Since the two parties could not reach an agreement on this issue, the Viceroy had not called for the Constituent Assembly to meet. Finally, under the pressure from Nehru, he called for the session of the Assembly. The League strongly protested against this.

The first session of the Constituent Assembly was scheduled to be held on 9th December. But it was made clear that the League would not participate in it. It had also become clear that even if the League did not participate, the work of the Constituent Assembly would proceed with the participation of all the non-League members of the Assembly. The dispute between the Congress and the League on this issue led to a political deadlock. Outside the government and the Assembly, the people who had rallied behind these parties had begun to move in the direction of communal riots.

The British government once again intervened in the Indian affairs. Prime Minister Attlee invited the leaders of the Congress and the League to London for a discussion.

The Sikh minister Sardar Baldev Sing was also invited to join the talks. Jinnah and Liaquat Ali Khan went to London to participate in the discussions representing the League. The Congress first declined the invitation, but later agreed to participate in the talks in London.

The talks in London did not help solve the problem. The British government made a declaration accepting the interpretation given by the League with regard to the provisions of section meetings contained in the scheme of the Cabinet Mission. As an attempt to solace the Congress, the British government further declared that any dispute over interpretations on this issue could be referred to the Federal Court. This decision naturally left the Congress dissatisfied.

The situations in India began to deteriorate again. The AICC met in January 1947 and adopted a resolution to the effect that there should be no compulsion on a province to join a section and that the rights of the Sikhs in Punjab should not be endangered. The resolution also declared that if there was an attempt to compell a province to join a section, then a province or a part of a province should have the right to take whatever action as required to give effect to the wishes of the people concerned.

Following, a meeting of the Working Committee of the League was held and adopted a resolution stating that the Congress had now openly rejected the scheme of the Cabinet Mission and demanding dissolution of the Constituent Assembly constituted in accordance with the scheme of the Cabinet Mission which had been rejected by the Congress as well as the Sikhs and the Scheduled Castes who stood with the Congress. The Congress, on the other hand, demanded removal from the interim government the ministers of the League who not only refused to attend the Constituent Assembly but also demanded its dissolution. The Congress raised the complaint that the Viceroy and other British officials were rendering all kinds of assistance to the League. As a protest against this attitude of the British authorities, the non-League ministers threatened to resign from the

interim government. The Congress leaders tactfully suggested to the British government the removal of Wavell from the viceregal position.

While the Congress and League leaders were in London in December, certain moves were made by the British government to change the Viceroy. We shall see more about it in the next section. Here, it may be noted that the Viceroy came to realize that things in India were not moving the way he wished. He had thought that after the formation of the interim government first without the League and later with League's participation, he would be able to control the situation by acting an arbiter between the two contending parties. That hope had now belied. On the contrary, it became obvious now that the policy of 'divide and rule' which the British authorities, including himself, had been pursuing might lead to a civil strife in India. He feared that the responsibility for such a situation would rest solely upon the British authorities. In order to avoid it, Wavell formulated a plan to phase out the British forces from India. The British government, however, rejected his plan thinking that it would constitute an admission of defeat. They came to the concusion that it was essential to formulate a new approach towards India and to have a new Viceroy capable of functioning in accordance with it.

IV. WAVELL AND MOUNTBATTEN

The annoucement made by Prime Minister Attlee on 20th February, 1947 was in recognition of the need to adopt a new approach to find a solution to the problems arising out of the rapidly deteriorating situations in India. The anouncement which was often considered "historic" expressed their "definite intension to leave India" by a date not later than June 1948 handing over power to a Central government formed on the basis of a constitution agreed upon by the parties concerned or in the absence of it, to "some form

of Central Government" as a whole or "in some areas to the existing Provincial Governments...." Attlee also anounced the appointment of Lord Mountbatten, the Supreme Allied Commander in the South-East Asia, as the new Viceroy.

The news media had from the beginning tried hard to build the image of Mountbatten as a person lacking the faults which Wavell had and possessing the merits which he lacked. The admirers of Mountbatten have praised the "unusual abilities" of Mountbatten and Lady Mountbatten, the part played by the new Viceroy in the British efforts to "free India" as a whole, if possible, otherwise in two parts, etc. Conscious efforts have been made to create the impression that "Freedom at Midnight" became a reality because the "unimaginative" Wavell was replaced by the "imaginative" Mountbatten as the Viceroy. This was reinforced by the fact that the Congress requested Mountbatten to continue as the first Governor-General of Free India.

It is not true to state that Wavell was against the idea of Britain leaving India handing over power to the Indians. It many be recalled that Wavell had placed the proposal before the Secretary of State for India that since it would be futile to attempt to bring about an agreement between the Congress and the League, the British should be ready to leave India in a phased manner. Although different in form and details, the same idea was contained in the announcement made by Attlee. It is thus clear that the "imaginative" Mountbatten and Attlee and the "unimaginative" Wavell alike recognized the fact that the British rulers would not be able to hold on to power in India for long.

It was widely propagated that Wavell was inimical to the Congress and friendly to the League, while Mountbatten was the other way round. This was baseless. For, as we have seen earlier, it was Wavell who took the initiative to form the interim government under the leadership of the Congress but excluding the League and also convened the Constituent Assembly on the face of opposition from the League. At the same time, it was the British government

that made an announcement in favour of the League when the dispute arose between the Congress and the League over the right of the provinces grouped in the different sections in accordance with the scheme of the Cabinet Mission. Mountbatten was, in fact, appointed Viceroy to implement the decision taken in favour of the League.

All this, however, does not mean that there was no distinction between Wavell and Mountbatten or between Wavell and Attlee. Nor does it mean that differences in personalities and their approaches did not affect political developments. There were, however, certain approaches of fundamental nature adopted by the ruling classes of Britain above personal characteristics and approaches. Wavell, Mountbatten, Attlee, Cripps, Pethick-Lawrence and all others, including the out and out conservative Winston Churchill, were handling the Indian question subject to this fundamental approach of the ruling classes. None could deviate from this approach. The central point of this approach was that the British would not be able to hold on to power for long after the war. How to get out of India was the only question over which they had differed from one another. Wavell was of the opinion that it was futile to hold negotiations with Indian political leaders and that Britian should withdraw from India in a phased manner. Attlee and his colleagues who did not agree with this thought that Britain should consult with Indian political leaders and leave India with their consent. In taking the decision to change the Viceroy, they were led by the understanding that Wavell was incapable of getting their consent by negotiating with them in accordance with this new approach, whereas Mountbatten would be able to do it.

The British rulers were unanimous in the opinion that in the event of the British leaving India, power should be handed over to a coalition government of the Congress and the League by bring about an agreement between them, or, if this was not possible, to two governments by dividing India into two.

Some among the British rulers like Attlee, Cripps, and Mountbatten had closer relations with Nehru and certain other Congress leaders. For that reasan, the League leaders looked upon them with suspecion. All the schemes formulated by the British beginning from the 1942 Cripps Mission contained the dichotomy of Hindu India and Muslim India. Autonomy to the Muslim majority provinces and the right to from groups constituted the common factor of all these schemes. The League had the hope and the Congress the fear that this would lead to the realization of the League's objective of Pakistan. The Cripps Mission and other schemes formulated by the British government reinforced this feeling. Further, as we have repeatedly stated, the central point of dispute between the Congress and the League since the formation of the interim government was the problems relating to the 'sections' and the rights of the provinces grouped into these sections. The judgement awarded by the British government on this dispute went in fovour of the League.

In other words, the British rulers were unanimous in the view that they would not be able to hang on to power in India for long and that in the event of their leaving India, no Muslim majority province should be allowned to opt out of Pakistan even if it decides that way. The difference of opinion among them was over the question of how to hand over power to the Congress and the Muslim League. Here Mountbatten had certain advantages over Wavell.

First, Mountbatten was a new comer to Indian politics and government. Unlike Wavell who had to deal with the Congress during the Quit India struggle as the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in India, Mountbatten was free from being the object of people's prejudice. His appointment as the Viceroy at the juncture helped him to create the impression as 'an administrator to implement a new policy'.

Second, his relation with the British royal family, the stories that got around about his experience of leadership in a vital area during the war and his ability to deal with people had raised expectation that he would be able to face

complax political situation in India. The personal behaviour of Lady Mountbatten added strength to this expectation.

Third, the friendship which had developed between Nehru and Mountbatten while he was the Supreme Commander stationed at Singapore had helped the conduct of negotiations later when he became the Viceroy.

Finally and more importantly, perhaps, he did not attract the hatred of Jinnah as the personal friend of Nehru. This was mainly because Jinnah was conscious of the nature of the scheme Mountbatten was going to implement. Jinnah was certain that whatever Mountbatten might do while maintaining friendship with Nehru, he would be able to turn it in his favour. Both before and after the arrival of Mountbatten, Jinnah acted as a lawyer-politician proficient in negotiations. Consequently, Mountbatten was able to adopt an approach based on the friendship with Nehru and avoiding confrontations with Jinnah.

It must, however, be stated that these personal qualities and capabilities might not have shone but for the political situation prevailing then. The Congress leaders had accepted the partition of India as a reality. They had accepted the sections system contained the long-term scheme of the Cabinet Mission. They had only instisted that the provinces which are grouped into the different sections should not be forcibly merged either in India or Pakistan. They had also recognized the reality that India would have to be divided as a logical extension of the operation of this provision. They now only insisted that just like the division of India, the provices of Punjab, Bengal and Assam should also be divided.

In other words, while opposing Jinnah's slogan of 'Divide India and Quit', the Congress had adopted the state of mind in effect to bring this slogan in force. Mountbatten had only to accomplish the task of determining the details of Indian partition which was being realized through bargains between the Congress and the League.

31

INDEPENDENCE: VICTORY OR DEFEAT?

I. THE SCHEME OF PARTITION

Mountbatten was sworn in as Viceroy as 24th March 1947. For more than a month after taking office, he held separate discussions with leaders of the various political parties, analyzed their opinions and communicated his conclusions to the British government in early May. Based on an amended version of Mountbatten's report, on 3rd June, the British government made an announcement which formed the basis for the establishment of two independent sovereign countries, India and Pakistan, on 15th August 1947.

