AFTER OFFICE ACCEPTANCE

I. THE CONGRESS-LEAGUE RELATION

We have noted earlier that the Muslims were not represented in the election by a single political party, but by a number of organizations, parties and individuals. The general picture of Muslim politics that presented itself during the elections consisted of several organizations and individuals among whom some were close to the Congress and others opposed to it and receiving assistance from the British government for that reason. This situation continued even when the formation of ministries became a live issue. In the Muslim majority provinces where the Congress met with a number of electoral reverses, there was no single political party of the Muslims capable of forming ministries. It was not the Muslim League but the Krishak Praja Party and the Unionist Party that formed ministries in Bengal and Punjab, respectively, with support of other groups in the
legislatures. The League had contested only a few seats because it lacked the confidence of winning the elections. So, the question of leaders of the Muslim League forming ministries did not arise.

However, the attitude of the Congress towards forming ministries and the discussions held between the Congress and certain Muslim organizations which were regarded nationalist brought about a change in this situation. A situation began to develop in which the Muslim League which was only one of the parties of the Muslims claimed itself to be the sole representative of the Muslims. It was later alleged and repeated in the posthumously published memoirs of Maulana Azad that what led to the growth of the Muslim League was the "rigid attitude" adopted by the Congress in general and its president Nehru in particular in regard to the formation of ministries.

In order to understand the truth of the matter, it is necessary to look back to the Muslim politics at the time of the elections. The capacity of the Congress to approach the Muslim voters was limited. Among the Muslim majority provinces, the Congress was strong only in the NWF Province. In many areas there were a number of Muslim leaders who wanted to maintain good relations with the Congress. Jamiat-ul-Ulema was the powerful organization of such leaders. Besides, the leaders of the Muslim organizations including the Muslim league were formerly the active workers of the Congress. Like Jinnah, these leaders also were organizing Muslims on the basis of moderate politics and were in agreement with the Congress on all issues except on the question of Muslim representation in the new constitution.

There were also certain other Muslim parties almost in all provinces representing the big landlords among the Muslims. With the assistance of the British they were striving to mobilize the Muslim masses against the Congress as well as against the Muslim parties like the League, the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, etc. Consequently, many Muslim parties including the League had reached some kind of informal understanding
with the Congress. It was partly as a result of this that the Congress decided to contest only a few seats reserved for the Muslims. This was mainly in the NWF Province.

Even at this stage there were frictions between the moderate Muslim leaders like Jinnah and the Congress leaders like Nehru. It was but natural that the general Congress policy of fighting against the landlords and other reactionary forces in order to wipe out hunger and poverty and the Congress election manifesto were allergic to the moderate Muslim politicians. Moreover, Nehru had repeatedly stated during the election campaign that the caste-communal politics was a product of the reactionary social forces and that the demand of communal representation in which the common people of all castes and religions had no interest at all was of benefit to a handful of bigwigs among them. Jinnah could not but contest these arguments.

Thus, even Jinnah who, as compared to many other Muslim leaders, had been able to reconcile with Congress raised voice against the approach of the anti-imperialist front represented by Nehru in his election campaign.

The situation became more complicated after the elections. In the United Provinces where the Muslims constituted a considerable force, the Muslim League was led by a former Congress worker, Choudhury Khaliquzzam who held political negotiations with the Congress leaders Govind Ballabh Pant and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai. As a result of these negotiations, Khaliquzzaman rejected the offer of joining the minority “interim” government of the loyalists in the province. The informal understanding reached between the Congress and the Muslim League was that the League would be a partner in the government when the Congress formed its ministry after ending the deadlock in connection with office acceptance.

However, this raised a controversy in the Congress leadership. Many prominent Congress leaders including Nehru and Azad were opposed to the understanding with the League. Following discussions held within the Congress leadership, it was finally decided to take ministers from the
league under certain conditions. These conditions were as follows.

1. The Muslim League in the U. P. Assembly should not function as a separate group. Their members should join the Congress Parliamentary Party. Like other members of the Congress Parliamentary Party, they should function subject of the discipline of the Congress.

2. The Parliamentary Board of the League in U. P. should be dissolved and the League members should work for the success of the Congress candidates in the future by-elections.

3. In case the Congress decided to resign from the ministry or legislature, the League members should follow suit.

These conditions were not acceptable to the League. They meant that the members of the League should become Congressmen. Not only did the attempts to form a coalition government in U. P. fail, but the League leaders charged the Congress leaders with trying to foist Congress domination over the Muslims.

Its repercussions were not confined to U. P. alone. A country-wide campaign was conducted that the "Hindu Congress" was trying to thrust its domination on Muslims and other minorities. The case of U. P. was cited as an example to show that the Congress was trying to establish its single party rule without allowing the true representatives of the Muslim community to participate in the ministry, even after it had become clear that the Congress lacked the support of the Muslims. The Muslims leaders, including Jinnah, created the feeling among the Muslim community that its political organizations should unite to defeat the Congress design to establish Hindu domination.

As a direct consequence of this, the Muslim leaders belonging to different organizations till then decided to join the League. The Unionist Party leader Sikander Hayat Khan, the Krishak Praja Party leader Fazlul Huq, Muhammad Saadulla of Assam and others called upon their partymen to join the League. All these were done in deference to the
call given by Jinnah to the Muslims to organize themselves against the Hindu domination of the Congress and to regard the League the organization of their own. They resisted what they considered to be "anti-Muslim" actions taken by the Congress ministries in the different provinces and organized the Muslim masses against them.

These activities that continued for three years from 1937 raised the Muslim League to a new status. Like the Congress which entered into negotiations with the government and other political parties claiming itself to be the sole representative of the Indian people, the League now started negotiating with the Congress as the party representing the Indian Muslims. In order to bring pressure to bear on these negotiations, the League also organized various struggles. This ultimately led the League in 1940 to adopt the 'Pakistan resolution' at Lahore.

There are some who hold that this situation could have been avoided, had the Congress not taken such an adamant attitude with regard to the formation of the ministry in U.P. and evaluate the subsequent events accordingly. The developments with regard to the origin and growth of the Congress and the Muslim League, and the conflicts and compromises between them as explained in the earlier chapters would show that this is incorrect. It may be recalled that the bourgeois section among the Muslims formed its own political organization (the Muslim League) when the Congress (bourgeois) leadership gathered enough strength to demand Swaraj as its political objective. Then the question was what share the Muslim bourgeoisie would get in the Swaraj. When the Indian bourgeoisie began to fight adopting different means to achieve its objective, the Muslim bourgeoisie began to do the same. This was basic to the Congress-League relations which took different forms at different stages.

The Congress-League conflicts in the initial period (1906-1916); the Lucknow Pact between them in 1916; the Khilafat movement which grew as part of Gandhi's non-cooperation movement; the conflict between them following
the failure of the movement; the cooperation among the Jinnah group, the moderates and the Congress in the Central legislature; the Congress-League split on the question of Gandhi’s civil disobedience movement and the Round Table Conferences; cooperation between the Congress and the League once again, to a lesser extent though, following the adoption of parliamentary programme by the Congress—these constitute the general picture of the Congress-League relation.

In other words, a particular section of the bourgeoisie belonging to the Muslim community was getting strengthened as part of the Indian bourgeoisie politically as well as socially and economically. This was a conflict between two sections of the bourgeoisie which were equally interested in acquiring power from the British, a conflict on the question of sharing political power.

The elections to the provincial legislatures held in 1937 constitute an evidence to show the extent to which the Indian bourgeoisie in general and its component Muslim bourgeoisie in particular had been able to make progress. The Indian bourgeoisie as a whole had been engaged in the task of deriving maximum benefit out of the provincial autonomy incorporated in the new constitution and also of gaining political power at the Centre. The Muslim bourgeoisie, on the other hand, had been trying to maximize their share of power. It was this effort that appeared in the form of the urgent demand of forming a Congress-League coalition government in 1937. It was the same that led the Muslim League to raise the slogan of Pakistan in the sense of dividing India into “Hindu India” and “Muslim India” and dividing power between the bourgeoisie in the respective sectors.

It is meaningful that the need for a unified all-India leadership for the Muslims was felt when it became clear that the majority everywhere except in the Muslim majority regions and consequently the political power in the provinces passed into the Congress. The proposal for a Congress-League coalition was an expression of this desire. Just as the Congress asked the British to accept its claim to represent
the Indian people, so the Muslim League demanded the Congress and the government to accept its claim to represent the Muslim community.

This was a challenge to the claim made by the Congress that it represented the entire Indian people. Similarly, the support received by the Congress in regions like the NWF Province and the programme of "mass contact" adopted by the Congress to extend this support to other regions constituted a challenge to the claim made by the League.

The stand taken by the League leaders was that the Congress and the League were the organizations of the Hindus and Muslims, respectively, and that they together should settle accounts with the British and acquire the rights of the Indian bourgeoisie. If this were conceded, then Congress would cease to exist politically. That was why the Congress demanded dissolution of the League Parliamentary Party in return to the induction of League members in the ministry. If this was accepted, then the League would cease to exist. That was why the League leaders rejected this proposal. In other words, basic to the rise of the Muslim League during 1937-1940 was the division and in-fighting within the Indian bourgeoisie.

