

VII. WHY SPONTANEOUS UPSURGE PETERS OUT

A SPONTANEOUS UPSURGE NEVER SUCCEEDS IN ACHIEVING HISTORIC aims. It has never happened before in human history, and yet you seemed to have pinned your entire faith on it, in case settlement did not come off and for which you got no chance to work because Amery's men ran away with you to Ahmednagar Fort.

That country-wide patriotic upsurge which began on 9th August soon began to peter out.

The spontaneous upsurge which was "a direct manifestation of the people's will which the Congress had claimed to represent" (Sub-Committee's report) was the spontaneous outcome of the August Resolution. A self-contradictory resolution *spontaneously* led to a self-condemned struggle. A proper and just demand was sought to be won through a wrong and unjust course of action. How could the demand for National Government for National Defence be won by hitting at the very means of defence?

The logic of the demand led one way but the logic of the action led the opposite way.

Your August resolution was both anti-British and anti-Jap. Now the more the British repression ran riot, the more the anti-British sentiment mounted and the people became more bitter and helpless, and pro-Jap feeling increased. And when it became clear, that the struggle had failed, large sections began to look to Jap invasion for deliverance from British yoke.

Your resolution was meant to increase the pressure of the progressive peoples of the world for our national demand. The post-August activities only helped to confuse the friends of India abroad. It was our brother Communist Parties abroad who almost singlehanded, took the initiative to answer all the Churchill-Amery slanders against you and clear the atmosphere for the propaganda that settlement with India was not **less** but more necessary. It was a difficult time for them before progressive opinion was again galvanised for India.

We keep regular track of world progressive opinion, we knew

what the numerous reputed foreign correspondents were cabling back to their papers and feeling like themselves. In 1941-42 their sympathy for India was gushing, immediately after August 1942 they were confused, and from 1943 onwards they became patronising. We give you some of their oft-repeated remarks : "We don't understand your leaders, anyway, they have produced a mess"; "We are not taken in by the British, but what are you doing?" And so on. And they are the papers and they were the correspondents whom Pandit Nehru would unhesitatingly class as "progressive and pro-Indian." They went on exposing the British Imperialist game as best as they could, but their faith in the capacity of our leaders to shape the destiny of our country also sagged as time went on.

What happened to the ideas and the morale of the persons who claim to have led the struggle?

They took "do or die" as their *mantram* and carried out the strategy of a "short and swift struggle" as best as they could. They had the full use of the Congress name and prestige, all its resources and the unprecedented anti-British indignation of the people on their side. They did what they wanted and as best as they could. Yet they found the popular enthusiasm for "struggle" ebbing away. They tried to whip it their hardest, and the louder they talked the more unreal they sounded.

The *Congress Bulletin* of Bombay of August 16, 1942, brought out by the Congress Socialists was already whipping up the sagging struggle. It gave a programme of stopping all communications, stopping production and threatened :

"Every citizen should remember that in the absence of successful response from the nation, Gandhiji will be taking upon himself the huge responsibility of freeing FOUR HUNDRED MILLIONS BY HIS OWN SUPREME SACRIFICE. According to information available *he is giving a fortnight to his people.*"

How did they understand and interpret the failure of "struggle"? We give you all their "reasons" and they are unworthy of serious revolutionaries, people's organisers who have a correct policy and an effective plan.

"The People Are Demoralised"

They were the people who were morally convinced that they were organising the Indian freedom revolution and that its victory was round the corner. But they soon found that the people were not doing what they wanted them to do. In most places the spontaneous upsurge did not last for more than two weeks; in the few districts where the upheaval had taken a mass form—seizure of police stations etc.—it later degenerated into sporadic organised actions by small underground groups.

How did they interpret lack of people's response to their call for "people's revolution"? The explanation that spontaneously came to their lips was that the "people are demoralised," that they were not prepared to face up to repression. This explanation was first only in whispers, later it was put down in black and white.