Based on a vast body of documents comprising notes and letters giving the details of the discussions which Mountbatten had held with Indian leaders in this brief period, many books have been written, some of which, like *Freedom at Midnight*, have been highly controversial. At any rate, these

documents indicated that the question being disscussed at that stage was not whether India should be divided or not, but how should India be divided.

The Congress demanded that, like India, the provinces of Punjab and Bengal should also be divided and the League demanded division of Assam also. The Akalis, on the other hand, wanted a separate Sikh state comprising areas in both wings of Punjab. Different sections put forward different proposals in this manner before the Viceroy.

Top leaders of the Congress which was supposed to oppose partition, like Nehru, Patel, Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, Azad and Kripalani, proposed, though individually, in one voice to the Viceroy that since the partition of India had become inevitable, the Hindu majority areas of Punjab and Bengal should not be included in Pakistan. Jinnah, on the other hand, argued that these two provinces should "wholesale" become part of Pakistan. If there was justification in the demand for the division of India, what was unjust in the demand for the division of Punjab and Bengal? Jinnah had no answer to this question. He requested Mountbatten not to render Pakistan unviable. At the same time, he insisted on the point that the Muslims must get a separate state, however small and weak it might be. His only request now was that like Punjab and Bengal, the Muslim majority areas of Assam should be made part of Pakistan.

These discussions revealed one thing which is of importance for students of the history of freedom struggle. This was the fact that Gandhi, the undisputed and supreme leader of the Congress for over a quarter of a century remained isolated from his colleagues. Pyarelal, a close associate and secretary of Gandhi, has described an incident which revealed his state of mind in those days. Pyarelal writes:

> On....the 1st June (1947), mistaking the hands of his watch, he (Gandhi) woke up earlier than usual. As there was still half an hour before prayer, he remained lying in bed and began to muse in a low voice: 'The purity of my

striving will be put to test only now. Today I find myself alone. Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading of the situation is wrong and peace is sure to return if partition is agreed upon. ...They did not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be a partition, it should not be through British intervention or under the British rule. ....They wonder if I have not deteriorated with age. Never the less, I must speak as I feel.... I see clearly that we are setting about this business the wrong way. We may not feel the full effect immediately, but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark'.[1]

In the midst of spreading the message of communal amity in Bihar, Gandhi reached Delhi on the invitation of Mountbatten. In his first interview with the Viceroy, Gandhi repeated his earlier suggestion to hand over power to a new government headed by Jinnah in order to solve the complex communal problems. This suggestion, however, was not acceptable to Nehru, Patel and other Congress leaders who told the Viceroy that it was an impracticable proposal. Nor was it acceptable to Jinnah who wished to establish a separate state for the Muslims, and not to become the prime minister of a Hindu majority country.

Meanwhile, a serious difference of opinion arose between Jinnah and certain League leaders in Bengal. The latter thought that a separate undivided Bengal would be better than dividing Bengal and presented this opinion before the Viceroy. Reacting to this, Jinnah said that there was no wonder if they did not like a Bengal without Calcutta. But soon they gave up the position and favoured a Muslim Bengal within Pakistan.

Thus, the Congress decided, unhappily though, to divide India, and the League to divide Punjab and Bengal. The future of the Congress majority N W F Province and that of the Muslim majority areas of Assam had to be determined.

1. Pyarelal, *Mahatma Gandhi : the Last Phase*. vol II, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Publishing House, 1958, pp. 210-211.

Similarly, the choice of the personnel of the Indian armed forces had to be made as to which country they would like to go. Actions had to be taken to solve these problems through mutual discussions. These and other matters were contained in the 3rd June announcement of the British government. We shall examine this and its repercussions in the next section. Before that we have to find answers to a number of questions. Specifically, why did Gandhi, the supreme leader of the Congress for a quarter of a century, remained isolated? Why did the League leaders in Bengal try even at the last moment to avoid the division of Bengal? Why did their efforts fail?

The description of events and the social analysis we have attempted to make in the earlier chapters based on these events provide answers to these questions. Let us recapitulate.

The Indian bourgeoisie which began to emerge in the later half of the 19th century steadily gained strength in the 20th century. A Muslim section also gradually emerged within the same class. The British tried to safeguard their own interests making use of the competition and conflicts between these two sections within the Indian bourgeoisie.

Thus the Congress worked for the realization of the demand of independence for the whole of India and the Muslim League for an independent Muslim state along with Indian independence. The masses rallied themselves behind both the sections of the bourgeoisie.

Gandhi's personality as well as the programme of struggle he formulated were beneficial to the bourgeoisie in rallying the masses in the movement for India's independence. Gandhi's method of struggle strengthened them enormously in their efforts to bargain with the British on the economic and political planes. The strict adherence to non-violence in Gandhi's method of struggle provided guarantee to the effect that the anti-British struggles of the people did not turn against the interests of their (the bourgeoisie and their feudal allies) interests. Consequently they were thrilled by the leadership of Gandhi in the continuous struggles and negotiations.

The situation as a whole changed by 1946-47. As a result of the struggles launched under the leadership of Gandhi as well as the development that took place at the international level, it appeared possible for the bourgeoisie to establish their regime in India comprising at least the Hindu majority regions and take the country along the path of capitalism by utilizing the new political power that was going to be acquired. It may be recalled that the leading section of the bourgeoisie had already formulated a plan, known as the Tata-Birla plan, even before the end of the war. The bourgeoisie also had started entering in the field of international relations as evident from the Asian Relations Conference conceived by Nehru in 1945 and held at Delhi in March-April 1947. In the circumstances, it was unthinkable for the bourgeoise to launch another national struggle to win freedom maintainning the integrity of India as proposed by Gandhi. Thus the Indian bourgeoise ignored Gandhi, the 'impractical dreamer' and stood firm behind the Nehru-Patel wing of the leadership handling 'practical politics'.

It was during the war time that the Muslim bourgeoisie achieved the most notable development. Calcutta was one of their principal strongholds. As a Bengal, and for that matter a Pakistan, without Calcutta was unthinkable for them, they made a last minute attempt to retain a united undivided Bengal comprising the Hindu majority west and the Muslim majority east. Jinnah who understood this 'sentiment' did not stand in their way, either.

But the campaign of 'two-nations theory' launched throughout the country for about a decade and the communal riots that followed had altered the very thought processes of the people belonging to the two communities. Although an undivided Bengal had continued to remain a drem for the Calcutta-based Muslim bourgeoisie, ordinary Muslims throughout the eastern part of Bengal including Calcutta had started thinking in terms of forming Pakistan even with a divided Bengal.

It is interesting to note that the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, Kiron Sankar Roy, had lent support to

the efforts of the League leaders in Bengal to maintain the unity of Bengal. Thus, when he had held discussions with the Viceroy the proposal of undivided Bengal had the support of both the ruling and opposition parties in the Bengal legislature. On further discussing the proposal with his colleagues after his return to Calcutta, he realized that the idea was not going to work. Thereupon, the idea of an undivided Bengal was abandoned.

Whatever the differences in details, the contents of all the proposals initiated by the British government from the 1942 Cripps proposals to the 1947 Mountbatten Plan were the same. The essence of all these proposals was that power would not be transferred exclusively to the Congress and that if the Congress was prepared to accept a Central government to the satisfaction of the League, and agreed to partition India under its aegis, it would obtain power; otherwise independence would be postponed indefinitely.

The Congress was not prepared to accept this position in 1942. But after five years it became eager to accept it and to get hold of power. All the Congress leaders except Gandhi were united on this issue, leaving Gandhi a solitary traveller.

II. THE SURGICAL OPERATION

The three sides, the British rulers, the Congress and the League, which took part in formulating the scheme of partition tried to justify their action by comparing the partition of India with a surgery performed on a patient who would have died otherwise.

Whatever the cause, the Hindus and the Muslims had become two communities unwilling to live together. If India had to be maintained undivided in such a condition, the Hindus had to reconcile to the reality of power passing to the Muslims in some provinces, and the Muslims to the reality of power passing to the governments under the control of the Hindus in other provinces and at the Centre. In both the

Hindu and Muslim majority regions there should be governments striving to run the administration consciously above communal considerations.

A situation had now come to prevail under which none of these was possible. The relation between the communities had become one of tension and mutual annihilation. Nehru, Mountbatten and all others concerned recognized the desease for which there was no remedy other than surgery. Besides, once surgery had become inevitable, it had to be performed as early as possible. Accordingly, the British decided to advance the date of departure to 15th August 1947 from June 1948 as announced earlier. It was also decided that power would now be handed over not to the leaders of undivided India but to the leaders of India and Pakistan. Servicemen in the military and police forces, members of the civil service and other government employees would be given the opportunity to opt for India or Pakistan. The assets and liabilities of undivided India would be equitably divided between India and Pakistan. Arrangements were made to work out the details of partition at the official level and at the ministerial level to sperintend the work. With all these arrangements it was expected that the process of partition would proceed peacefully and amicably.

But the result was the other way round. 15th August which should have been illuminated with the bright light of independence was darkened by the shadow of the communal riots. It was the day on which Gandhi, the 'commander-in-chief' of the freedom struggle was afflicted with deep sorrow.

The main points of the announcement made by the British government on 3rd June with the approval of the Congress and the League are as follows.

1. Although the representatives from the provinces of Madras, Bombay, United Provinces, Bihar, the Central Provinces, Berar, Assam, Orissa and the NWF Province as well as those from Delhi, Ajmer-Mewar and Coorg had been participating in the existing Constituent Assembly, a majority of the representatives from Bengal, Punjab, Sind

and Baluchistan and the League members from other provinces were not participating in the Assembly. As such, it had to be decided whether the existing Constituent Assembly should continue and whether there should be a separate Constituent Assembly consisting of the representatives of those provinces, who had kept away from the existing Constituent Assembly.

2. In the NWF Province from which a majority of the representatives had been participating in the existing Constituent Assembly and in the Sylhet district of Assam contiguous to Bengal, a referendum would be held to determine whether they would like to join India or Pakistan.