II. THE NEW POPULAR UPSURGE

The formation of Congress ministries in seven provinces first and coalition ministries with Congress partnership later in Assam and NWF Province gave rise to optimism among the people throughout the country. People believed that the new governments would bring measures against the vested interests as envisaged in the Karachi-Faizpur Congress resolutions and the Congress election manifesto. However, the ministers and the Congress leaders did not act in accordance with the aspirations of the people and even went against them. They, in fact, took a number of actions against ordinary Congressmen and other political workers as well as
their supporters. Most ministries functioned in a manner in which the ministers came to terms with the Governors, British civilian officials and the vested interests.

Nehru expressed his protest and opposition to this state of affairs, but with no effect. Gandhi who had ceased to be even a four-anna member of the Congress was standing firmly behind the ministers and other right-wing Congress leaders. Nehru was not prepared to raise his voice against Gandhi. Nehru's biographer stated:

...On the whole, the record of the Congress ministries was, as Jawaharlal Nehru realized soon enough, static if not counter-revolutionary. The worst cases were Bombay and Madras. There was no question now of taking office to combat the new Act; the ministers worked in close cooperation with the Governors, and in carrying out minor reforms forgot the major issues. Soon after they took office, Jawaharlal, as Congress president, directed them to release all political prisoners. Govind Ballabh Pant's first act on taking charge in the U. P. was to sit down at his office table to write the order for their discharge. But K. M. Munshi, the Home Minister of Bombay, 'if anything more royalist than the king', ignored his directive. Keen to detain communist and left-wing leaders, he asked a surprised Viceroy to put the C. I. D. of Bengal in touch with his own C. I. D. to deal with communists in and around Bombay. When Jawaharlal rebuked Munshi for his zeal in this matter—'you have already become a police officer'—Munshi appealed to the higher authority of Gandhi and continued as before. Jawaharlal protested in the Working Committee that the Congress ministers appeared more concerned about the effect their actions would have upon the British Government than upon their own people; but his arguments had no effect.¹

S. Gopal also refers to B. G. Kher and C. Rajagopalachari, the Chief Ministers of Bombay and Madras, respectively. Lord Linlithgow, the Viceroy, had advised the Bombay Governor Lord Brabourne in a letter: ‘My advice to you, for what it is worth, would be, here and elsewhere, to play for time and to miss no chance of impressing Kher and his colleagues with a sense of their own importance and of the necessity for standing on their own legs.’ Dr. Gopal further quotes what Lord Erskine, the Governor of Madras, “a die-hard Tory himself”, recorded about Rajagopalachari: “In fact, he is even too much of a Tory for me, for though I may not go back twenty years, he wishes to go back two thousand and to run India as it was run in the time of King Asoka.”

The first issue on which the Congress ministries and the left movement clashed was the release of political prisoners and keeping in abeyance the repressive laws. In many provinces, including Bombay and Madras, repressive actions against political workers were revived. Without inhibition the Congress governments resorted to such measures as suppression of leftist newspapers and printing presses which was the order of the day under the British. Instead of releasing political prisoners, the Congress governments put more inside jails.

Not only the activists of the left parties and the Congress but also Congress committees (including leaders like Nehru and Bose) raised their voice against these actions. But that did not make any effect. The Congress ministers continued to act according to their whims with the open support of Gandhi. Nehru acquiesced in it in the name of ‘Congress discipline’. “We cannot agitate against ourselves”, he said.

But facing these and other repressive actions, the agitations and struggles of workers, peasants and students were advancing. Communists and socialists were ceaselessly working to give these struggles an organized form, thereby

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strengthening the anti-imperialist front. Many Congress committees too participated in these activities.

The strike launched by the workers of a British-owned textile mill in Kanpur in July 1937 for increased wages and for recognition of their union was a brilliant example of such struggles. Although the Communists and Socialists were in the forefront organizing and guiding the strike, the local Congress Committee played an active role in it. Consequently, it developed into a general strike of all workers in and around Kanpur. Under its pressure, the U. P. Government appointed an enquiry committee with Rajendra Prasad as chairman to go into the demands of the workers. The report it submitted conceded many demands of the workers.

The Kanpur strike became a model for worker’s actions throughout the country. It also helped to make anti-imperialists all over India aware of the outcome if communists, socialists and ordinary Congressmen stood united in serving and helping the workers. Following this, there was a wave of strike struggles all over the country under the pressure of which Congress governments in many states appointed committees to enquire into workers problems and demands. Feeling the wind of change many capitalists conceded the demands of the workers to avoid strikes. There were others who were not prepared to follow this path. In those industries workers struck work which was supported by all political parties including the Congress, compelling the Congress governments to take action to make the capitalists concede the workers' demands. More than 50 percent of the strikes in 1937-39 was partly or fully successful.

These strikes were reflected in the number as well as in the membership of trade unions which showed a big increase. The number of unions went up from 241 in 1936 to 562 in 1939 and the membership from 268,000 to 390,000. The increase was mainly in Bengal, Madras, Punjab and U. P. Among the trade unions it was the AITUC under the leftist leadership that took great strides. Its 71 affiliated unions with 51,600 members in May 1936 rose to 193 unions with
348,000 members by February 1940. On the other hand, the National Trade Union Federation and its affiliated unions led by the moderates were weakened. Fearing isolation from the working class its leadership decided in January 1938 to merge their organization with the AITUC.

This advance of the working class flabbergasted the Congress ministers and other right-wing leaders. In order to stop this advance, they started taking repressive actions, which was at its worst in Bombay. Apart from lathi-charges and other acts of repression, they prepared a bill incorporating most undemocratic provisions with regard to recognition of trade unions. Strikes against this "black Act" and in defence of the immediate demands of the workers became widespread. The impact of these actions was felt in the Congress as well. Not only the ordinary Congress workers and the local Congress committees but also the provincial committees came out against the approach of the Congress ministers.

This was also a period of peasant agitations and struggles. The elections to the provincial legislatures were held within a year of the formation of All-India Kisan Sabha. As a result of the activities of the Kisan Sabha and also because of the declarations made by the Congress, thousands of activists had entered in the midst of the peasants. Even from among the ranks of the peasantry thousands of militant workers had started rising. Mass meetings, demonstrations and marches were held all over the country demanding the Congress ministries to reduce rent, scale down debt burdens and stop evictions as assured in the Congress election manifesto and in the Faizpur resolution. The Kisan Sabha membership rose from 600,000 in May 1938 to 800,000 in 1939.

It must be noted that there was a fundamental difference between this new peasant upsurge and the one witnessed earlier under Gandhi's leadership. It was as part of the national movement under the bourgeois leadership that peasant went into action when Gandhi gave a call. It was true that
there were tens of thousands of militant workers among them. But Gandhi was not prepared to fan their fighting spirit into a revolutionary fire. On the contrary, the Gandhian method of struggle in those days which was anchored on "non-violence", was an attempt to tie down the peasantry to the confines of bourgeois nationalism. In contrast to this, an independent organization (the Kisan Sabha) of a revolutionary class had emerged now, which, though cooperating with the bourgeois national movement, was functioning independent of it and making its own contributions to the anti-imperialist movement. Like the working class, the peasantry had adopted as their own the red flag, May Day, etc., which are the symbols of socialist revolution. On such matters they showed no hesitation in coming into a clash with the bourgeois leadership of the Congress. As a matter of fact, the growth of the Kisan Sabha in the provinces where the Congress ministries were in office and the role played by ordinary Congressmen and the Congress committees at the lower level in its growth had disturbed the Congress ministers and the right-wing Congress leaders. So, the higher Congress committees mounted a political attack on the Kisan Sabha. They directed that Congressmen should not participate in the activities of the Kisan Sabha. They asserted that the leadership being given by the Kisan Sabha and its activists in organizing resistance to the violence let loose by the Zemin-dars or the big landlords was "against the creed of non-violence of the Congress". Not satisfied with this political attack, they unhesitatingly took actions against the activists of the Kisan Sabha using the provisions of the existing repressive laws.

However, they realized that this alone could not contain the peasant movement. Therefore they tried to placate the peasants by conceding some of their demands and making preparations for legislations to this effect, which went in parallel to the repressive actions. Thus in many provinces the Congress governments appointed committees to enquire and report on legislative measures to be introduced
with a view to ending Zamindari and other landownership systems.

The reports of most of these committees were extremely moderate in content. Moreover, the Second World War broke out and the Congress ministries resigned before initiating legislative work based on these reports. Thus, these reports did not benefit the peasantry in any way. However, it became clear that the peasants, like the working class, could form their own organizations and agitate and fight under the banner of these organizations compelling the Congress ministries to take actions favourable to them. This brought out another important face of the anti-imperialist front.

The All-India Students Federation which was founded in 1936 under the leadership of Communists and Congress Socialists also made similar progress in the years following the formation of Congress ministries in the provinces. For examples its membership increased from 40,000 in 1938 to 100,000 in 1939. This progress of the students movement—yet another face of the anti-imperialist front—was achieved against the wishes of the right-wing Congress leadership and in spite of its opposition.

III. MINISTRIES AND THE PEOPLE

The existence of the Congress ministries which took office in July 1937 and the non-Congress ministries in the Congress minority provinces and also the ‘interim’ ministries which were in power in the Congress majority provinces before the Congress decided to accept office enabled the people to compare the Congress and non-Congress ministries. These non-Congress ministries functioned more or less the same way in which the Congress ministers functioned as in charge of certain departments allocated to them in the provinces in accordance with the 1919 reforms Act. Therefore the coming into power of the Congress ministries had been considered as the beginning of a new stage in the history of Indian politics.
For about 18 years after Gandhi took over the leadership, the Congress had been functioning as an organized opposition to the British government. With the emergence of the Swaraj Party, the Congress decided to extend its role of opposition to the legislature. In 1930 it gave up the parliamentary programme and became an opposition party functioning only outside the legislature. A party which had been thus functioning continuously as an opposition now in the legislature, now outside the legislature, had taken office in some provinces.