Jai Prakash Narain, the leader of the Congress Socialists for whom all of you have expressed admiration, gives his reasons for the failure of the struggle :

"An ancient nation, like ours, with all its glorious achievements, not the least among them its survival through the ages, *should have possessed more self-confidence. But while our people have faith in the least potent of things, from stones to tombstones, they have no faith in themselves, they know not their own strength.*"

Ninth August, No. 2, August 23, 1943, p. 4.

Wrong Policies Don't Inspire

It is not illegality, hardships, repression that can cow down our people; it is wrong policies, that fail to inspire them.

It is true that the British terror was unprecedented but any serious revolutionaries should have expected more of it, known their people well enough, estimated their own worth and limitations realistically enough, before they gave the call for "Freedom Revolution."

If after sixty years of our national movement, with the tra-

dition and experience of three national upheavals (Mutiny, 1920 and 1930), any Congress or revolutionary group proclaims that the revolution they had planned in the name of the Congress failed because the people could not stand up to British terror, we call it a slanderer of the Indian people, a blind leader who finds fault with his own people instead of his own policy for the people.

Did we have to teach anti-British hatred to our people? They were hated as *Firangis* when they were only rapacious traders, even before they became the oppressive rulers of our country.

Did we need more martyrs to inspire our present organisers? The majority of our districts can lay claim to more than one martyr of their own, there are some where they would go beyond ten.

Were our people cowardly and incapable of heroic resistance? We daily glorify the Mutiny, the 1920 and 1930 movements, numerous working class and peasant struggles as examples of mass heroism. India's revolutionary patriotic heritage would be the pride of the proudest country of the world.

Pandit Nehru immediately after the Cripps Mission claimed with justified pride that among its own people no country had a more popular organisation than the Congress, except perhaps the Communist Party in the U.S.S.R. It was patent enough and all of you talked openly of the fact that never before was there greater anti-British hatred, more political interest and greater urge for freedom.

If after all this the "August revolutionaries" could not organise their "freedom revolution" even with the name, resources and workers of the Congress at their disposal, there is obviously something radically wrong with their freedom policy, their methods and themselves.

When the means go against the ends then the ends could not obviously be realised.

People's morale sags when they find that the blows they are striking are not proving effective, but the blows of the enemy are getting the upper hand.

"We Were Not Organised"!

The second theory of the organisers of the movement which gained currency after the collapse of the spontaneous upsurge had become patent to all was that you of the Working Committee had made no preparations whatsoever and they, your successors, could not "organise the revolution"; in short, the revolution failed for organisational and not political reasons.

Ram Manohar Lohia, another Congress Socialist leader, in an article "Organise the Open Rebellion" writes :

"Let me repeat for the nth time that there was no plan for organisation to lead the people in their Rebellion on 9th August, 1942....."

He says that this was due to a mistaken reading by Gandhiji of the British character who hoped that he would not be arrested and proceeds :

"I have already suggested that we cannot quarrel with Gandhiji for neglecting the organisation of our Rebellion. Although, I am at times inclined to do so, I feel that we cannot in justice quarrel with the Congress Working Committee either. Not because the Committee has any such justification as Gandhiji of trying to enthrone the supremacy of the unarmed common man, but because it consists of people who have given over twenty-five years of their lives to unremitting toil and sacrifice. We should still want them to lead us politically with their wisdom, but we may not any longer hold them responsible for our organisational inadequacy."

Ninth August, No. 12, January 26, 1944.

Jai Prakash Narain in his letter, "To All Fighters For Freedom," a printed pamphlet, says :

"Firstly, there was no efficient organisation of the national revolutionary forces that could function and give an effective lead to the mighty forces that were released. The Congress, though a great organisation was not tuned to the pitch to which the revolt was to rise. The lack of organisa-

tion was so considerable that even important Congressmen were not aware of the programme of the revolt, and till *late in the course of the rising it remained a matter for debate in many Congress quarters whether what the people were doing was really in accordance with the Congress programme.* In the same connection should be mentioned the regrettable fact that quite a considerable number of influential Congressmen failed to attune their mental attitude to the spirit of this 'last fight for freedom'. The earnestness, the urgency, the determination that marked the attitude of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Rajendra Prasad or Sardar Patel failed to be reflected in the minds and hearts of all Congress leaders."