3. Members of the provincial Legislative Assemblies from the Muslim majority districts of Bengal and Punjab would meet separately to decide which country they would like to join.

4. The members of the provincial Legislative Assembly of Sind would decide which state to join.

5. Appropriate actions would be taken by the Viceroy to enable Baluchistan to make a choice.

6. The above provisions apply only to the 'British Indian' territories and not to the 'Indian States'. In the event of the British leaving the country, the princes who had been ruling these states in accordance with the treaties with the British government, would have the right to decide their future. All the earlier declarations in this regard would remain in force.

The whole scheme appeared to Gandhi, Nehru and other Congress leaders as Balkanizing the country and they were deeply disturbed by it. The reaction of Nehru to the first draft of the scheme was unfavourable. But he found no alternative to it. Thus, the final version of the scheme had his approval.

Gandhi had opposed the scheme at every stage. He thought that the surgery, rather than saving the life of the patient would kill him. The difference between him and the Congress reached its full form.

The full meaning of the surgery started becoming clear as the arrangements to implement the scheme were in progress. Not only India, but also the three provinces of Punjab, Bengal and Assam were going to be partitioned. Not only the people in these provinces but also in all other provinces, who had been living together, speaking the same language, sharing the same culture and traditions in every village and town were going to become the citizens of two different countries. Where should they stand? Should they leave their village or town where they had been living for generations and settle down in unknown villages and towns of another country? Should they regard their friends bound by family and social relations enemies just because they happened to hold faith in another religion and choose a new place and a set of new friends with whom they have no relation except that of religion? These and similar other questions arose before several thousands of families and individuals.

We might feel that there is no justification for thinking in these terms and that it is completely illogical. If a country is divided politically and administratively into two, is there a need for the people in one part to leave their homes and go to the other part immediately after the division? Is it not absurd and unjust to insist that just because Pakistan has been formed, the non-Muslim in Pakistan must necessarily go the Indian Union and the Muslims in the Indian Union to Pakistan? Can't the Hindus in Pakistan and the Muslims in the Indian Union continue to live as citizens in their respective countries?

However, there had emerged in India a situation under which these questions were irrelevant. A situation under which the Hindus and Muslims considered each other enemies had already come to exist in the country. The Muslim League had already formulated the 'two-nations theory' to provide a theoretical basis for the emergence of this situation. The Congress which had been opposing this theory, on the other hand, had reflections of certain elements of Hindu communalism.

Besides, certain organizations like the R.S.S arguing that India was a Hindu nation and that the non-Hindus in India should be 'Indianized', had been fomenting communal riots. The instigators of riots had been encouraged by the British rulers and had been receiving assistance from the vested interests in India.

It was in the soil fertile for the growth of communalism that the British rulers, the Congress and the League jointly decided to sow the seeds of partition. This made the Hindus and Sikhs in the Muslim majority provinces feel extremely anxious. The conditions of the Muslims in the Hindu majority provinces also were bad. The religious fanatics and their organizations on both sides subjected the people belonging to the minority communities who wanted to live in their own country to cruelties unheard-of in normal times. Government officials and oridinary employees who were expected to protect the people from such acts began to function keeping communal considerations in mind.

This was an indication to the new stage of the communal riots which started with the observation of the 'direct action day' on 16th August 1946 with the connivance of the League government in Bengal as well as the British authorities and subsquently spread to Noakhali and Bihar. The political conflicts that took place at the higher level during and after the formation of the interim government provided strength and extent to the communal riots at the lower level. The Congress gave approval to Indian partition and to the partition of Punjab and Bengal thinking that this 'surgery' would help to end this situation and to restore the peace.

But the decision to partition and the news that the Congress and the League gave approval to it brought about a situation quite contrary to this optimism. As it became clear that India would be partitioned soon and along with it the provinces of Punjab, Bengal and Assam, the people who were going to be directly affected by it started feeling agitated. Their emotion began to ferment. For them, the Mountbatten plan was not a document of detached theoretica

interest; it was rather a life issue that puts upside down all their personal and family relationships. The feelings of each of them merged together to form two parallel streams of emotion: Hindu and Muslim. As an inevitable result of it, in the days immediately preceding and following 15th August, hundreds of thousands of people left their homes and moved to the neighbouring country as refugees. Taking whichever mode of trasportation available and carrying whatever domestic effects and other possessions they could collect in hands, people fled form Pakistan to India and vice versa. On the way many were killed at the hands of religious fanatics and many of those escaped murder lost all their possessions and turned destitutes. Women were forcibly carried away and molested and turned victims of forced conversion and marriage. The surgery was performed in this manner on hundreds and thousands of people and families.

It was in this background that the two independent countries, Indian Union and Pakistan, emerged at the stroke of midnight of 14th-15th August 1947. The suggestion came up that there should be a common Governor-General for the new countries and that it should be Lord Mountbatten. The most enthusiastic support to this suggestion came from Nehru, the most radical leader of the Congress which was regarded as more 'anti-imperialist' than the League. But the suggestion was turned down by Jinnah and the League. The League emphatically stated that the head of their state should be their Qaid-e-Azam (Jinnah).

Thus, Lord Mountbatten who left for Karachi to administer the swearing in ceremony of Jinnah as the Governor-General of Pakistan returned to Delhi after the ceremony and administered the swearing in ceremony of Nehru as the first Prime Minister of free India.

While the swearing in ceremonies where taking place, the worst kind of man-hunt human history has ever witnessed was going on all over the country. The freedom fighters, (except Gandhi and his close associates) accepted these tragic events as inevitable in the circumstances that led to the emergence of the Indian Union and Pakistan.

III. LEADERS OF FREEDOM STRUGGLE IN POWER

On 15th August 1947, the Union Jack was removed from the Red Fort of Delhi and in its place was hoisted the national flag of India. Jawaharlal Nehru was sworn in as the first Prime Minister of India. Millions of Indian people regarded the event as the realization of their long standing dream. They welcomed it with great delight.

But away from these joyous celebrations was Mahatma Gandhi working for the re-establishment of peace in Calcutta, the centre of communal riots. No one in India could have ever imagined an Independence Day celebration without his participation. He was, however, not in a state of mind to participate in these celebrations. To a reporter who approached him and sought for a message to the Indian people, he told: My heart has dried up.

The mass killings that took place immediately before 15th August on either wing of the country disappointed him. He had been led by the conviction that the freedom obtained in this background was not genuine. He decided to devote the rest of his life to liberate the people of both India and Pakistan from the brutal emotions which led to this situation. He celebrated Independence Day with fasting, prayer and the recital of *Gita*. Congress President Kripalani stated: "Thousands of people had lost their all including their relatives and friends and no adequate arrangements could be made for the rehabilitation of those who had survived. I had on August 14, 1947 issued a statement in Calcutta in which I had said that 'it was a day of sorrow and destruction for India'. "[2]

But the communal riot and its disastrous consequences were not the only thing which pained Gandhi and other leaders like Kripalani. In the words of Kripalani: "There were also growing differences between Jawaharlal and Sardar

2. J. B. Kripalani, *op cit*, p. 291.

Patel. The Sardar and Maulana Azad were also not pulling on well with each other. To add to these difficulties, the country was suffering from a food crisis. The controls which had continued after the end of the war were not working satisfactorily. Further, there were during this time reports of rivalry for positions of power amongst Congressmen and corruption in the administration. Gandhiji's words carried little weight with the leaders. Partition had not brought peace to the country."[3]

Indications to this had already started appearing even before Independence. For example, after the 1945 elections Gandhi had proposed Rajagopalachari for the chief ministership of Madras. But the decision in accordance with it could not be carried out. Finally, Gandhi himself had to submit to the decision to make T. Prakasam the Chief Minister. But on account of the infighting, the Prakasam ministry did not survive for more than a year. We have already referred to the rivalry between Nehru and Patel which had started immediately before the formation of the interim government at the Centre. However, it had not come out openly till the end of the negotiations between the British government and Jinnah. By 15th August, this rivalry began to get sharper.

But there was absolutely no difference of opinion either between Nehru and Patel or between them and Azad on the question of the primacy of administration over organization. Later, this became sharper in the form of frictions and conflicts between the administrative and organizational wings of the Congress. This has been described by J. B. Kripalani who was the Congress President at the time of transfer of power, as follows.

> My position as Congress President was embarrassing. The leaders in the Government took important decisions without consulting me or the Working Committee of which they were important members and wherein the opinions would

3. *Ibid*, 296.

have prevailed.... In one meeting of the Working Committee Jawaharlal said, 'The historical role of the Congress is finished with independence.' My reply was: 'Then your Government will hang in the mid-air'. I was not called to the conference where the draft of the Independence Bill, to be passed by the British Parliament, was discussed. I did not like to lower the status which had been occupied before me by the most distinguished patriots of the country...."[4]

Thus, Kripalani resigned the presidentship of the Congress. He stated that he wrote a letter giving the reason for his resignation, which were approved by Gandhi as genuine. In other words, the approach adopted by the organizational wing of the Congress against the administrative wing had the general approval of Gandhi.

Another incident which Kripalani has cited is noteworthy. He states: "Jawharlal and the Sardar then approached Rajendra Babu to resign his Food portfolio in the Interim Government and take up the work of the Congress. Rajendra Babu did not approve of this idea. He went to consult Gandhiji. He was against his leaving the portfolio of Food and Agriculture.... However, Jawaharlal and Vallabhbhai ultimately prevailed upon him to become the Congress President. In the final decision that Rajendra Babu took, he had not consulted Gandhiji." [5]

Gandhi had been disturbed by the feeling that most of his trusted followers were moving away from him. Besides, as the Congress which was a fighting organization became the ruling party, its activists at all levels started falling victim to power-hunger, arrogance, selfishness and other evil habits. Considering all this, Gandhi proposed to disband the Indian National Congress as a political organization and "flower into a Lok Seva Sangh", an instrument for serving the people above politics. Since there were many groups among the Congress leaders with distinct views and perspectives, let each of

4 *Ibid*, pp 296-297.
5 *Ibid* p. 297

of them form a political party in accordance with its views and perspective—this was what he had suggested to the Congress leaders. He thought that if the Congress transformed itself into an organization for service to the people, the entire political atmosphere in India would change. Accordingly, Gandhi prepared a draft constitution for the Congress to convert it into a Lok Seva Sangh.