On a number of counts there were differences between the Congress ministers and other ministers who had taken office now. Some of these differences were conspicuous. For example, the Congress decided that its ministers should not draw a salary exceeding Rs 500 in deference to the resolution adopted at the Karachi session. This was less than the amount drawn by the non-Congress ministers in other provinces and the 'interim' ministers in the Congress majority provinces. Further, the Congress ministers had followed the Congress discipline and Gandhian way of life including habitually wearing khadi. This made them distinct from other ministers and created the impression that they took office representing the daridra narayans (poor).

A more basic change that had come about was that it was made clear that though each ministry was functioning in a particular province, it had to function as part of an all-India organization and subject to its leadership and direction. The Congress ministries had a common perspective and a common programme giving clear and concrete directions in their day-to-day functioning. There was a central organizational leadership to supervise their functioning and to rectify the mistake they committed in their functioning. This central organizational leadership had the authority and capability to reprimand and even to dismiss any ministry or minister who disobeyed its directives. No non-Congress ministry now in power or an earlier ministry was subject to such a control.
Parties opposed to the Congress as well as the British newspapers strongly criticized the functioning of the provincial ministries under such a centralized political leadership. They contended that it was undemocratic for an individual or organization outside a province to be vested with powers to interfere in the affairs of a ministry in that province. The Congress leaders replied that the main political question before India was that of the administration of the whole country and not that how each province had to be administered. The real question was how the administration of the whole country including that at the Centre should be transferred from the British to the Indians and how to effectively carry on the struggle for the transfer of administration. The Congress had taken over power in those provinces where it had commanded a majority in the legislature only as part of the process of organizing the people as a whole for the purpose.

The non-Congress ministries in other provinces had no such perspectives and no such central leadership to control and guide them. As distinct from them, the ministers of the Congress who had adopted the political objective of uniting the whole organization, perspective and method of struggle must submit themselves to a centralized discipline.

The Congress which decided to exercise full control over its ministries evolved a form of organization suited for this purpose. Before the elections it had formed a Parliamentary Board to nominate the candidates to contest elections and to carry on the organizational work in connection with the elections. After the elections it formed a Parliamentary Sub-committee consisting of Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Abul Kalam Azad to control the ministries and to give them guidance in their activities.

The very constitution of the Parliamentary Sub-committee with Patel as chairman and with Rajendra Prasad, a well-known right-wing leader, as a member, needs special mention. It was during the presidency of Nehru, a known leftist, that the Parliamentary Board was formed with a
rightist majority and with no place for Nehru in it. This Board was to control the functioning of the ministries. This was a clear evidence to show the correlation of forces inside the Congress. Nehru to attract the masses and secure their votes, and Patel to control the ministries after winning the elections—such was the division of labour inside the Congress.

Although Nehru was not a member of the Parliamentary Board, he was a force to be reckoned with in the formation of the ministries and in their functioning. Durga Das describes how the choice of the Chief Minister was made in U. P., the home province of Nehru.

(Pandit) Pant told me one day of how his Ministry came to be formed. Purushottamdas Tandon was senior to Pant but was dedicated to the cause of Indian Sanskriti (culture) which appeared to Nehru and Rafi a reactionary outlook. Tandon was senior to Nehru too, and in fact was among the few who called him by his first name. Rafi manoeuvred to get Tandon to accept the Speakership of the U. P. Assembly and thus cleared the way for Pant...to take over as Chief Minister. Rafi, on his part, told me how he had helped to insulate the Pant Ministry against "the irritable criticism and interference of the unpredictable Nehru". Pant and he waited on Nehru at his residence in Allahabad and sought his blessings for the induction of Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit in the Ministry. Nehru, who doted on his younger sister, readily agreed. This plan did succeed to a very great extent, but still Nehru could not help an occasional outburst.3

With the formation of ministries Nehru began to drift away from his colleagues. He was not able to reconcile himself with the functioning of the ministries controlled by Patel and other right-wing leaders. Sometimes he publicly expressed his sentiments in this regard. For example, Durga Das has recorded an incident in which Nehru got infuriated at a meeting when Pant's peon entered clad in his official uniform.

He was restive of many omissions and commissions of the Congress ministries. He had noted a tendency in the Congress ministers to be on good terms with the British civil officials rather than considering the ministry as an instrument in the struggle against the administrative system imposed by the British. Nehru’s fury at the official uniform of Pant’s peon was symbolic of his opposition to this tendency.

If this was the plight of Nehru, it is needless to mention that of the ordinary Congressmen. People had great expectations form the Congress leaders after they assumed ministership as the spokesmen and representatives of the daridra narayans.

The expectations of the populace were pitched in a high key. When Zemindars (big landlords) were almost all defeated in the elections, a big revolution which had already been in full swing, received an added impetus in the Zemindars for the revision of old tenures and taxes. Agrarian relief, scaling down debts, removal of intermediaries in cultivation, restriction of the extent of lands possessed by absentee landlords, abolition of illegal exactions...these were the batch of Reforms which the popular ministers had to address themselves to.4

In other words, the people had expected that many of the demands raised by the peasantry before and after the formation of the Kisan Sabha could be realized with the emergence of the Congress ministries.

The Communist Party, Congress Socialist Party and the left-wing Congressmen tried to give an organized form to these expectations that arose among the peasants, workers and other labouring masses. Attempts were made to make the Congress implement a programme for social transformation. They consciously utilized the freedom of activities which became available with the formation of the Congress ministries to organize mass agitations and to form trade unions

4. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op cit, pp. 54-55. A number of items such as total prohibition in the list of Sitaramayya have been left out here.
and peasant organizations. They transformed the very existence of the ministries under the command of Sardar Patel into conditions for the growth of the left movement. They came forward to raise the demand that the promises made to the people in the election manifesto and other official documents of the Congress must be fulfilled.

This led to serious clashes. The leftists and the ordinary Congressmen had started feeling that the Congress leaders who had now become ministers were not functioning in accordance with the promises formally given by the Congress. From the incident narrated by Durga Das it must be understood that even Nehru had shared this feeling. Dr. Gopal, Nehru’s biographer, stated that having understood that he would not be able to reconcile himself with the political atmosphere arising out of the formation of Congress ministries, Nehru "virtually opted out of the day-to-day activities of the domestic politics" and engaged himself in developments outside India. 5

The Congress governments freely used the provisions of those very repressive laws which the British government had been using against the Congress earlier, against the activists of mass organizations. Protests against these actions came not only from the ranks of the Congress but also from certain Congress committees in the different provinces.

In sum, the formation of the Congress ministries at one and the same time helped the growth of the bourgeoisie as well as of the left revolutionary forces fighting against the bourgeoisie. It also helped each of them to formulate their respective strategy for anti-imperialist struggles. For the first time in the history of the Congress and of Indian politics, there emerged a bourgeois strategy of bargaining with the imperialists both by making use of the administrative machinery and by rallying the people under a well-trained centralized leadership as well as a leadership (Patel and others) to put this strategy into practice. On the other side,

5. S. Gopal op. cit. p 232.
a leftist political force basing itself on the strategy of revolutionary struggles against the Congress strategy of bargain began to emerge.

Nehru who aspired to remain on the side of these revolutionary forces but kept himself away from the conflicts between these two forces for want of mental strength was used by Patel and his cohorts as an ornament that could be placed at the top of their organization. The left forces which were uncompromisingly opposing the right-wing strategy of bargain with the British imperialists found another prominent leftist leader—Subhas Bose to stand with them at least for the time being. It was in the background of an impending clash between the left forces with Nehru and Bose on their side, and the right-wing leadership under Patel and Rajendra Prasad that the next annual session of the Congress was held in Haripura.

IV. TOWARDS CRISIS

The Haripura session of the Congress was held in February 1938 in the shadow of a political crisis that arose from the resignation of the Bihar Chief Minister Srikrishna Sinha and U. P. Chief Minister Govind Ballabh Pant. The resignation was a sequel to the refusal of the Governors to concur with the decisions of the cabinets of Bihar and U. P. to release political prisoners. The question arose before the delegates to the session whether this political crisis would remain confined to these provinces. Doubts were expressed whether the assessment of the political situation made by the Congress at the time of formation of the ministries following the political-legal controversy that lasted for three months was correct, whether the Governors were interfering in the functioning of the ministries or not and, if they were, whether it was not proper for the Congress leadership to direct other Congress Chief Ministers also to resign and lead a country-wide struggle.
A situation was developing all over the country which might turn this into a crucial political issue. In Bengal, well-known for the valour and sacrifice displayed in the anti-imperialist struggle, thousands of political workers were behind the bars. The government there did not take any action to release them. Instead, it was resorting to fresh repressive measures. Similarly, a considerable number of political prisoners from Bengal and other provinces had been banished to the Andaman Islands. The Central government did not even consider the question of releasing them. This naturally created deep discontent and unrest among the people throughout the country. It was in this context that the Congress governments of Bihar and U. P. decided to release the political prisoners under their jurisdiction. The interference of the governors drew a storm of protest from the people.