The aim was freedom and what could be wrong with it? Thus the mistake could only lie in the "organisation" of revolution, they argued.

They never asked themselves whether the aim of freedom does not need a sound political policy, based on a correct understanding of the political situation, both national and international, and whether the political actions planned should be such as lead the people towards the aim, and so on. The freedom aim was enough for them.

How Congressmen Learn

The average Congress worker is a good-hearted decent-minded patriot, a good specimen of our countrymen, which is why he becomes a Congressman. Having suffered and sacrificed in the various movements, he becomes an active worker. He is not guided by any political ideology; he reads some nationalist daily, some generally progressive literature. But he has learnt his political lessons through bitter experience, from failures.

After 1920, he learnt to be critical of Gandhism through the abstract controversies on non-violence *vs.* violence, non-co-operation *vs.* co-operation, nationalism *vs.* communalism.

It was ten years later that Congressmen realised that the old leaders had illusions about the Imperialists, and insisted on

the Congress aim being defined as Complete Independence, and the resolution was passed.

He had to live through the failure of the Civil Disobedience movement of 1930 to see that workers and peasants must be organised separately, that their existing organisations must be welcomed for the sake of the freedom struggle itself and their demands accepted as fundamental rights.

We have no doubt that the failure of 1942 will also lead him to accept the principle of self-determination.

Immediately after the failure of the August struggle, however, he fell a ready victim to the theory of "failure due to lack of organisation."

The Indian freedom struggle is real to him as the 1920 and 1930 movements.

He gets fed up with waiting for the leaders to bring freedom, the leaders lose hopes of anything coming from British Government; he acts as the connecting link between the Congress mass and the leaders and presses hard for another "struggle".

The leaders give the call, he goes out to rouse the people, there is terrific response to the call of freedom, he is whisked away by the police, the police terrorises the people, there is heroic resistance followed by silent but impotent anger against the British Raj.

He comes out, gets sunk in looking after his family affairs for a while, does whatever is to be done to keep the banner flying, becomes critical of the policies of the leadership but observes discipline, does his own thinking over and over again, listens to different points of view that have grown up within the Congress in the meanwhile and comes to his own conclusion about what was wrong with the last movement and what new things must be done next time.

Basic programmatic issues do not worry him; he adjusts his traditional ideas to the new reality and imbibes new lessons by asking himself what practical use they would be to our freedom movement and to the welfare of our people; and he assimilates new ideas if he finds that they bring freedom nearer and faster.

For the time being he is bitter against the British and with

all those who were not with him in the August movement. Did he not become a revolutionary from being a Satyagrahi? But the *Inquilab* did not come off because the revolution was not organised enough to become successful revolution. And next time he will see to it from now on.

The "no organisation" theory is enough for him for the time being, there is room in it for him to express his discontent with your past policies, with the leadership that led him during the August movement and with his own failings. But we are certain that his own patriotism and work will lead him to the conclusion that the organisational explanation is not enough to explain the failure of the August movement.

Life Will Teach Him Anew

The more he hears us and reads our literature the more he will find that there was something radically wrong in what he has been thinking about us. His leaders are already telling him: "Don't read Communist literature, they argue cleverly even against the August revolution—don't talk to a Communist, he will defeat you in argument and slowly run away with you."

When he reads of the anti-fascist liberation movements of Europe, he will find that people even under fascist conditions much worse than any terror India has known, can successfully liberate themselves and the theory that terror can suppress a modern people's revolution is just not true.

When he reads of the liberation movements in the East he will find that Communists were not anti-Japanese because they were Soviet agents but because they were true sons of their people, fighting for their people's freedom. He will learn that they not only fought the Japs but they also successfully resisted or tried their best to foil the plan to restore the status quo by the British, Dutch, French or U.S. Imperialists, and that they are patriots above everything else.