Since the draft constitution was prepared a few hours before Gandhi was assassinated, no action was taken in pursuance of it. The Congress continued as a political party. The conflicts and competition between the administrative (ministerial) wing and the organizational wing and between the leaders belonging to these wings became sharper. Certain sections among the different groups within the Congress at times even came close to the forces of Opposition. A description of the consequences of these developments is, however, beyond the scope of the present volume.

However, it must be indicated here that, as pointed out by Gandhi and many other Congress leaders including Kripalani, the assumption of power by the leaders who had been in the forefront of the freedom struggle had changed the nature of Indian politics. The leaders who were looked upon as symbols of service to the people turned themselves into a group of people who considered their personal interests above the interests of the country. The Congress lost its tradition of service to the people which it had built over a long period of struggle.

Gandhi and Kripalani could not examine these developments; nor could they find a real answer to the question why such developments took place at all. An answer to this question may be easily found if we examine, as we have attempted to do in this volume, the emergence and growth of the Congress in the light of Historical Materialism.

The constant economic and political progress achieved by the Indian bourgeoisie lay behind the emergence and growth of the Congress. The objective of this class was the achievement of political power and continued development of capitalism.

Once the objective was achieved, with limitations though, the ideals which had been leading the political representatives of this class in the struggles to achieve the objective disappeared. In place of these ideals, selfishness characteristic of capitalist society—filling one's own pocket by exploiting the people and competing with each other for the purpose—came out in naked forms.

Leaders like Gandhi who continued to uphold the old ideals to a great extent even at this stage expressed dissent to the policies of their colleagues and began to move along their own path.

It must be noted here that Gandhi, despite the disagreements, never opposed publicly the decisions taken by the leaders working in the administration of the country. Although Gandhi was fundamentally opposed to all the schemes, including those of Wavell, the Cabinet Mission and Mountbatten, he never came forward to organize the masses against them. If the people had known generally that Gandhi was opposed to these schemes and if they had been called upon by Gandhi to oppose them, the Mountbatten Plan would not have come into force so easily.

In other words, the British plan with regard to the division of India as well as the communal riots which broke out raised a number of complex questions before the non-Muslim bourgeoisie represented by the Congress: Was it necessary to acquire power by giving approval to partitioning India, or whether the struggle for freedom should be continued without making compromise over the question of partition? How to normalize the relations between India and Pakistan at the state level and between the Hindus and Muslims in the country after Independence?

Each of the top Congress leaders, including Gandhi, had his own views on these problems. It was, in fact, the conflicts among them that kept Gandhi away from other Congress leaders. At the same time, despite the divergence in views, all of them represented basically the same class interests.

Besides, the controv[illegible]en the Congress and the League had divided th[illegible]ople into the Hindu and Muslim camps. The Hindu fanatics believed that the speeches and activities of Gandhi who was disturbed by the frictions and conflicts arising out of these controversies, were encouraging the unjust claims of the Muslims. They openly gave expressions to their feelings. There were reports to the effect that Gandhi might fall victim to the physical attack of this section.

There was a bomb attack on Gandhi's prayer meeting ten days before he was assassinated. There were complaints later that the ruling Congress leaders behaved thoroughly indifferently without taking the incident seriously.

In any case, Gandhi was assassinated on 30th January 1948. With this ended the era which can be called "Gandhian" in the histroy of Indian people.

Page	Line	For	Read
192	15	1986	1906
227	11	millions	thousands
249	10	Likmaya	Lokmanya
253	24	movent	movement
271	10	messes	masses
,,	12	sadopted	adopted
279	6	Allahabad	Ahmedabad
280	25	Maulana A.C. Azad	Maulana A K.Azad
,,	35	tired waiting	tired of waiting
281	22	Gandh's	Gandhi's
321	18	R. C. L. Shastry	R. C. L. Sharma
336	27	content	contend
353	16	poycott	boycott
365	28	1627	1927
400	15	acreed	creed
423	32	Spru	Sapru
426	1	Spru	Sapru
444	36	trankly	frankly
447	2	order	older
464	10	MacDhnald	MacDonald
507	2	C. V. Chintamani	C. Y. Chintamani
508	26	1033	1933
690	10	in	is
699	19	was	war
743	36	over	our
747	13	1948	1942
752	6	adament	adamant
757	24	down	dawn
785	32	asolution	solution
793	27	Gandai	Gandhi
850	20	Brith	British
851	18	provinsion	provision
859	22	mean	means
876	28	North Eastern	North Western

INDEX

Abdulla, Sheikh, 562, 663, 859, 862
Abyssinia Day, 607
Academic Association, 124
Acharya, M. P. B. T., 306, 307
Adhikari, Dr. G., 312, 315, 331, 375, 514
Afghanfstan 217, 219, 306
Afghans, 59
Aga Khan, 192, 360, 507
Agarkar, 168
Agrarian policy, 92
Agrarian revolution, 16, 31
Aikya Kerala, 214
Ahmed, Gulam, 318
Ahmed, Muzaffer, 307, 312, 319-23, 375
Ahmedabad strike, 251, 299
Aid India Committee, 219
Akali, 843, 896
Akali movement, 302
Akbar, 47, 60, 64, 65
Akbar, Muhammed, 317
Aktar Party, 562
Alexander, A. V., 843
Allied Powers, 234, 237
Ali Brothers, 260, 262
Ali Fida 318
Ali, Maulana Mohamed, 216, 307, 326, 508
Ali, Nawab Mohammed, 46
Ali, Shaukat, 508
Aligarh Muslim University, 154
Alipore Conspiracy Case, 187
All India Communist Conference, 322
All India Congress Committee, 677, 826, 864
All India Federation, 559
All India Harijan Seva Sangh, 496
All India Khilafat Committee, 260
All India Kisan Conference, 600, 601
All India Kisan Congress, 600
All India Kisan Day, 613
All India Kisan Sabha, 600, 612, 613, 644, 645, 650, 655-57, 668, 669, 678, 689, 877, 878
All India Naujawan Bharat Sabha, 436
All India Progressive Writers' Association, 601
All India Spinners Association, 295, 339, 391
All India States People's Conference, 861
All India Students Federation, 614, 646, 668, 819
All India Trade Union Congress, 300, 364, 366, 367, 378-80, 554-56, 643, 644, 819, 876
All Parties Committee, 354-63
Ambedkar, B. R., 353, 357, 492, 623
'American Model', 881, 882
Amery, L. S., 807, 808
Amherst, 51, 95
Amsterdam International, 367, 379
Anand Bhavan, 423
Andhra, formation of, 212
Andhra Mahasabha, 209, 883
Aney, M. S., 497, 526, 527, 529, 531
Ansari, Dr., 329, 352, 455, 508, 510, 511, 531
Anti-Brahminism, 101
Anti-Fascist People's Front, 573
Anti-Hindi movement, 666
Anti-imperialist Front, 570
Anti-imperialist League, 354
Anti-imperialist People's Front, 572
Anushilan Samiti, 186
Arms Act, 128
Arogya Prasad, 322
Arthashastra, 123
Aryans, 19, 76
Arya samaj, 146, 149, 207
Asaf Ali, 815, 816, 838, 867, 868
Asaf Ali, Aruna, 758, 759, 838, 839
Asian Relations Conference, 899
Asiatic Society, 81, 82, 86
Assam, 842, 902
Atlantic Charter, 735
Attlee, 824, 888, 890, 891, 901, 902
Auckland, 51, 134
August Revolution, 766
Aung San, 832
Aurangazeb, 33, 60, 62, 65
Ayyappa Seva Sangh, 150
Azad, Abul Kalam, 40, 54, 55, 216, 278, 280, 329, 635, 648, 673, 709, 731, 743, 814, 848, 855, 856, 870, 896, 907

Backward Castes, 147
Bagerhatta, J. P., 323
Bajaj, Jamnalal, 383
Baksh, Allah, 664, 781
Balasundaram, 205-207
Baldwin, 465, 466
Balkan War, 216, 217, 259, 263
Ball, Charles, 54
Baluchistan, 902
Banerji, Surendranath, 128, 130, 136,