However, neither the Congress nor the Congress Chief Ministers wanted to bring the matters to a head. On the contrary, they adopted an attitude which would facilitate a compromise. Durga Das, who was the Lucknow correspondent of the Statesman, has put it on record that the U. P. Chief Minister Pant had drafted his resignation letter very carefully making sure that it did not impair his relations with the Governor and that he (Durga Das) helped Pant to soften the tone and approach of the draft.

The resolution adopted by the Haripura session of the Congress had made reference to an incident which drew objections from the Governor of U. P. In order to bring out the attitude of the Congress leadership towards the issue involved, the relevant part of the resolution is given below.

On behalf of the U. P. Governor it has been stated that the demonstrations organised to welcome the Kakori prisoners and the speeches delivered by some of them had interfered with the policy of gradual release of political prisoners. The Congress has always discouraged unseemly demonstrations and other objectionable activities. The demonstrations and speeches referred to by the U. P. Governor were strongly disapproved by Mahatma Gandhi.
Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, President of the Congress, had similarly taken immediate notice of the indiscipline which was thus betrayed. Nor were they ignored by the Ministers. As a result of these corrective steps public opinion rapidly changed and even the persons concerned came to realise their mistake.\(^6\)

The resolution was an open admission that the objections raised by the Governor were not entirely baseless as well as an expression of the readiness on the part of the Congress leadership to carry on matters according to the wishes of the Governors. The conciliatory attitude expressed in the resolution was in fact an appeal to the Governors not to interfere with the functioning of the ministers. Furthermore, this conciliatory attitude would not be limited to the question of the release of political prisoners. As we have repeatedly pointed out earlier, the Congress leadership was striving at a compromise with the British authorities on all the issues including the Federal system at the Centre in such a way as to protect maximally its own class interests.

However, the British authorities were aware of the fact that a considerable section within the Congress was working uncompromisingly against this conciliatory attitude. The actions taken by the Governors of Bihar and U. P. were designed to test the strength of this section as well as the willingness of the leadership to resist it and continue this conciliatory attitude. The resolution adopted at the Haripura session had moreover shown that the leadership was prepared for compromise disregarding the leftists. The resolution had specifically stated that the "Congress Ministers have more than once declared their determination to take adequate action in the matter of violent crime..."\(^7\)

Consequently, soon after the Haripura session ministerial crisis in Bihar and U. P. were brought to an end. The ministers who had resigned resumed office and the statements and counter-statements were exchanged between

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\(^6\) Zaidi and Zaidi, \textit{op. cit}, p. 437.

\(^7\) \textit{Ibid}, p.437
the ministers and the Governors for this purpose. But the Haripura session marked the beginning of an intense struggle within the Congress on several issues including the question of the release of political prisoners.

The commotions and the convulsions in national thought during the two preceding years were largely conditioned by the concepts of Socialism and Communism which travelled afresh into the country, the conflicts that arose in 1938 must largely be put down as the off-shoots of the earlier antagonisms that had been raging indeed for some years past in the Congress annals. Here was Gandhi who though not a member of the Congress was still the power behind the throne, the fountain spring of all ideas of constructive nationalism and the architect of that mighty barrage which helped to stem successfully the tide of violence. There were the younger folks who felt impatient over the slow progress of the ideas rooted in non-violence and were hard put to discover short cuts to vertical heights or make long jumps over impassable gulsfs. The formation of Ministries in particular did not achieve that millennium nor did the popular governments help to hasten the advent of that far off divine event, the emancipation of the Kisans.8

The growth of the Kisan Sabha became an issue of heated controversy in the Haripura session. The fact that its leapership was not with the Congress but with the Communists and Socialists agitated the right-wing Congress leaders. They launched a heavy attack on the Kisan Sabha for it was functioning independent of the Congress discipline and was hoisting red flag in its meetings and demonstrations. The resolution adopted at the Haripura session stated:

In view of the difficulties that have arisen in regard to the Kisan Sabhas and other organizations in some parts of India, the Congress desires to clarify the position and state its attitude in regard to them. The Congress has already fully recognised the right of Kisans to organise

themselves in peasant unions. Nevertheless it must be remembered that the Congress itself is in the main a Kisan organization and as contacts with the masses have increased, vast numbers of Kisans have joined it and influenced its policy. The Congress must, and has in fact, stood for these Kisan masses and championed their claims, and has worked for the independence of India which must be based on the freedom from exploitation of all our people... While fully recognising the right of the Kisans to organise Kisan Sabhas, the Congress cannot associate itself with any activities which are incompatible with the basic principles of the Congress and will not countenance any of the activities of those Congressmen who as members of the Kisan Sabhas help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policy. The Congress, therefore, calls upon provincial Congress Committees to bear the above in mind and in pursuance of it take suitable action wherever call for.  

It becomes obvious from the resolution that the conflict between the left and right-wings of the Congress were getting intense and that the problem of the relationship between the Kisan Sabha and the Congress arose as a symbol of this conflict. The complaint of the right-wing was that the leftists were going ahead with programmes, which were not to their liking, of propagating the ideologies of socialism and communism among the people and organizing peasants in the organizations independent of the Congress based on these ideologies. The resolution was adopted after a heated debate with a majority of votes.

Kisan Sabhas had been organized under the leadership of the leftists in all provinces where the Congress ministries were in power. The agitations, struggles, and demonstrations conducted by them under the red flag were a headache not only to the big landlords and the British rulers but also to the Congress ministers. It had become such a strong movement that it could march ahead even if it was opposed by

all the right-wing Congress leaders including Gandhi. This was the case not only with the Kisan Sabha but also of the trade unions and students organizations. The message of socialism and communism had spread extensively in these movements. The Communist and Socialist parties had been growing in strength capable of leading them. Utilizing the freedom of speech and press and other civil liberties in the provinces where the Congress ministries were in power, the left parties were also engaged in publishing newspapers and journals and organizing meetings and demonstrations.

Changes were taking place in the old revolutionaries giving a fresh impetus to these developments. A considerable section of the prisoners in the different jails in India, including in the Andaman Islands, were those who believed in the politics of bomb. Acquaintance with the communist and socialist literature and world political developments including the rapid progress achieved by the Soviet Union made them rethink politically. They began to realize that the kind of revolution that had taken place in Russia and for which many other countries were preparing, would take place in India only by organizing the different sections of the people and making them politically conscious, rather than by physically eliminating the enemies of the people. Many who later became prominent Communist leaders were those who had adopted the ideology of communism at this stage.

The statement signed by the former bomb politicians renouncing the bomb politics was interpreted by the right-wing Congress leadership as evidence to the increasing influence of the Gandhian philosophy of non-violence. It was, in fact, a victory of socialism and communism because it showed that the revolutionary forces inside and outside the Congress had begun adopting the perspective of working on the basis of organized revolutionary strength of the working class, peasantry and other toiling people.

It was as part of the approach of the right-wing leadership to stem the upswing of the left forces that they decided to install the leftist Subhas Bose as the president of the
Congress at the Haripura session. We have seen that the right-wing leadership was able to implement their own policies under the shadow of Nehru who had been placed as an ornament at the top of the Congress continuously for two years. They hoped that they would be able to perform the same feat under the presidency of Bose as well. And this calculation was not an entirely misplaced one. Bose did not cause any "trouble" to the right-wing leadership during his presidency.

But by the time of the next session, the Congress was once again heading towards a split. The fierce controversy that raged in the Haripura session on the question of the relationship between the Kisan Sabha and the Congress was the first indication of the storm that was gathering.

V. PRINCELY STATES AND THE CONGRESS

Another important issue which came to be hotly debated in the Haripura session was the attitude of the Congress towards the struggles for democracy in the princely states. As in the case of many other issues, the left stood firmly against the attitude of the right-wing leadership on this issue. But unlike on most other issues, certain non-left sections also expressed dissatisfaction over the stand taken by the right-wing on this matter.

As we have noted earlier, the official position of the Congress was that it would not participate in the popular struggles for democracy in the princely states. The contention of those who formulated this policy was that since the princes were sympathetic to the struggle against the British rulers, the Congress should not function in a manner that disconcerted them. But with the development of the bourgeoisie in the princely states as it did in British India, activities for establishing the democratic principles and values which were upheld by the Congress began to take place in these
states at least on a lower key. Just like the Congress demanded the transfer of power from the British rulers to Indian bourgeoisie, so the demand came from the princely states that the autocratic rule be ended and the bourgeois democratic system introduced.

Basically, the bourgeois leadership of the Congress should have been sympathetic to this demand. But considering the consequences of joining hands with democratic movements in the princely states, the Congress turned its back and adopted the policy "non-interference in the internal affairs of the princely states".

A change came about in this in the Round Table Conferences and in the years following the Conferences. It became clear that the princes were one of the main forces to support the British in rejecting the national demand raised by the Congress. Undoubtedly, those who would 'represent' the autocratic princely states in the Federation would be the henchmen of the rulers of these states. Therefore, in order for the Congress to achieve its objective, it was essential that there must be a basic change in the administrative set-up in the princely states. So, the Indian bourgeoisie had to raise the slogan of responsible governments in the states along with the demand of full independence for India.

It was in these circumstances that democratic organizations—Praja Mandals—working for the establishment of democracy in the princely states emerged. An all-India conference was convened in July 1936 at Karachi with a view to provide the various Praja Mandals scattered all over the country a uniform perspective. An all-India organization of the states' organizations was formed at the conference. The leaders of that organization appealed to the Congress for moral and practical assistance to the struggles being conducted in the states since they looked upon the Congress as an organization which represented their aspirations.