When he reads the new literature on the Soviet Union he will begin to see how the Soviet is a state of a *new* type, it works just as he would want the free Indian State to work, and how Soviet people are of a *new* type; they have a sense of solidarity

which he would want his own people to have. He has seen the Soviet fight and win as no one else has fought and won so far. He will now begin to understand how Soviet democracy is different from other democracies and why better. He will understand why the Soviet peoples are one in their solidarity that it is because they all enjoy and exercise self-determination in their own homelands and have thus a sense of common Soviet patriotism, a patriotism which he will desire more and more and to which he will pay tributes from the bottom of his heart.

After 1930 he read of the victory of Socialism and the achievements of Soviet plans and that made him pro-Soviet. This time as he will read of the birth and achievements of new democracies in Europe, he will find how anti-Communism loses caste as the people's movement grows, how popular political parties had to sink their differences and unite for the common cause, how unity only came when necessity drove them to accept and observe the just principle of self-determination, and people's response was undying when different sections of the people knew that the freedom of one was the freedom of all, and their trusted leaders were together. He will thus get the main keys to understanding why the August movement failed and India is where it is.

The more he thinks why the 1942 movement failed the more he will be led to read and think about people's movements that succeeded in achieving their aim in the same war years, the more he will see where his own movement went wrong, what it suffered from, and who misled it.

The theory that the struggle failed because of organisational reasons is only a cover behind which each blames the other for failure, rather than understand the root cause of the failure itself.

Leaders Blame Each Other

Its top leaders began by blaming the old for leaving no organisation behind.

The new underground leaders gave all the instructions they knew about making the "revolution", but found they proved more and more ineffective as the spontaneous upsurge subsided. The

leaders began to blame the ranks for incompetence, sloth and carelessness. The ranks began to blame the leaders for not knowing the situation outside, not sending enough money and being no good themselves.

Leaders of different groups put the blame on each other. The Socialist leaders began to blame the Gandhi-ites for acting as a check or brake through their non-violence.

Jai Prakash Narain in his *Second Letter to Fighters for Freedom* says :

“For some months past, particularly since the correspondence between Gandhiji and the Viceroy was published, a controversy has sprung up among fighters on the question of violence and non-violence. . . . To me a controversy on this issue at this stage seems meaningless. Every fighter for freedom is free to choose his own method. Those who believe in similar methods should work together as a disciplined group. And the least that those who follow a different path should do is not to come in the way of one another and waste their energies in mutual recrimination. Where *Do Or Die* is the *mantram* of action, there is no room for recrimination whatever. . . .”

Page 3.

“ . . . While it is true that there are some who in the name of non-violence are attempting to disown certain parts of the programme, which they had themselves sanctioned previously and which *even such a high authority as Shree Kishorilal Mashruwalla did not have the heart to condemn* or ask the people to desist from, there is no doubt that the conscious basis of the programme which the Congress organisations have followed since August 1942 has been non-violence, as interpreted by the people in authority during this period.”

Page 5.

“Speaking of organisation, I have referred only to the Congress. *Those, however, who wish to go beyond the creedal limitations of the Congress naturally require a separate orga-*

nisation to carry on their special activities.”

Page 15.

The Gandhi-ites blamed the Socialists for not being able to bring in the working class and because by their violence they only provoked police repression. Both blamed the Forward Blocists for only making tall promises but implementing nothing through their organisation.

The Forward Blocists blamed both for keeping up old feuds and not glorifying Bose to inspire the masses to act, for being afraid of Communist propaganda, and of being dubbed as pro-fascists, for doubting Netaji's patriotic bona fides when he had succeeded in raising a National Army and getting recognition of Indian freedom and a Provisional Government from the Axis. If they mistrusted the Japs, the Germans could be used against them and if either tried to stick on in India after the war was over, the strength of the National Army and the national revolution all of them were organising together would be enough to guarantee and safeguard Indian freedom. How could they do much, when the Congress itself had discredited them in the past?—Let them now popularise Bose and remove popular prejudices against them, then they will be able to take on a greater burden of the revolution on themselves here and now.

We know the story first-hand from the mouths of some who were their responsible leading colleagues in organising the “August Revolution” and from hundreds of their trusted loyal followers, who became disillusioned and came over to us.

Is this a theme for glorification or lampooning?