137, 140, 171, 181, 241
Banerji, W. C., 136, 140
Banias, 116, 117
Bande Mataram, 150, 184
Bardoli, 281, 355, 356, 457, 458, 471
Barkatulla, 306
Battle of Delhi, 64
Battle of Plassey, 33, 35
Bengal, 28, 30, 35, 902
Bengal famine, 786
Bengal partition, 170, 171, 177, 189, 195-97, 202, 208, 214-17
Bengalee, 129
Bengali extremists, 194
Benn Wedgwood, 463
Besant, Annie, 150, 227-45, 230, 268
Bharat Mata, 150
Bharati Movement, 106, 110
Bhave, Vinoba, 718, 721-24
Bhoomijas, 50
Bipan Chandra, 588-592, 597
Birkenhead, 295, 335-37
Birla, G. D., 589, 592, 594, 818
Bismark, 9
Blavasky, Madame, 146
Blitzkrieg, 715
Boer War, 159
Bolshevik Agents, 319
Bolshevik Government, 218
Bolshevism, 318
Bose, Khudiram, 187
Bose, Rash Behari, 763, 764
Bose, Sarat Chandra, 832, 854, 868
Bose, Subhas, 280, 345, 358, 369, 370, 373, 385, 388, 391, 397, 406, 499, 521-23, 531, 543, 553, 583, 592, 593, 624, 657, 671, 678, 679, 723, 724; in Karachi Congress, 444, 445; in Haripura, 670; Jalpaiguri conference, 672; in Tripuri, 673; resigns from Congress Presidentship, 676; and fascism, 688, 689; against compromise politics, 709; leaves India, 729; in Germany, 761; in Tokyo, 763; and Provisional Government, 764
Bomb, Cult of, 183
Bombay Association, 125
Bombay, revenue collection, 30
Bourgeois democratic movement, 209, 210, 213
Bourgeois democratic revolution, 11
Bourgeois liberalism, 132
Bourgeois national movement, 85
Bourgeois nationalism, 79, 80
Bourgeois nationalist, 57, 96, 226
Boycott, 177, 197
Boycott of foreign textiles, 173-75, 270, 275, 391, 432
Bradley, Ben, 375, 587
Bradlaugh, Charles, 139, 140
Brahma Samaj, 98, 101, 104, 137, 145
Barahmin domination, 332
British Indian Association, 125, 130
British Indian Society, 125
British bourgeoisie, 27, 145, 162
British capital investment in India, 345
British Commonwealth, 739
British Labour Party, 300, 320, 367, 368, 420, 421, 463-65, 824
British rule, dual character, 23
British system of administration, 44
British traders, 25
Buddhist religion, 105, 107
Burma, 772
Cabinet Mission, 841-51, 860, 861, 863, 889, 910
Cama, Madame, 159, 188
Canada, 218, 220
Capital, 12
Capitalism, 22, 35; in England, 12
Capitalist development, 77, 91; in England, 28; in India, 27, 565, 566
Capitalist plantation, 161
Capitalist relation, 14
Capitalist society, 19, 91
Caroe, Olaf, 887
Caste, 15
Caste-communal organizations, 35
Caste-communal politics, 407
Caste-communal forces, 28
Caste domination, 166
Caste-Hindus, 102
Caste society, 74, 80
Caste system, 81
Central Executive Council, 842
Central Legislative Assembly, 140, 141 809, 810, 814, 824, 942
Chakki, Profulla, 187
Chamanlal, Dewan, 366, 407
Chamberlain, Austin, 234
Chamberlain, Neville, 697, 716 796,
Chambers of Commerce, 141
Champaran, 251
Charka, 274, 293
Chartist movement, 133
Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra, 150, 194

Chattopadhyaya, Harindranath, 306
Chattopadhyaya, Kamaladevi, 524
Chattopadhyaya, Virendranath, 306
Chaturvarnya, 20, 80, 86
Chauri Chaura, 282-85, 301, 313, 318, 349, 353, 417
Cherusseri Namboodiri, 107
Chettiyar, Chakkarai, 251
Chettiyar, Shingaravelu, 316, 319, 321, 323
Chetty, Shanmugam, 544, 545
Chetty, Swami Venkatachalam, 544
Ching Kai-shek, 738
China, 9, 18, 19, 57, 160, 219, 220, 354, 743
Chintamani, C. Y., 286, 291, 507
Chittagong Armoury Case, 413, 414
Christianity, 16, 70, 92
Christian missionaries, 99, 110
Christians, 68, 69
Chowdhury, Dr. S. B., 55
Chundrigar, 868
Churchill, W., 697, 716, 735, 752, 777, 824
Chuwar tribes, 50
Civil Disobedience, 276, 283, 485
Civil Liberties Union, 608
Class struggle, 6, 7
Class Struggle in France, 1848-50, 8
Clive, 16, 33
Cochin, 859
Conditional co-operation, 243
Cologne Trial, 320
Commodity production, 21, 22
Common language, 107
Communal and caste politics, 332-38
Communal award, 488, 527-30, 799
Communal riots, 325, 808, 866-79, 901
Communal question, 157, 225
Communist International, 307, 313, 367, 370, 515, 571-73, 577-99, 581, 585, 621, 681-86, 697, 732
Communist Manifesto, 6, 8, 9, 13, 18, 19
Communist movement, 323, 324
Communist Party of Great Britain, 519, 732
Communist Party of India, 305, 307, 310, 367, 513-20, 524, 575, 579, 584, 585, 596, 610, 650, 668, 678, 695, 725 773, 785, 786, 827, 828; formation at Tashkent, 307, 517; manifesto to Indian National Congress, 308, 309; reorganization, 683; and left forces, 683-89; and anti-imperialist war, 686; and anti-war agitation, 720, 727;—and Socialist differences on mass movement, 725; and Second World War, 729-34; and Quit India Struggle, 767-774; and Indian national problem, 801-06; and post-war people's actions, 830; and RIN mutiny, 838-40; and federal constitution, 849; and communal riots, 879, 880; Punnapra-Vayalar, 880-86; and Telangana, 880-86
Communist Party of Pakistan, 307
Congress Democratic Party, 244, 245, 391
Congress Nationalist Party, 520, 521, 544-49, 567
Congress Socialist, 668
Congress Socialist Party, 502, 526, 537, 555, 556, 575, 580, 584, 585, 596, 610, 619, 650, 678, 684, 695, 727, 765; Patna Conference, 524, 526; Meerut Thesis, 585; of Kerala, 686; expel communists, 725
Constituent Assembly, 888, 889
Cotton textile industry, 116, 143
Cripps, Sir Stafford, 738, 825, 841, 843, 844, 900
Cripps Mission, 735-41
Cuba, 57
Cultural renaissance, 118
Curzon, Lord, 140
Daily Herald, 421, 422
Daily Tribune, 12
Dandi March, 396
Dange, S. A., 307, 312, 316, 319, 331, 375, 514, 518
Das, C. R., 257, 268, 278-80, 291, 294-96, 315, 329, 335, 338, 339, 346, 366, 367, 379, 502
Daulatram, Jairamdas, 424
Dawn, 798
Dayal, Har, 188
Dayanand Saraswati, 146, 149
Decolonization Theory, 312
Deen, 69
Democratic movements (princely states), 558-63
Deo, Shankarrao, 619, 722
Depressed Castes organizations, 353
Desai, Bhulabhai, 471, 509, 546, 548, 809-12;—Liaquat talks, 813
Desai, Mahadev, 487

Deshmukh, 'Lokahitawadi', 125
Dev, Acharya Narendra, 574, 671
Dhillon, Capt., 831
Dhondoji Wagh, 44
Digby, William, 143
Dimitrov, Georgi, 320, 572, 579
Direct Action Day, 858, 865, 924
Disraeli, 52, 54
Divide and rule tactics, 170-176
Diwani, 25, 28, 35, 47, 49, 96
Diwan-i-Am, 51
Diwan-i-Khas, 51
Dominion Status, 343, 350-63, 383, 718, 808
Dravida Kazhakam, 667
Dravida Munnetra Kazhakam, 667
Dravidian 1
Duff, Alexander, 54
Dufferin, Lord, 132, 135, 138, 156
Duke of York, 101
Dupleix, 33
Durga Das, 246, 248, 465, 649, 651, 653, 789
Durga puja, 150
Dutch, 24
Dutt, B. C., 836, 837, 839
Dutt, Bhuteswar, 372
Dutt, Michael Madhusudan, 135
Dutt, Ramesh Chandra, 121-123
Dyer, 256-258

East India Company, 18, 23, 26, 28, 29-31, 34, 35, 52, 61, 75, 125, 160, 161
Economic development in India, 408-11
Economic policies of British, 35
Economic production, 6
Educated middle class, 77, 127-130, 151
Egypt, 18, 19, 152
Eka Movement, 302
Elite class, 36, 38, 49, 61, 93
Elite, Muslim, 194
Ellenborough, 52
Engels, F., 6, 9, 7, 11, 12, 17, 571
English bourgeoisie, 16
English language, 110
English medium Schools, 94
English milliocracy, 83, 84
Engineer, N. P., 854, 856
Erskine, Lord, 642
Europe, 11, 16, 18
European renaissance, 98
European traders, 19
Exchange of commodities, 23
Explosives Act, 184

Extremists, 160
Extremist tendencies in Bengal, 170
Ezhuthachan, 210
Factionalism in Congress, 869-71, 873
Factory Labour Commission, 165
Famine, 83, 129, 136, 168, 185
Faraidi Movement, 68
February Revolution, 9
Federal constitution, 850
Federal Court, 889
Feudal Chiefs, 26
Feudal lords 34-36, 43, 58
Feudal forces, 14, 17
Feudal system, 29
Feudalism, 14
Finland, 159
Fitingova, Rosa, 307
Foreign capitalism, 23
Foreign market, 31
Foreign traders, 27, 43
Forward Bloc, 683, 688, 725
France, 9, 23, 24, 33, 34, 152, 159, 218 227, 237
Franco, Gen., 573, 694
Free Press Journal, 837
Free trade, 19
Freedom of the Press, 95, 98, 201
French Communist Party, 772
French Revolution, 16, 96, 99
Full Independence, 343-49, 377-400

Ganavani, 368
Gandhi, Mahatma, 4, 203, 243-45, 523, 525, 589 705, 872, 896, 909;—'s political outlook, 208; and Tilak, 246-53; and labour organization, 251;—'s politics, 274; and South African struggle, 202-08; resistance to racism, 204; method of struggle, 207; Civil Disobedience, 284; Dandi March, 401, 402; Salt Satyagraha, 411, 412;—'s 11 points, 420;—Irwin Pact, 431-38, 530; at Karachi Session, 440-42; Second Round Table Conference, 460, 463-69; Civil Disobedience Movement, 475-85, Poona Pact, 488; Harijan Welfare, 491-99; Selfpurification fast, 498; Individual Satyagraha, 503; and the Left, 531-44; retires from Congress, 531-537; and movements in princely states, 660;—Bose relation, 673-76, at Ramgarh Session, 710; on Congress organization, 710, 711;—Vs Congress Working Committee, 716,