Although the democratic movements in the princely states were under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, the approach of the leaders of these movements was different
from that of bourgeois leadership of the Congress towards
the autocratic rules in the states. They believed that they des-
erved the full support from a movement like the Congress. 
On the contrary, the right-wing leadership of the Congress
feared that if they antagonized the rulers of the states by
giving direct support to democratic struggles in the states,
that would weaken the national front against the British
rulers.

This difference in approach was found reflected in the
top leadership of the Congress. Not only Nehru and Bose
but also those right-wing Congress leaders who had at
least a remote relation with the princely states were of
the opinion that the Congress should reconsider its attitude
towards the struggles in the princely states. As a result, the
AICC meeting held in Calcutta in October 1937 adopted a
resolution declaring support to the struggles of the people of
Mysore against repression.

However this was severely criticized by Gandhi who
maintained that although the struggles of the people of the
princely states for responsible government was just, the
direct participation of the Congress would do harm to these
struggles. The Communists, Socialists and other leftists
showed that Gandhi’s argument was basically wrong and
pointed out that his argument in fact amounted to conceding
the contention of the autocrats in the states that the Congress
was an “outsider” to their states. They also pointed out
that since it had become clear that the British were trying to
weaken the country-wide freedom struggle by differentiating
between “British India” and “Indian India”, responsible
governments in the princely states should also be brought
within the definition of Purna Swaraj.

At least on this issue a section of the right-wing leader-
ship joined hands with the left. They joined the left forces
to raise protest against the draft resolution prepared by the
Working Committee to be placed before the Subjects Commi-
ttee of the Congress at Haripura. The draft had completely
prohibited formation and functioning of Congress Committees
in the states. Finally a "compromise" resolution was adopted at the Haripura session which included the following paragraph.

"The Congress therefore directs that, for the present, Congress Committees in the States shall function under the direction and control of the Congress Working Committee and shall not engage in parliamentary activity or launch on direct action in the name and under the auspices of the Congress. Internal struggles of the people of the states must not be undertaken in the name of the Congress. For this purpose independent organizations should be started and continued where they exist already with in the State."

That this 'compromise' resolution did not have an iota of compromise would be clear to any one who has read it. Open struggle and parliamentary work are two facets of political work. The 'compromise' here was that the right-wing leadership had no objection to forming Congress committees sans these two facets of political work. This meant that no "outsider" should interfere in the internal affairs of the princely states, that Congress Committees are "outside" organizations for the princely states and that they should keep aloof from the conflicts between the subjects and rulers of these states. Thus, under the veil of 'compromise' the Haripura resolution re-affirmed the attitude of the right-wing leadership towards the struggles of the people in the princely states.

It was but natural that there was a powerful section among the delegates to the Haripura session which was opposed to this resolution. Whereas the Kisan Sabha-Congress relation was an issue on which the left and right confronted each other, on the question of the princely states a section of the right-wing leadership together with the left raised a challenge to the approach of Gandhi and his associates. However, the resolution which was introduced by the right-wing leadership was adopted with a majority of votes.

In the months that followed the movements for responsible government forged ahead in many states. In Mysore, Cochin, Travancore, Kashmir and in the states in Orissa, Gujarat and other regions the slogan of responsible government reverberated and the struggle for it assumed different forms. For the first time since the formation of the Congress various princely states became the scene of fight aganist autocratic rule and for responsible government.

Two distinct approaches emerged within and outside the Congress on how to handle the new situation.

As in the case with the struggle aganist the British, the right-wing leadership adopted the policy of mobilizing the people and utilizing the force thus gained to bargain with the autocratic rulers in the states. As distinct form this, the leftists started working with the perspective of leading the people of the states along the path of revolutionary struggles against autocratic rule. Depending on the correlation of forces of the right and the left, particular path was adopted in each state.

The State of Travancore was a brilliant example of the revolutionary path. There an organized working class movement and left parties based on it were growing for more than a decade. These left movements had close links with similar movements in the neighbouring state of Cochin and the Malabar region of British India. Further, there was a state Praja movement led by rightists but in which leftists actively participated. Following the Haripura session of the Congress, a bourgeois democratic movement called the State Congress came to exist there. Demands were raised for the establishment of a fully responsible government in the state. The organized working class in the state actively participated in the struggles waged to realize this demand. The agitation organized by the State Congress in 1938 for responsible government and the political strike launched by the working class as an independent class as part of this agitation were important events in the political history of Travancore. The agitation for responsible government transformed itself into
a democratic struggle in which the working class led by the left parties played a significant role.

The struggle conducted in the state of Rajkot in Gujarat under the direct leadership of Sardar Patel with the blessings of Gandhi was quite distinct from this. Neither an organized working class nor leftist forces were there in that state and consequently the movement was completely in the hands of the rightists. The ruler of the state and Sardar Patel struck a compromise which was thrown to the wind by ruler before the ink was dry on the document forcing Gandhi to launch a fast in protest against this.

The situation in Kashmir was different from both these cases. Although bereft of any working class or left movement, there was a bourgeois leadership which had imbibed to an extent, the left ideology, which later became well-known as the National Conference. Although leaders of the National Conference shared the thinking of the poor and middle classes in the towns and countryside, they were not able to organize the people on a revolutionary basis with a working class outlook. All the weaknesses emanating from this could be found reflected in the activities of the National Conference and its leaders like Sheikh Abdullah. But they did not try to bargain with the ruler in the state and gain their political objective as did the Gandhian leadership in Rajkot. They adopted the path of organizing massive struggles of the people which also found reflected in the later day politics in the state.

Struggles for responsible government broke out in many more states. But the Congress was incapable of giving a centralized leadership to these struggles. The resolution adopted at the Haripur session to the effect that the Congress was an 'outside' organization to the princely states and that Congress committees should not interfere with the internal affairs of the states cast its shadow over the democratic movements in the states.

Despite this, a section of the right-wing leadership of the Congress was forced by circumstances to remain on the
forefront of the *Praja* movements. What forced them to take
this stand was the realization on the part of the Indian
bourgeoisie that it was essential to end the autocratic rule
in the princely states to defeat the game of the British rulers
and also the desire of the bourgeoisie in each state to share
power in their respective state.

VI. MINISTRIES AND THE RIVALS

The right-wing bourgeois leadership of the Congress
used the ministries in such a way as to make use of the
growing anti-imperialist trend to serve its own class interests.
The ministries tried to implement the main slogans of the
anti-imperialist front, viz., release of political prisoners, with-
drawal of the repressive laws, and legislation against the
interests of big landlords. In the process they often came in
conflict with the Governors. In addition, they also initiated
steps towards introducing educational reforms, transforma-
tion of Indian economy through industrialization and
prohibition of intoxicating drinks. The formulation of an
educational system linking education with manual labour and
the formation of the National Planning Committee to intro-
duce economic planing in post-independence India deserve
special mention. These were the initial efforts made to tell
the people the shape of things to come in the administration as
well as in the economic and educational fields in independent
India.

However, the Congress did not have an undisputed all-
India representation as claimed by it; it was a minority in
five out of eleven provinces. Of these five provinces, only in
Assam and the NWF Province could it form ministries with
the support of certain other political groups and individuals.
In Sind, the Allah Baksh ministry which was formed after
the fall of the ministry headed by Gulam Hussain Hiday-
atullah had the indirect support of the Congress. Therefore,
it introduced certain items of the Congress programme. The
governments of the remaining two provinces of Punjab and Bengal were hostile to the Congress.

These two non-Congress ministries did not command a majority in the legislatures. The Unionist Party of Sikandar Hyat Khan in Punjab and the Krishak Praja Party of Fazlul Huq in Bengal were in power in these two provinces with the support of certain other parties. Since both of them were Muslim majority provinces, Jinnah made an attempt to bring the governments and the ruling parties under the influence of the Muslim League. But none of them yielded to Jinnah. Fazlul Huq even tried to get the support of the Congress. Although the Bengal Pradesh Congress was in favour of it, it had to reject it because the national leadership of the Congress was opposed to it. In spite of the fact that the Congress moved to the Opposition, Huq did not go to the League. Similarly, the Hyat Khan ministry remained independent of both the Congress and the League.

The situation in India as a whole was changing rapidly. As we have indicated earlier, efforts made to form a Congress-League ministry in U.P. failed. The rejection of Huq's request for support by the Congress created serious repercussions in the League leadership. Huq's appeal to Jinnah to come to terms with the Congress was turned down. Jinnah said that he too desired a settlement with Congress, but that it became impossible because the Congress was trying to compel the British to accept its demand and leave the Muslims in the lurch.11

The political developments in India during and after the elections of 1937 prepared the ground for the rise of the Muslim League which was one of the several parties of the Muslims, as the sole representative of the Muslim community. Following the refusal of the Congress to give a share to the Muslims in the U. P. ministry and to cooperate with the Huq ministry in Bengal, the Muslim League led by Jinnah started a powerful campaign against the 'anti-Muslim attitude of the

Congress’. The report of the Committee headed by the Nawab of Pirpur, appointed by the League to enquire into the ‘anti-Muslim measures taken by the Congress government in U. P.’ provided considerable motivation to the Muslims to rally behind the Muslim League. The ‘Pirpur Report’ was hotly discussed by the Muslims all over India.

This was only the beginning. The alleged ‘anti-Muslim policy’ being followed by the Congress governments in other provinces created commotions among the Muslim masses. Propaganda was extensively conducted that if the national democratic set up as demanded by the Congress came to exist, the Muslims would be physically eliminated and that if that situation had to be avoided, the Muslims must set aside the differences among themselves and strengthen the League. The intention of those who let loose this propaganda was to raise the League to the position of a party of the Muslims as opposed to the ‘Hindu political party’, the Congress.