“Communists Sabotaged It”

On August 9 the self-appointed leaders of the “revolution” were perfectly certain that we Communists would be finished off. They gave the call for general strike to workers in every locality in the name of the Congress, to stop production and communications. They knew we were men of principles and would oppose their move and they took it for granted that we had dug our own graves. They were convinced that the working class would

throw us overboard and follow them. In their appeal to the *Workers of India* issued from "the AICC Office" distributed on August 17, 1942, they said :

"You might be told by the Communists who used to talk incessantly about revolution that this is not the right time because this will hamper Allied war efforts. What about our defence efforts which England is hampering and which her Allies are doing nothing to prevent? Tell them that revolutions do not wait to be timed by a silly lot of people like Communists who have today become British agents and our enemies. You have shown your contempt of them by coming out of your factories. Forget them and get on with the task of making the Revolution successful."

Within a week, and in some places the same day, they realised that they were living in a world of illusions. Rather than understand their own failure and the source of our influence over the working class and our capacity to keep that influence even in time of acute provocation from the British Imperialists and a great storm against it among the patriotic people, they began to explain away their own failure and our success. As time passed their key theory to explain the failure of what they imagined to be "the August Revolution" was that the Communists sabotaged it by keeping the working class out of it.

Our position was very simple ; we knew them and we knew their "plan of revolution" through their own numerous handbills which they were scattering in the working class and we knew that to do anything that would directly and indirectly aid their plan, would not be working class action for Indian freedom but for helping Jap invasion. They tried to carry out their duty to the Congress and the country as they understood it and we tried to do ours as we understood it.

The easiest thing in the world to do is to put the blame for one's own failure on someone else. As we have shown above, they found fault with the people for getting demoralised, they found fault with each other for not being able to do the job and they found fault with us the most, for betrayal. In fact they

found fault with everybody except themselves, their ways and their policy.

We were not only technically correct as Congressmen in doing what we did but as subsequent events proved, the lead they gave to the working class would have been disastrous for the country if they had had their way.

We did not take the charge of treachery at all seriously after August 1942 and upto the time Congress leaders began being released. In December 1942 we wrote an article in the issue of *People's War* dated December 6, 1942 titled "Where does the C.S.P. stand?" in which we said :

"Our fellow-patriots attacked us as traitors for advancing this slogan, for refusing to join the "struggle". We explained, explained, and explained and go on explaining that sabotage of defence cannot be the struggle for Indian freedom. Our friends thought we would be isolated from the national patriotic opinion, our enemies thought this was the chance to smash us. Nothing of the sort has happened. The struggle has failed as we had forecast, more people are rallying behind our banner than we have even been able to rally before, the same patriots who refused to listen to us before are coming to us in large numbers to discuss the present plight of our country and see what is the way out."

We were carrying out what we thought was our patriotic duty and because we found popular response for our policy, slogans and our practical activities we never felt that we had any need to reconsider our policy.

How We Have Grown

The months following August 1942 have been terrible days for our people and yet our Party could register phenomenal progress, even in the worst phase of the national crisis.

PARTY MEMBERSHIP & MASS ORGANISATIONS

	PRE-CRISIS	LENIN DAY (Jan. 1943)	MAY DAY (1943)
Total Party members	4,464	9,308	15,563
Whole-time workers	1,200	2,015	2,637
T. U. membership	—	196,620	301,400
Kisan Sabha membership	—	295,000	385,370
Students' Federation membership	—	25,822	39,155
Women's organisations membership	—	22,400	41,100
Bal Sangham members	—	6,400	9,000
Volunteers	—	24,610	32,166

And today our total Party membership stands well over 30,000.

Could a party whose policy went against the national aim grow in strength as a political party?

Could a party whose practical activity went against the Congress grow in the esteem of the Indian people?

Any honest Congressman has only to ask the question and he will get the answer himself.

Hunting for a scape-goat came naturally to such "Socialists" and their like who set out to organise a "revolution" and found they could not organise it and who ended up by becoming slanderers of their people, and naturally enough of our Party which did not share their illusions and did not fall in line with them.