717; for unconditional assistance to British, 717; launches Individual Satyagraha, 720; attitude towards war,721; on fast, 777;—Jinnah talks, 796-801; and Cabinet Mission, 844-46; on Cabinet Mission Plan,853; opposes participation in Interim Government, 855; opposes Cabinet Mission Plan, 857; opposes Partition, 897; and Indian bourgeoisie, 898; isolation from colleagues, 898, 907, 908; assassination, 911
Gandhi Vs Lenin, 312
Gandhian era, 246-283
George IV, King, 752
George, Lloyd, 259, 261, 289
Germany, 217-19, 223, 306
Ghaddar Party, 302, 307
Ghate, S. V., 322, 323, 375, 514
Ghosh, Ajoy, 372, 376
Ghosh, Aurobindo, 186, 187, 194
Ghosh, Birendra Kumar, 186
Ghosh, Rash Behari, 175, 179, 180
Giap, Gen., 715
Giri, V. V., 555
Gram Panchayat, 35
Gupta, Nalini, 319, 321
Goa, 25
Gokhale, Gopal Krishna, 123, 168, 174, 175, 178, 196, 197, 244, 225, 244, 248, 682;—Morley talks 198, 199
Gonds, 50
Gopal, S., 586, 605, 606, 642, 651
Gorki, Maxim, 601
Govt. employees (Madras) strike, 877
Govt. of India Bill (1935), 564-69, 809
Govindan Nair, C.K., 524

Handicraft, declining, 119
Handloom, destruction of, 18
Hailey, Malcolm, 461
Hanuman,15
Hardayal, Lala, 305
Hardikar, N.S., 232
Hartal, 255, 256
Hartog, Philip, 378
Hasan, Shamsuddin, 319
Hidayattullah, Gulam Hussain, 664
Hilal, 216
Hind Swaraj, 207
Hindu, 27, 36
Hindu communalism, 903
Hindu communalists, 20
Hindu Culture, 146
Hindu *Dharma*, 67
Hindu intelligentsia, 150
Hindu Maha Sabha, 194, 326-29, 530, 623, 799
Hindu-Muslim conflicts, 68, 173, 189-95, 876
Hindu-Muslim Convention, 224
Hindu-Muslim problem, 330
Hindu Philosophy, 20
Hindu religion, 20
Hindu revivalism, 145-51, 157, 194
Hindu *Sanyasis*, 67
Hinduism, 99
Hindustan Labour Kisan Party, 316
Hindustan Seva Dal, 384
Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, 372
His Brittanic Majesty, celebration of, 552, 553
Historian, nationalist, 2, 3, 6, 39, 57
Historian, non-Marxist, 6, 10
Historian, pro-Congress, 4
Historian, pro-imperialist, 3
Historical Materialism, 2, 6, 8, 10-12, 41, 909
History of Freedom Movement in India, 54
Hitler, 607, 697, 714, 722, 727
Hoare, Sir Samuel, 463, 479, 485-87
Ho, 50
Ho Chi Minh, 715, 832
Holland, 23, 33
Home Rule League, 227-45
Home Rule Movement,150;in Ireland,232
House of Commons, 54
Hume, Allen Octovian, 131, 132, 134,136
Hungary, 159
Huq, Fazlul, 257, 623, 637, 665
Hussain, Ghulam, 312, 319
Hussein, Zakir, 854
Hutchinson, 375
Hyderabad, 859

Ilbert Bill, 129, 130
Imperial Preference, 407, 408, 410
Independent journalism, 97
Independent Labour Party, 623
Independent Travancore Movement, 881, 882
"India Act", 37
India Bill (1853), 127, 134
India House, 188
India Today, 312
India and capitalist crisis, 404-11

India in Transition, 312
Indian bourgeoisie, 123, 142, 145, 221, 222, 225, 227, 234, 297, 898, 899, 909; and Partition, 899
Indian Capitalists, 143, 162-65, 222, 270, 345
Indian civilization, 17, 18, 23
Indian cotton, 81
Indian Communist Movement, 305
Indian culture, 96
Indian economists, 121
Indian economy, 263-65
Indian elite, 35
Indian handloom, 81
Indian Home Rule Movement, 138
Indian Home Rule Society; 188
Indian Independence League, 763
Indian language press, 128
Indian National Army, 727, 731, 741, 764-67, 831, 832; INA trial, 876
Indian National Congress, 3, 4, 131-50; against Bengal Partition, 173; Calcutta Session, 173, 175-77; Surat Session, 179, 181-83; Extremists rejoin, 224, 225; Amritsar Session, 246, 266, 267; special Calcutta Session, 267; Nagpur Session, 271; Salt Satyagraha, 269, 401-3, 411, 412; three political trends, 273; Gaya Session, 291; special Delhi Session, 304; Lahore Session 376; Independence Day, 396, 419, 551, 552; Karachi Session, 446, 454; Fundamental Rights Resolution, 446-54; Second Civil Disobedience, 475-85; Calcutta Session, 497; Individual Satyagraha, 499-505, 510; Lahore Session, 516; Individual Satyagraha withdrawn, 522; Bombay Session, 529, 537-44; and Simon Commission, 547-49, 550-60; and democratic movements in princely states, 558-63, 658-64, 859; 1935 Reforms Act, 567; Lucknow Session, 583, 595, 602-06; and 1937 elections, 609-15, 622-28; Faizpur Session, 615, 621; ministries in provinces, 626; provincial governments, 641-52; All India Convention, 627, 628; ministries and political prisoners, 653, 654; Parliamentary Subcommittee, 648; Haripura Session, 652-58, 660, 661, 670; Jalpaiguri Conference, 672; Tripuri Session, 675, 676; Surat and Tripuri compared, 682; and Second World War, 690-95 698, 701; resignation of ministries, 702; renewal of struggle, 707; Ramgarh Session, 709; resumption of satyagraha, 720; Quit India, 730-33, 741-59; election manifesto, 827; talks with Cabinet Mission, 844-47; Simla Conference, 849, 850; and Cabinet Mission Plan, 851, 852; decides to join interim government, 855;—League dispute on Constituent Assembly, 880-90; demands partition of Bengal and Punjab, 894; Mountbatten Plan accepted, 896
Indian National Trade Union Congress, 820-22
Indian political economy, 118, 120
Indian princes, 26
Indian press, 128
Indian residents abroad, 188
Indian rural economy, 30
Indian states, 902
Indian social system, 2, 16
Indian Socialist Labour Party, 316
Indian society, 15
Indian Sociologists, 188
Indian soldiers, 56, 57
Indian textiles, 31
Indian traders, 25
Indian village system, 30
Indian War of Independence, 53
Indian Working class, 13, 300
Indigenous industry, 162
Indigo farmers, 135, 136
Indigo plantations, 90
Individual Satyagraha, 720
Indo-China, 24, 715
Industrial capitalism, 111-14, 117, 122
Industrial proletariat, 27
Industrial revolution, 31, 109-13
Industrial workers, 159, 250
Industries in India, 162, 163
Industry and trade, 8, 35
Inprecor, 313, 578, 580
Instrument of production, 1
Interim government, 864, 867, 886
Internal trade, 23
Iran, 18, 19, 152, 160
Irwin, Lord, 346, 347, 381, 431, 455, 465, 474
Islamic politics, 151-57
Islamic revivalism, 195
Italy, 761
Iyer, Sir Subramania, 231, 233

Jallianwala massacre, 246, 253-59
Jagirdar, 47, 73
Jamiat-ul-Ulema, 635
Japan, 111, 217, 219, 220, 728, 737
Jayakar, M.R., 257, 341, 423, 432, 793, 794
Jihad, 21
Jinnah, 268; 280, 281, 292, 357, 359, 508, 509, 546-49, 567, 636, 637, 665, 678, 694, 780-83, 786, 796-98, 809-11, 814, 815, 842, 844, 889, 894, 896, 905, 907
Jirga, Afghan, 459
Joglekar, K. N., 322
Jones, Ernest, 133
Josh, Sohan Singh, 514
Joshi, N. M., 380, 555
Joshi, P. C., 368, 375, 514, 585
Judicial system, 28
Justice Party, 332, 353, 623, 666
Phule, Jyotiba, 101, 145
Kabir, 107, 210
Kakori prisoners, 653
Kali pooja, 150
Kambar, 210
Kampuchea, 772
Kanpur Conspiracy Case, 317-24
Kanpur textile strike, 643
Kashmir, 858-63
Kashmir Muslim Conference, 859
Kashmir National Conference, 562
Katta Bomman, 40, 44, 45
Kaur, Rajkumari Amrit, 854
Kaye, J. W., 54
Kelappan, K., 496, 524
Kelkar, N. C., 341
Kerala P C C, 120
Kesari, 168
Kesavan, C., 563
Khadi, 275, 276, 294, 295
Khalif, 152
Khaliquzzman, 634, 694
Khan, Abdul Ghaffar, 415, 459, 472, 553, 624, 860
Khan, Hafizulla, 317
Khan, Hakim Ajmal, 279
Khan, Khizr Hyat, 815, 842
Khan, Liaquat Ali, 809, 810, 816, 868, 889
Khan, Safaat Ahmed, 867, 868
Khan, Sayyed Ahamed, 191, 783
Khan, Sikander Hyat, 637, 665, 781
Khan Saheb, Dr., 472
Khasis, 50
Kheda, 252
Kher, B. G., 642
Khilafat, 216, 259-65, 301, 304, 305, 308, 309, 325-27, 332, 348, 363
Khudai Khidmatgars, 415
Kidwai, Rafi Ahmed, 636, 649
Kieths, A. B., 630
Kingdoms in South, 47
Kirti, 368
Kisan Congress, 619
Kitchlu, Saifuddin, 255, 257
Kodum Tamil, 210
Kohat riots, 328
Koonan Kurisu Pledge, 69
Korea, 57
Kotnis, Dr. 685
Kranti, 368
Krishak Praja Party, 623, 625, 634, 665, 817
Krishna Menon, V. K., 607
Krishna Pillai, P., 524
Kripalani, J. B., 810, 852, 855, 869-72, 896, 906, 906, 908, 909
Kripalani, Sucheta, 872
Kshatriyas, 92
Kunchan Nambiar, 106
Labour Monthly, 586
Labour Party, 159
Lohore Conspiracy Case, 375, 384, 385
Laissez-faire, 122
Land Holder's Society, 125
Landed aristocracy, 86, 91
Landlords, 31
Land relations (under Mughal), 29
Land revenue, 29
Laos, 772
League against Imperialism 371, 573
Le Duan, 715
Left unity, disruption of, 724-29
Leftist Coordination Committee, 678
Left-wing nationalism, 150
Lenin, 57, 169, 189, 571, 577, 609, 621, 803
Liberal Federation, 239, 241, 351, 359, 360
Liberal Party, 121, 132-34, 137, 159
Linguistic states, agitation for, 208-14
Lord Linlithgow, 378, 642, 784, 789
Lok Seva Sangh, 908, 909
Lohia, Rammanohar, 685, 758, 759
London Meeting, 818, 889
Lothian, Lord, 485
Lucknow Pact, 226, 227, 334
Lytton, Lord, 129, 134