With this anti-Congress propaganda of the League, communal clashes between Hindus and Muslims and between the Sikhs and Muslims began to erupt. These communal clashes became the worst in 1940-1941 by which the Congress had left the provincial governments. The Muslim League had adopted a resolution in its Lahore session in March 1940 demanding an independent state of Pakistan by combining the Muslim majority provinces in India.

Another event which took place in the same period which needs particular mention was the anti-Hindi agitation in the Madras province where a Congress ministry was in office. The people were agitated over the decision of the ministry to teach compulsorily in the schools Hindi which the Congress considered as the ‘symbol of Indian nationalism’. The Justice Party which was defeated in the 1937 elections tried to fan the anti-Hindi sentiments of the people and turn it against the Congress. The message of anti-Hindi agitation reached the people who were already agitated over Prohibition and the newly introduced sales tax to make good the deficit
caused by it. This was the beginning of the anti-North India slogan raised by the Dravida Kazhakam and the Dravida Munnetra Kazgakam later on.

The emergence of the Muslim League as an all-India force and the beginning of Anti-Hindi agitation in Madras were pointers to the growth of certain new forces in Indian politics. Along with these, an anti-Congress wave was rising among the Sikhs, Christians, the depressed castes and others. Each of these sections was raising challenge in its own way to the claim made by the Congress that it was the sole representative of Indian people.

None of these parties and groups was against the declared objective of the Congress, viz., national independence and a democratic set-up in India. What turned sections of the people belonging to various religions and castes against the right-wing leadership of the Congress was the rights they were to enjoy in an independent democratic India. Therefore, it would be absurd to characterize any of them as 'lackeys of the British rulers' and 'enemies of national independence'. That the British rulers succeeded in turning them individually and collectively against the Congress and in their own favour was beside the point. The division of the country into India and Pakistan in 1947 and the accompanying communal riots were the culmination of the British moves.

The origin of this was in the years 1937-1939. As power was transferred to the bourgeoisie, though it was confined to the provinces, dispute arose among the bourgeoisie belonging to the different nationalities on the question of sharing the power thus transferred. It was this dispute and the communal riots that arose out of it that finally led to the slogan of Pakistan and the direct action based on it.

There is another side of the picture. Here we are referring to the left political forces which had been supporting the objectives declared by the Congress and challenging its right-wing leadership while engaged themselves in practical activities for the realization of these objectives. We have already described the advance made by the left forces including
the Communists and Socialists, its impact in the country, and the important position gained by the left outlook in the election manifesto and other official documents of the Congress. What follows are some instances which showed the natural results of these trends.

As we have mentioned earlier, the Communist Party of India which was reorganized in 1933-1934 was declared illegal in this period. A change in this situation came about when the Congress ministries came to power in the provinces. Since the Party was declared illegal by the Central government, the Congress governments in the provinces had no authority to lift the ban on it. However, they were able to release political prisoners including communists and communist sympathizers and to provide them facilities to conduct meetings and publish newspapers and journals. This enabled known communists to work openly in the trade unions, Kisan Sabhas and other mass organizations and also to join the Congress and contest elections. These facilities were offered by the Congress governments in the provinces.

Using these facilities, the communists began the publication of the *National Front*, a weekly from Bombay and the *New Age*, a monthly from Madras. The *National Front* was run by an editorial board consisting of the General Secretary and members of the Polit Bureau of the Party. The office of the journal became the legal office of the illegal Party. Prominent communist leaders could participate in the AICC meetings as delegates and as press correspondents. Thus, the ban on the Party remained only on paper.

Leaders of the Congress Socialist Party which was not banned, openly conducted their political activities. They published their journal *The Congress Socialist* from Bombay. On the basis of an understanding reached between these two parties they cooperated with each other in working in the Congress, AITUC, Kisan Sabha, Students Federation and other organizations.

It was true that differences also arose between them in the process of these activities and it was also true that these
differences led to a split between them later on. But they were working together even at that stage on the basis of left unity.

Before and immediately after the election, the right-wing Congress leadership did not prevent the growth of these left forces in any way; they even helped them. But the situation had begun to change after the elections. We have referred earlier to the attack launched by the right-wing leadership against the activities of the leftists in the Kisan Sabha. However, the leadership at that time was not prepared to take things to an open split in the Congress nor to take disciplinary actions against the leftists. On the contrary, they kept the leftists Nehru and Bose at the presidency of the Congress continuously for three years. Things were moving, however, to a situation in which an open conflict between the left and right-wings appeared inevitable. And the conflict did burst out at the Tripuri session of the Congress.

The developments that took place before and after the Tripuri session will be dealt with in the following chapter. It is necessary to point out here that parties of the ruling classes like the Muslims League on the one side and the left forces under the leadership of the Communists and Socialists on the other, had started challenging the right-wing leadership of the Congress. The dispute between the former and the right-wing leadership of the Congress was over sharing the power in the future administrative set up and not over the form of the set up and the method to shaping it. The latter, on the other, opposed the right-wing leadership on the question of the method to be adopted to achieve independence as well as the social content of it.
CRISIS IN THE CONGRESS

I. THE PRESIDENT

Subhas Bose who took over the Congress presidency from Nehru at the Haripura session, though known to be a leftist like Nehru, never maintained personal relations with Gandhi as Nehru had done. Besides, a person who had been keeping relations with the four decade old revolutionary movement in Bengal, Bose had not been able to reconcile himself politically with Gandhi and the right-wing leadership led by him. Consequently, a considerable section of the Congressmen looked upon the circumstance that led to the election of Bose to the presidency with mixed feelings.

The reasons that motivated the leadership to install a leftist leader as the president had not ceased to exist. Whatever the nature of the collective leadership of the Congress, a leftist president was absolutely essential for mobilizing the masses enthusiastically for political action. The next
best person to serve this purpose was Bose. However, the question arose whether Bose would submit himself to be tamed by Gandhi and other right-wing leaders as Nehru did, or whether contradictions and conflicts would develop between them. In any case, the leadership felt that if a well-known leftist leader from Bengal like Bose, who had spent a longer period in jail than Nehru, was not made the president at least for one term, it might create problems. Consequently, Bose was elected president with the full backing of Gandhi. In a statement issued on the occasion of his election, Bose stated that as long as he remained the president he would utilize that position to resist with all legal and legitimate means the federal scheme which contained all undemocratic and anti-national elements. He would utilize the presidency to strengthen the determination of the country to fight against the federal scheme by formulating, if necessary, a mass resistance programme which would include non-violent non-cooperation.

This was apparently no different from the statements issued by the right-wing leaders for they also had been claiming to prepare the people for a country-wide struggle against the federal scheme. However, in this statement as well as in his presidential address and other pronouncements made later during his presidency, there was an overtone of a determined anti-British struggle, whereas in the approach of the right-wing the slant was towards compromise. This was, in fact, the basis of the split that surfaced a year later at the Tripuri session.

Bitter controversies raged between the left-wing and right-wing in the Congress during the year that intervened between the Haripura and Tripuri sessions. The struggle inside was so intense that there was even a walk out by the leftist leaders led by Acharya Narendra Dev, a member of the Working Committee, at an AICC meeting held in September 1938. The attitude of the provincial Congress ministries towards the peasant struggle which were going on all over the country and the negative approach adopted by
Gandhi and other right-wing leaders towards the democratic struggles of the people in the different princely states made the leftists discontent and restive. On these and similar other issues Bose stood firmly with the leftists.

The conflicts between the two wings reached an explosive stage when the issue arose whether Bose should retire from presidency after the one year term or whether he should be re-elected for a second as in the case of Nehru. The view became widespread among the leftist Congressmen that Gandhi and other right-wing leaders were not determined enough in organizing national resistance to the federal scheme. The behind-the-scene moves initiated by leading capitalists like Birla to bring a compromise between the Congress and the British government were well known. It was widely felt that Bose should continue as president if these moves were to be stalled. Unlike Nehru, Bose was relentless in his opposition to the right-wing leadership which made the leftists rally behind him.

Bengal was one of the provinces where the feelings against compromise were expressed in the strongest terms. For example, the Jalpaiguri District Conference of the Congress in a resolution proposed rejection of the federal scheme. The resolution also proposed that the British should be given a six months notice and that after the expiration of this period, a programme should be adopted to launch a mass struggle including civil disobedience and strikes. Bose himself had expressed this opinion on many occasions. An indication of this was also contained in the statement he had issued after he was elected president of the Congress at the Haripura session.

The Jalpaiguri resolution and Bose's statement were reflections of the sentiment of ordinary Congressmen in the other provinces as well. The idea of launching a mass struggle by mobilizing the people aganist the federal scheme had exerted considerable influence among the people. Bose appeared on the forefront as a powerful spokesman of this idea.
The right-wing leadership was totally against this stand. Consequently, they opposed tooth and nail the proposal to re-elect Bose for a second term. When his candidature was announced, they proposed Maulana Azad as their candidate for the presidency. They argued that with the deepening political crisis and the Hindu-Muslim conflict in particular, a venerable Muslim leader like Azad would be a better choice. But Azad withdrew from the contest saying that it would do more harm than good if he were to stand against Bose. Following this, the right-wing leaders nominated Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya as the presidential candidate.

