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 representatives 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 constitution have shown a repeated fondness 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 politicians. And it was the Muslim League that stood in the forefront of the communal-caste

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 similar 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 manoeuvres 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

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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 responsibility 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

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 govern-
ment 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 govern-
ment through means far more effective than a protracted
satyagraha struggle, individual or mass.

However, Gandhi knew that things would not materi-
alyze 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 represen-
tatives. 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 April 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 situ-
atation. 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 several 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 magistrate 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 committees 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 comprehend 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 repercussions 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 Indian 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 bankruptcy 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 bankrupt, 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 these groups 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 workers 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 organization 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 concerning "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 developments 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 countries, 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 Union 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 from 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 presidency 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 deliberations. 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 socialististic form. He wrote to many of his communist and socialists friends stating that since the Congress was the only developed revolutionary organization 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 grandeur 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.

Subsequently, 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 throughout 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 unexemplified loyalty to me. No leader can expect greater loyalty and devotion than I have received 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 assert, 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 organisations 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 powerful movement against 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 conviction.
Needless to say, here also Gandhi blessed the right-wing Congressmen against the leftists. 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 ascendancy 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 religiosity 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 constitution. 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 "ascendancy 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 (complete 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 from 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 from 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 opinion 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 emergency 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 direct 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 conducting 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 intervention 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 against 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 against 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 opposed 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 against 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 emergency 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 on 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 against 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 leadership 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 specifically 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.
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 contrast 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 containing 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 Britanic 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 ‘‘refrain 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 decisions, 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 outsiders 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, confined 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 conference 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 organizations 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 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 reign 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 amendment 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 often 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 Abdullah 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 Abdullah 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 establishing 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 Brahmns. 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 effort 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 bourgeoisie 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 overcoming 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 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 continuous 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 indispensable 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 against 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 the 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 predominantly 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 world, 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 bourgeoisie 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 collaboration with the bourgeoisie, but also to the weakness of the bourgeoisie itself which is stricken with fear at the realization 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 tactics 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-fascist 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 different 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 fascist 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 achievements 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 pretend 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.