Macaulay Minute, 95
MacDonald, R., 320, 351, 381, 399, 425, 436, 464
Madhavan, A., 524
Madras Native Association, 126
Madras Presidency, land revenue, 30
Madrassas, 153
"Magna Carta" of India, 236
Mahajana Sabha, 130
Mahalwari, 29, 88
Maharaja of Cochin, 33
Maharaja of Travancore, 33
Mahe, 25
Mahratta, 59, 168
Majid, Abdul, 317
Majumdar, R. C., 54, 55
Malabar, 213
Malaviya, Madan Mohan, 261, 268, 280, 281, 326-28, 340, 407, 455, 484, 497, 526-29, 531, 613
Malaya, 772
Malayalam, 106
Malikhan, 37
Malleson, Col. G. B., 54
Manufacturing industry, 31
Jogendranath Mandal, 868
Manilal, 319
Mansur, Ferozuddin, 307, 317
Mao Zedong, 570
Marathi, 79
Martizburg prison, 205
Market, for foreign goods, 31
Maruda Pandyan, 45
Marwaris, 117
Marx, Karl, 7, 9, 11-17, 19, 59, 80-88, 115, 305, 306, 320, 376, 571; on India, 13, 16
Marxism, 78
Marxism-Leninism, 307, 311, 315, 585
Masani, M. R., 524, 685-87
Mauryas, 41
McCarthy, J., 52
Medieval India, socio cultural life of, 92
Medium of instruction, 94, 95
Mehanatkaksh, 368
Mehmood, Gulam, 317
Mehta, Ferozeshah, 140, 175, 682
Meerut mutiny, 71
Meerut Conspiracy Case, 320-22, 370-76, 384, 449, 514-18, 586
Mercantile capitalism, 111, 112
Mimamsa, 95
Minto, Lord, 198, 201
Minto-Morley Reforms, 198, 237
Mirajkar, S. S., 368, 514
Mir Jaffar, 25, 26
Missionary propaganda, 71
Mitra, Deena Bandhu, 135
Mittar, P. C., 287
Mode of production, 18
Moderates, 176, 177
Moderates-Extremists, conflicts of, 164
Modern education, 95, 97, 153
Modern educational institutions, 118
Modern grammer, 109
Modern nationalism, 53
Modern Review, 305
Modern Knowledge, 109
Modern system of educatian, 93
Modernization, 2
Modernization of agriculture, 166
Modernization, foundation for, 118
Mohamud, Dr. Sayed, 424
Mohani, Maulana Hazrat, 279, 322
Monopoly capitalism, 142, 161
Monopoly Industrial Houses, 117
Montagu, 231-34, 245
Montagu-Chelmsford Report, 238-45, 292, 261, 271
Moonje, B. S., 341
Mopla rebellion, 301
Morley, J., 196-98
Mother tongue, 271
Mountbatten, 790, 833, 887, 891, 893, 900, 901, 905, 910;—Plan, 895
Mudholkar, R. N., 140
Mughals, 14, 17, 22, 28, 47, 59
Mughal Emperor, agents of, 30
Mughal Empire, 24, 33
Muhammad, Sultan, 317
Mukherji, Abani, 306, 307
Munich Pact, 696
Munshi, K. M., 641, 678
Muslim, 61
Muslim bourgeoisie, 898, 889
Muslim caste, 21
Muslim community, modernization of, 154
Muslim elites, 67, 157,
Muslim *Fakirs*, 67
Muslim League, 190-93, 200, 215, 216, 222-26, 223, 236, 237, 327, 332-34, 341, 342, 492, 625, 634, 638, 640, 665, 703-05, 774, 775, 780, 785, 827, 842, 859; Lahore Resolution, 707; demands Pakistan, 707; accepts Cabinet

Mission Plan, 852; demands interim government without Congress, 857; withdraws acceptance of Cabinet Mission Plan, 857; decides direct action, 858; and Kashmir movement, 862; Direct Action, 865, 866; in interim government, 868; demands partition of Assam, 872
Muslim National Party, 562
Mussolini, 727
Muzaffarpur murder, 187
Mymansingh, 877

Naicker, E. V. Ramaswamy, 333
Naidu, Sarojini, 424, 455, 602
Nana Saheb, 59, 64, 65
Narayan, Jayaprakash, 524, 681, 583, 585, 600, 687, 728, 756-61, 819
Narayana Menon, Vallathol, 563
Natarajan, S., 837
National Agricultural Party, 623
National Front, 668
National Liberal League, 239
National movement, early, 5
National Planning Committee, 664, 692, 693
National Students Organization, 821
National Trade Union Federation, 554, 555, 644
Nationalist Party, 560, 613, 842
Naoroji, Dadabhoy, 119-23 126, 127, 143, 153, 159, 162, 168, 174, 176-78
Naya Kashmir Programme, 863
Nazi Germany, 727
Nazr, 51
Nehru, Jawaharlal, 315, 345, 353, 358, 362, 363, 369, 370-74, 384-97, 406, 423, 436, 482, 500, 521-25, 531, 555, 569, 570, 583, 595, 603-15, 636, 641, 642, 654, 688, 722, 745, 864, 869, 896, 901, 905, 906, 908; and Gandhi, 386-89; at Karachi Session, 446, 454; and Communists, 586,587; and Indian bourgeoisie, 588-95; at Lucknow Session, 603-06; and Spanish Civil War, 607; at Faizpur Session, 615-21; and Quit India struggle, 745; Vs Communists, 818; defends INA, 831; visit to South-East Asia, 833; and Kashmir movement, 861, 862; on the role of Congress, 908
Nehru, Kamala, 585
Nehru, Motilal, 257, 261, 268, 278, 284, 291, 332, 335-61, 381, 382, 389, 393, 408, 418, 423, 433, 482, 502
Nehru Report, 359, 508
Nepalis, 79
New Age (Madras) 668
Nimkar, R. S., 376
Nistar, Abdur Rab, 854, 868
Nizam, 26, 42, 44, 61
No-tax campaign, 433
Non-Aryan tribes, 19
Non-Brahmin movement of Maharashtra, 101
Non-Brahmin organizations, 332, 333
Non-Catholics, 23
Non-co-operation, 244, 265-72 275-83
Norton, 140
Nouveau riche, 56, 64
NWF Province,842, 861, 886, 912
North-Western Railway Strike, 876
Nyaya, 95

Obeidulla, 219
October Revolution, 218, 234, 306, 570, 730
O'Dwyer, Michael, 257
On the First Indian War of Independence, 1857-1859, 12
Oriental Despotism, 15
Oriental education, 94
Oriental languages, 93
Oudh, 52, 53, 57
Ownership rights on land, 29

Pakistan, 4, 26, 864, 880, 893, 899, 905; and Indian national problem, 801-06
Pal, Bipin Chandra, 187, 233, 268
Pali, 92, 106, 107
Palme-Dutt, R., 586
Panagal, Raja of, 287
Pandit, Vijayalakshmi, 649
Pant, Govind Ballabh, 636, 641, 649, 652, 675
Parsis, 116, 117
Partition of India, 900
Pasha, Kamal, 262
Patel, Vallabhbhai, 356, 385, 389, 441, 471, 477, 569, 606, 616, 648, 716, 855, 869, 870, 896, 907, 908
Patel, Vithalbhai, 275, 284, 335, 356, 488, 424, 499, 522, 531
Pattani, Prabhashankar, 462
Patwardhan, Achyut, 583
Paxbassi Raja, 3, 40
Pearl Harbour, 737
Permanent Settlement, 47-51, 97, 117
Peasant struggle, Civil Disobedience, 281

Peasant struggles, 555, 556; in Bengal, 878; in Maharashtra, 878; in Malabar, 878; in U. P., 302, 468, 459, 471
Peshwa, 44
Peshawar Conspiracy Case, 307, 317-24
Pethick-Lawrence, 841, 843, 848
Philippines, 715
Phillips, W., 789
Pirpur, Nawab of, 666
Pirpur Report, 666
Plassey, Battle of, 25, 26, 28
Poland, 159, 714
Poligar, 47
Politics of the Bomb, 273
Pollitt, Harry, 732, 733
Pondicherry, 25
Poona Conference, 510
Poona Pact, 485-92
Portuguese, 24, 33, 41
Portugal, Catholic monarchy, 23
Post-war peasant struggles, 877-79
Poverty and un-British rule, 120
Praja Mandals, 659, 859
Prakrit dialects, 104, 106
Prarthana Samaj, 145
Pratab, Raja Mahendra, 219
Prakasam, T., 907
Pre-capitalist society, 77
Premchand, Munshi, 602
Press Act, 96, 134, 184
Primitive exploitation, 20
Princely States, 858
Production relations, 18
Proletariat, 6
Proselytization, 99, 109
Protective tariff, 409
Protest Day (May 9, 1939), 679
Provisional Revolutionary Government, 219
Public Safety Bill, 384
Punjab, 902
Punjabis, 78
Punnapra-Vayalar, 806, 863, 877, 880-86
Purdah, 100
Pyarelal, 896