In the fierce fight between the two, both sides used all the weapons available. The sharpest weapon on the one side was the leftist sentiment that a decisive battle had to be waged against the British rulers serving them with a six months ultimatum. The effective argument on the other side was that for any such struggle to succeed, the mature and seasoned leadership of Gandhi was essential. Thus the presidential context was between these two political views.

Bose was elected with a narrow majority. The election which might be considered as a victory for the left over the right led to the biggest crisis in the Congress since the Surat session. In a statement issued soon after the election, Gandhi owned Pattabhi’s defeat as his own. He said: “... since I was instrumental in inducing Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya not to withdraw his name as a candidate when Maulana Azad withdrew, the defeat is more mine than his.”1 In this statement Gandhi was indicating that if the leftists represented by Bose gained upper hand in the Congress and a struggle was launched under its auspices, he would not participate in that struggle. The various statements and counter-statements that followed contained numerous allegations against each other. Soon the right-wing members in the Working Committee resigned bringing the activities of the Congress at the top to a standstill.

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Gandhi’s anti-left attitude was well known since 1934 when he had resigned his primary membership in the Congress stating that in case the socialists gained ascendancy in the Congress he would not like to remain in the organization. But the Congress Socialists and other leftists were a minority then. The situation continued to be the same during the presidency of Nehru. Nor was there any problem apparently during the year in which Bose was made the president. But in the confrontation that took place at the end of his presidency, the right-wing which was working with the blessings of Gandhi was defeated. Gandhi could not but hit back. This was what he had started with the statement that Pattabhi’s defeat was his own.

Although the right-wing was defeated in the presidential election, the left-wing had a serious weakness. Gandhi had known what this weakness was. A considerable section of the ordinary Congressmen who shared the sentiments of a relentless struggle also believed in the indispensability of the leadership of Gandhi for victory in the struggle for independence. To the ordinary Congressmen Gandhi was the only leader who inspired the masses and drew them into the struggle. The experience of the Indian people had not so far shown them that the path of mass revolution based on the Marxist-Leninist perspective was practical politics. Even the ordinary Congressmen who supported the line of uncompromising struggle championed by Bose and other left-wing leaders believed in the indispensability of Gandhi’s leadership. The statement made by Gandhi conceding defeat in the presidential election was in fact the warning that these would not go together and that if they wanted his leadership, the programme advocated by Bose and others should be abandoned and a president and a Working Committee enjoying his confidence must come to the leadership. The resignation of the right-wing leaders declaring unwillingness to cooperate with the president who was elected with a narrow margin of votes was another form of the same warning.

Gandhi’s statement and the resignation of the right-wing leaders from the Working Committee brought about a change
in the co-relation of right-left forces among the delegates. Although a majority of the delegates to the Tripuri session was with Bose at the time of the presidential election, most delegates considered that Gandhi’s leadership was indispensable. Most delegates were under the spell of a psychological conflict, a conflict between the feelings that the statement and the resignations were designed to hound out Bose and that the continuance of Bose as president should not be at the cost of Gandhi’s leadership.

Exploiting the state of mind of a majority of the delegates, the right-wing leadership made a clever move. On its behalf Govind Ballabh Pant introduced a resolution suggesting that Bose continue as president and nominate the members of the Working Committee in consultation with Gandhi. The rationale for raising this demand was mentioned in the resolution.

In view of the critical situation that may develop during the coming year and in view of the fact that Mahatma Gandhi alone can lead the Congress and the country to victory during such a crisis, the Congress regards it as imperative that the Congress Executive should command his implicit confidence...

The introduction of the resolution led to a lot of procedural wrangle. Many incidents took place reminiscent of the Surat session. Finally the resolution was adopted, which represented a greater victory for the right-wing than that of the left-wing in the presidential election. The political result of the Gandhi-Bose confrontation was that it belittled the narrow victory of the leftists and carried the majority of the ordinary congressmen to stand behind Gandhi and other right-wing leaders. Organizationally, Pant’s resolution placed the leftist president at the mercy of the right-wing leaders. In other words, Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders who were successful in taming Nehru took a major step towards destroying the entire left movement by trouncing

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Bose in a direct political-organizational fight. A few months after this, they launched a fresh attack on the left.

II. THE SWORD OF DISCIPLINE

The meaning of the resolution introduced by Pant and adopted at the Tripuri session was that in return to his remaining as the president, Bose should be prepared to nominate a Working Committee as proposed by Gandhi and acceptable to the right-wing leadership. Bose and Gandhi could not come to an agreement with regard to the implementation of the resolution. Consequently, the entire Congress organization remained paralyzed for several weeks after the Tripuri session. This was a development which was not anticipated by the delegates who elected him president. Seeing no way out of the impasse, Bose tendered his resignation and called a meeting of the AICC.

The AICC session which was held in Calcutta to consider the resignation of Bose and other related matters was equally stormy. Since the right-wing had a big majority in the AICC there was no difficulty in accepting the resignation of Bose and electing Rajendra Prasad as president in his place. Thus the election of the president by a majority of delegates and the support to the left policy demonstrated in that process were rejected by this action of the AICC.

The leftist outlook in the Congress and the reality of its manifestation in the different forms could not be eliminated by this organizational action alone. Just as the right-wing political force was not wiped out by the election of Bose as the president of the Congress, so the left political force was not destroyed by the forced resignation of Bose from the presidency. Even after the resignation of Bose, popular feelings rose high against the right-oriented policies pursued by the leadership in general and the anti-people measures of the Congress ministries in particular. Workers' strikes, peasant
\textit{satyagraha} and other forms of direct actions became widespread all over the country, in which ordinary Congressmen joined hands with Communists and Congress Socialists. In all provinces numerous district and local Congress committees and in certain provinces like Bengal, U. P and Kerala even the provincial committees actively participated in these mass actions. These were, in fact, the expression of the anguish of ordinary Congressmen over the repressive actions being resorted to by the Congress governments in which they were little different from the non-Congress governments. The tactics adopted by the right-wing leadership in hounding out a president who was elected by a majority also intensified the protest of the Congress ranks.

In order to meet the new situation, the AICC which met in June 1939 at Bombay adopted two resolutions. One of these resolutions was designed to prevent Congressmen and lower level Congress committees from going on agitations by putting the restriction that "any movement or Satyagraha for any purpose should be run under the direction, control, and superintendence of the Provincial Congress Committees". The other resolution was intended to prevent open criticism of the provincial Congress governments by the Congress Parliamentary Parties or Provincial Congress Committees. The resolution laid down that "in administrative matters, the PCC should not interfere with the discretion of the Ministry but it is always open to the Executive of the PCC to draw the attention of the Government to any particular abuse or difficulty...In matters of policy if there is a difference between the Ministry and the PCC reference should be made to the Parliamentary Board. Public discussion should be avoided."

These resolutions gave a clear indication to the direction in which the right-wing leadership and the ministers under their control were moving. The essence of these resolutions is that since the Congress is in power in some of the provinces, people in those provinces should not launch struggles, and even if they did, Congressmen should not participate in these
struggles and that even if an action of the governments is found to be wrong, which causes the struggle, this should not be stated publicly. In other words, the Congress committee should function as an appendage of the Congress ministry.

There were certain political developments behind all this. As Dr. Gopal, Nehru’s biographer, has stated, the British rulers were having a sort of honeymoon with the right-wing Congressmen. The repressive policies adopted by Rajagopalachari in Madras and Munshi in Bombay gave tremendous satisfaction to the British rulers who began to realize that if the Congress ministers, on being given the power to rule at the provincial level, were prepared to “maintain law and order” so satisfactorily, giving them power at the Centre would in no way cause harm to their imperial interests.

Feeling upset by the close relations between the Congress and the British rulers, Jinnah began to make certain counter moves. On the other hand, the suspicion spread among the ranks of the Congress that the right-wing leaders were trying to reach a compromise with the British rulers. What made Subhas Bose the target of the ire of the right-wing Congress leadership was that he gave a manifest form to this suspicion. The charge openly made by Bose that the right-wing leadership was trying to arrive at an understanding with the British rulers, the criticism of the right-wing that this amounted to questioning their honesty and the declaration that they would not cooperate with Bose unless he withdrew the charge—all this led to the resignation of Bose from the presidency after being elected with a majority of votes.

The resolution adopted by the AICC which met at Bombay in this background came to be sharply criticized by the leftists. The leftist coordination committee formed by the Congress Socialist Party, the newly formed Forward Bloc under the leadership of Subhas Bose, the Communist Party, the Royist group and the All-India Kisan Sabha called upon the people to observe 9th July as a Protest Day to organize public opinion against the approach of the right-wing
which had taken a dangerous form as evident from these resolutions. The Protest Day was observed on a big scale all over the country. It became evident that the actions of the right-wing had brought the leftists closer. Sensing the danger involved in the left unity, the right-wing leadership decided to take ‘strong actions’. The new president, Rajendra Prasad, asked for an explanation for the ‘breach of Congress discipline’ on the part of Bose. The reply given by Bose throws light on the prevailing political situation as well as on the main issues of dispute between the left-wing and the right-wing in the Congress. The relevant parts of his reply are quoted below.