Queen Victoria, Jubilee celebrations, 128
Proclamation, 73-76, 85
Quit India struggle, 730, 733, 741-59
Quit Kashmir movement, 860, 861
Qurban, Fazal Illahi, 318
Qureshi, Akbar, 317
Radical Democratic Party, 684
Radical Party of England, 131
Rahman, Gaur, 317
Rai, Lala Lajpat, 159, 175, 178-80, 228, 232, 236, 267, 278, 284, 326, 379, 682
Railways, 82, 83, 162; importance of, 83
Raja, M. C., 492
Raja Todarmal, 47
Rajagopalachari, 291, 383, 389, 496, 606, 617, 642, 678, 798, 716, 745, 779, 796, 797, 799, 800, 802, 872, 896, 907
Rajaguru, 375, 441
Rajas of Travancore, 44
Rajayyan, 40-42, 44
Rajbhoj, 492
Rajendra Prasad, 291, 545, 606, 643, 648, 676, 679, 705, 717, 722, 896, 908
Rajkot, 663
Ramakrishna Pillai, Swadeshabhimani, 305
Ranade, M. G., 121-23, 153, 162, 168
Ranga, N.G., 600, 601, 619
Rani of Jhansi, 59, 64-66, 72, 94
Rao, V. K. R. V., 120
Rashid, Capt. Abdul, 832
Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, 195, 904
Reading, Lord, 277, 295, 346
Reddy, K.V., 285
Red Shirt Movement, 441, 459
Red Trade Union Federation, 555
Red Trade Union International, 315
Reforms(1919), 564, 646
Religious education, 105, 107
Revolts of 1857, 3, 4, 5, 12, 27, 32, 39, 45, 47-78, 126, 127, 133
Revolts in South India, 39-46
Revolution of 1848-50, 8
Revolutionary Conspiracies Enquiry Committee, 253
Ribbontrop, 761
Ricardo, D., 120
Rippon, Lord, 134, 138
Roosevelt, 738, 743
Roy, B. C., 510
Roy, Evelyn, 307; on Gandhi, 314
Roy, Kiron Shankar, 890, 899
Roy, M. N., 304, 306-08, 310-24, 337, 450, 515, 524, 577, 621, 773
Roy, Raja Rammohan, 94, 95, 98-104, 118, 124, 127, 145, 146, 153, 207, 221
Round Table Conference I, 226, 279, 392, 421, 423, 425-31; II, 456, 463, 508, 511, 526, 553
Royal Indian Navy Mutiny, 834-40, 786
Ruling princes, 37

Rural people, pauperization of, 31
Russia, 9, 152, 159; post-revolutionary, 217
Ryotwari, 29, 30, 47, 48, 82, 88, 126, 355

Saadulla, Mohammad, 637
Sadiq, G.M., 860
Sahajananda Saraswati, 600, 601
Sahgal, Capt., 831
Salt Satyagraha, 269, 401-03, 411, 412, 418, 530, 559, 580
Sampurnanand, Dr., 319, 524
Samyukta Karnataka, 214
Samyukta Prasthanam, 563
Sandhya, 184
Sankaran Nair, Sir, 247, 280
Sanskrit, 92, 104-06, 211
Santals, 50
Sanyasi-Fakir Revolts, 67
Sapru, Tej Bahadur, 281, 351, 357, 423, 430, 432, 334, 507, 629, 794;
Sapru Committee, 808, 809
Saravajanik Sabha, 130
Sastri, Srinivasa, 430, 432, 434
Sati, 71, 100
Satpal, Dr., 255, 257
Satyabhakta, 319-23
Satyagraha, 251-54, 258
Satyagraha Sabha, 254
Satyashodhak Samaj, 101
Savarkar, V. D., 53, 186, 188
Scheduled Castes, 811, 814
Secret Groups, 188
Self-sufficient village, 21-23, 28, 80, 81, 107, 108
Sen, Dr. S.N., 55
Sen, Surya, 413
Sen Tamil, 210
Sepoy mutiny (See Revolts of 1857)
Sepoy Mutiny and the Revolt of 1857, 55
Shafiq, Muhammed, 318
Shah, Akbar, 317
Shah, Bahadur, 51, 60, 64, 66, 72, 94
Shanawas, Col., 831
Sharma, R. C. L., 319, 321
Sherwani, 472
Shiva, 147
Sholapur uprising, 416, 417
Shradhanand, Swami, 261
Siddiqi, A. R., 694
Siddiqi, Mohammad Shafia, 307
Sikh community, 814
Sikh peasants, 302
Simla Conference, 813-18, 824-28, 841-43, 849, 859
Simon Commission, 847-60, 378, 379, 381, 420; boycott of, 355
Sind, 886, 902
Singh, Bhagat, 372, 375, 416, 436, 437, 441, 444
Singh, Sardar Baldev, 889
Singh, Capt. Sohan, 763
Sinha, Srikrishna, 652
Siraj-ud-Daula, 25
Sitaramayya, Pattabhi, 347, 434, 447, 510, 604, 608, 618, 673, 699, 826, 868, 870
Slave system, 20
Slocombe, George, 422-24
Smith, Adam, 120
Stalin, 803
Statesman, 856
Steam, 82
Strike struggles, 300, 364, 365; of textile workers, 877; of Assam plantation workers, 300; of Bombay, 299; of coal miners, 205, 877; of Jalalpur railway workers, 299; of Kolar gold miners 877; of Post and Telegraph, employees, 877; of SIR railwaymen, 876
Social reforms in Kerala, 102
Social systems, 27, 46
Socialist, 331
Socialist International, 684
Socialist revolution 27, 57
Society for Acquisition of General knowledge, 124
Socio-cultural life, 32
Socio-cultural renaissance, 96, 98
South-African struggles, 202-08
South-East Asia Day, 833
South Indian Rebellion-First War of Independence (1800-1801), 40
Soviet Union, 521, 522, 570, 571, 574, 698, 714, 727-29, 733, 735, 743
Spratt, Philip, 375
Sri Narayana, 146
Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, 146, 147, 149
Suhrawardy, H. S., 832
Sukarno, Dr., 832
Sukhdev, 375, 441
Sultan of Mysore, 26
Superstructure 7,
Swadeshi, 158-65, 169, 171, 174, 175, 181, 196, 197, 206, 272, 419, 456

Swaraj, 158-65, 171-78, 181, 202, 203, 209, 228, 232, 240-44, 248-50, 272, 273, 276, 293, 858
Swaraj Bhavan, 433
Swaraj Fund, 388
Swaraj Panchayat, 761
Swaraj Party, 269, 279, 291-96, 325,334, 338-41, 346, 347, 500, 502, 506, 510, 513, 531, 533, 589, 592, 680

Takli, 274
Talukdar, 47, 62, 73
Talwar, H M I S, 837
Tagore, Dwarkanath, 124
Tagore, Rabindranath, 602
Tandon, P. D., 472, 649
Tartars, 17
Tarachand, 37
Tata family; 221, 222
Tata, Jamshedji, 116, 117, 163
Tata Iron and Steel Mills, 299
Tata, Ratan, 203
Tata-Birla Plan, 122, 899
Tazia procession, 328
Tebhaga movement, 806, 878, 879
Technological revolution, 92
Telangana struggle, 806, 863, 877, 880-86
Tendulkar, D. G., 204
Textile industry, 117, 163
Thapar, Romila, 2
Theory of Drain, 119
Theosophical Society, 146, 150
Thompson, George, 124
Thunchathu Ezhuthachan, 107, 136, 210
Tilak, B. G., 150, 157, 167-69 171, 177-79, 194, 224, 227, 245, 246, 253, 332, 363, 379, 416, 467, 682;—'s political outlook, 229
Tilak Era, 158-214
Tilak Swaraj Fund, 274, 277
Times, 177, 178, 183
Tippu Sultan, 103
Tiruchi Proclamation, 45
Tojo, 765
Trade unions, 300
Traditional industries, 113
Trading interests, 24
Travancore, 622, 663, 859
Tribal system, 20
Tukaram, 107
Tulsidas, 107, 210
Turkey, 152, 160, 216, 217, 259, 306
Turks, 17
Two-nations Theory, 783, 796, 862, 899 903
Tyabji, Abbas, 257

Unconditional non-cooperation, 247
Underground AICC, 761
Union Jack, 895
Unionist Party, 623, 625, 665, 816, 817, 842, 843
United States of America, 217-20, 306, 737
Untouchables, 146
Untouchability, 294
Upanishads, 7, 99
Usmani, Shaukat, 307, 319, 321
Usurers, 31
Urdu, 193

Vaishnavite poets, 106
Vanguard, 313, 330
Varanasi agitiation for food, 829
Varna-Caste system, 20, 21, 66, 85, 92
varna-jati, 3
Vasco da Gama, 23, 33
Vedanta, 95, 149
Vedas, 7, 69, 99, 100
Vedic Aryans, 22
Velayudhan, M. P. S., 319
Velu Thampi Dalava, 3
Vellore Mutiny, 58, 60
Verma, Shyamji Krishna, 188
Verma, Shiva, 372, 376
Vernaculars, 108, 110
Vietnam, 57, 772
Village artisan, 89
Village community, 15, 57
Village Panchayat, 36
Vishal Andhra, 214
Visweswarayya, M., 122, 693
Vivekananda, 146-49, 160

Wadia, 251
Wahabi Movement, 251
War-time national upsurge, 215
Wavell, 784, 789, 794, 796, 807, 811, 817, 822, 823, 844, 886, 891, 910
Willingdon, Lord, 475
West Asian countries, 20
Western education, 94, 95
White Paper, 506, 507
Wignate, Capt., 30
Wilson, President, 231
Women, illtreatment towards, 100

World capitalism, 11, 13, 158
World capitalist crisis, 404-11
World Communist movement, 311
World market, 8
World Peace Conference, 607
World Peace Congress, 607
World Religious Convention, 148
World War, First, 120, 204, 216, 217, 221, 247, 305
World War, Second, 695, 714
Worker-capitalist conflict, 250
Working Class, 14, 132, 133, 158, 169, 297-303, 363-70, 554; in political struggles, 297; appendage of national movement, 289
Workers' and Peasants' Parties, 310-16, 367-69
Workers Party of Vietnam, 715
Workers' struggle, Post-war, 876, 877

Yagnik, Indulal, 600
Yugantar, 184

Zaheer, Syed Ali, 868
Zamindar, 42, 48, 49, 97, 144, 302
Zamindari, 29, 30, 82, 88, 117, 126
Zamorin of Calicut, 33