In the first place, one has to distinguish between protesting against a certain resolution and actually defying it or violating it. What has so far happened is that I have only protested against two resolutions of the AICC. It is my constitutional right to give expression to my opinion regarding any resolution passed by the AICC when a particular session of that body that comes to a close. If you want Congressmen the right to express their views on resolutions passed by the AICC you cannot draw a line and say that only favourable opinions will be allowed expression and unfavourable will be banned. If we have the constitutional right to express our views, then it does not matter if those views are favourable or unfavourable. We have so long been fighting the British Government, among other things, for our Civil Liberty. Civil Liberty, I think, includes freedom of speech. According to your point of view, we are not to claim freedom of speech when we do not see eye to eye with the majority in the AICC or in the Congress. It would be a strange situation if we are to have the right of freedom of speech against the British Government but not against the Congress or any body subordinate to it. If we are denied the right to adversely criticize resolutions of the AICC which in our view are harmful to the country’s cause, then it would amount to denial of democratic right.
I hope you will agree that when a resolution is once passed by the AICC it is open to us to have it reviewed or amended or altered or rescinded at a subsequent meeting of that body. I hope you will also agree that it is open to us to appeal against the AICC to the higher court of appeal, namely, the open session of the Congress. You will agree further, I hope, that it is open to a minority to carry on a propaganda with a view of converting the majority to its point of view. Now how can we do this except by appealing to Congressmen through public meetings and through writings in the press? If you maintain that once a resolution is passed in the AICC it is sacrosanct and must hold good for ever, then you may have some justification for banning criticism of it. But if you grant us the right to review or amend or alter or rescind a particular resolution of the AICC either through that body or through the open session of the Congress, then I do not see that you can gag criticism, as you have been trying to do. Apart from the fact that it is our constitutional and democratic right to protest against resolutions which in our view are harmful to the country’s cause, a consideration of the merits of the two resolutions, if given effect to will serve to accentuate the drift towards constitutionalism, to increase the influence, power and authority of the Provincial Ministries at the cost of the Congress organizations, to isolate artificially the Congress from the general public as also the AICC from the rank and file of the Congress. Moreover, they will serve to undermine the revolutionary spirit of the Congress. Consequently in the best interest of the country these two resolutions should be immediately held in abeyance and ultimately altered suitably or withdrawn.

In this connection I cannot help drawing your attention to certain incidents at the time of the Gaya Congress in 1922 and after. Please do not forget what the Swaraj Party did in those days. Please do not forget either that when the AICC amended the resolution of the Gaya Congress, the Gujarat PCC resolved to defy it.
Lastly please do not forget that Mahatma Gandhi wrote... that the minority has the right to rebel. We have not gone so far yet as to rebel against the decision of the majority in the teeth of our opposition.

I hope you will accept my explanation as satisfactory. But if you do not do so and if you decide to resort to disciplinary action, I shall gladly face it for the sake of what I regard as a just cause. In conclusion I have to request that if any Congressman is penalised in connection with events of 9th July, then you will also take action against me. If the observance of an all-India day of the 9th July is a crime then I confess, I am the arch-criminal.3

The right-wing leadership rejected all his contentions, except the responsibility which he owned for the protest day. Therefore, accepting the admission he had made that he was the “arch-criminal”, the Working Committee decided to award him an “exemplary punishment” of removing him from presidentship of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and also disqualifying him from holding elective posts of the Congress for a period of three years. Disciplinary actions were also taken against many other leftist Congressmen who had taken part in the observance of the protest day.

The post-Tripuri situation must, in fact, be compared with the post-Surat situation and not with the post-Gaya situation as Bose has done, for the sharp differences that surfaced in the Gaya session did not lead to a rupture in the relation between the two groups which were existing at that time. Rather, an unwritten agreement was reached between the two allowing the Swarajists to go their own way and their opponents to function as they liked. In Surat and Tripuri, on the other hand, there was not only a rupture but the right-wing also took organizational actions in order to curb the growing influence of the left-wing.

Besides, in the days about the Tripuri session, as was the case with the Surat session, the right-wing in the Congress

had been making attempts to come to a settlement with the British government. The main condition for the success of such attempts was to expell the left-wing from the leadership, if not from the organization. In Surat, Gokhale and Pherozesjah Mehta came forward to face the extremits, thinking that Tilak or Lajpat Rai becoming the president of the Congress would be dangerous to their attempts. In the Tripuri session and in the months following it, Gandhi and his associates thought that continuance of Bose as president would be dangerous and decided to remove him from the presidency.

Dispite this similarity, there was a major difference between the Surat and Tripuri sessions. As distinct from the moderates of the Surat days, the right-wing leadership in the Tripuri days was a mature bourgeois leadership having gained the experience from rallying the millions around itself. The leftists at the Tripuri session too were more experienced than Tilak and his colleagues in leading mass struggles. So, the dispute between the two wings was over the method and the perspective of the final battle against the British rule. There were two contending methods and perspectives: the non-violent civil disobedience struggles combined with non-payment of taxes as proposed and demonstrated by Gandhi and mass agitations including worker's strikes and peasant actions combined with civil disobedience, non-payment of taxes and other forms of struggles as proposed and put into practice by the leftists. People in millions were rallied in both the camps representing these methods. Both the groups waged the struggles standing in the forefront of the people.

The disciplinary actions were taken against Bose and other left-wing Congressmen at a time it was not clear where this struggle would reach and what forms it would take. Within a month of the disciplinary action, in the first week of September the Second World War broke out which completely changed the political situation in the world, including India. This made the right-left division as it continued for the past more than a couple of years irrelevant. The relations
and co-relations prevailing in the country in general and in the Congress in particular changed in a fundamental way. Following this, the internal crisis in the Congress was resolved temporarily. But new problems emerged inside and outside the Congress which assumed new forms.

III. COMMUNIST PARTY AND LEFT FORCES

Although the Communist Party, the Congress Socialist Party, the Forward Bloc, the Royist group and the Kisan Sabha were united in general in the fight against the policies of the right-wing leadership of the Congress, there were differences among them on a number of fundamental issues. These agreements and disagreements had played a significant role in the progress of the independence movement as well as in the post-independence political developments in India.

Among these organizations the Communist Party alone had possessed the greatest ideological clarity and organized style of work. This quality of the Party has been referred to earlier while dealing with its development at the different stages. In particular, we have shown that, apart from the infantile disorders common to all political parties and organizations, the severe repressions let loose by the British imperialism on the Communists as part of its opposition to the world communist movement had stood in the way of forming and fostering a Communist Party in India. The Communist Party was finally reorganized in the year 1933-1934. In other words, a stable Communist Party was established in India in the 1930's as part of the new anti-imperialist upswing witness in this period.

But as distinct from other left parties, the Communist Party has an international outlook of its own. It is a Party which is striving to create a revolutionary movement by rallying the entire masses under the leadership of the working class in India as has been done in other countries following the victorious October Socialist Revolution in Russia. The
Party, as part of the Communist International, was striving to consolidate the leadership of the working class in the anti-imperialist movement in India and to rally the peasantry and other working masses against the policies of the bourgeois leadership. This is what distinguishes the Communist Party from all other left parties.

We have mentioned earlier the services of M. N. Roy in the early years of the development of the Communist movement in India. But Roy after being expelled from the Communist International and his Radical Democratic Party began to work in a manner hostile to the Communist Party of India. This brought Roy to opportunist politics in the later years. But, this political group was part of the left movement in the second half of the 1930's. In those years the phrasology and style of functioning of his group appeared to be in keeping with the traditions of the Communist International.

The attitude adopted by the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party was different from that of these two organizations. As pointed out earlier, it had its origin in the efforts made to give an organized form to the extremist views that had begun to emerge within the Congress. Consequently it possessed a characteristic which was absent in the Communist Party and the Royist group. This characteristic was the stipulation that anyone who wished to be a member of the Congress Socialist Party must be a member of the Congress. The leaders of the Congress Socialist Party thought that theirs was a party of the left-wing in the Congress.

The Communist Party and the Royist group, on the other hand, were non-Congress Parties which were striving to organize the masses against the bourgeois leadership of the Congress. The Royist group had never given up the Communist outlook that the right-wing leadership of the Congress was, from the class point of view, the leadership of the bourgeoisie. The Congress Socialist Party had never accepted this position.

At the international level, there was an organization called the Socialist International parallel to and opposing the
Communist International in ideology and in practical politics. This was the continuation of the Second International which was working on the basis of class collaboration as against the working class revolutionary outlook represented by Lenin in the world working class revolutionary movement. The outlook of the British Labour Party which had some connection with the Indian national movement and which had come to power twice in England, was that of the Second International. Its ideological influence held sway over the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party as also some other sections of the Indian nationalists. It reflected itself in the attitude of the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party towards the world communist movement, the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of India. It publicized in India the anti-communist and anti-Soviet slanders fabricated by the enemies of communism, in which the Party’s Joint Secretary M R Masani, the editor of the Party journal Ashoka Mehta and Dr. Rammanohar Lohia were prominent. Consequently, this group of the Congress Socialist leadership was inimical to the Communist Party.

The political developments that took place at the national and international levels in the later half of the 1930’s were such that this hostility to communism was not likely to cut much ice. European fascism which started in Mussolini’s Italy and spread to Hitler’s Germany and the Japanese militarism which was striving to conquer the entire Asia were growing as a big threat to world democratic movement. The possibility of a global war breaking out if this aggressive tendency was not contained shocked the people.

Efforts were going on at the international level to build a fighting front against fascist aggression, in which the different national organizations in India, including the Congress, were actively participating. In particular, India made practical contributions to the heroic battles being waged against the fascist forces. Nehru's visit to Spain and the Indian medical mission led by Dr. Kotnis sent to China were examples.
The Communist International was in the forefront of this world anti-fascist upsurge. The anti-fascist call given by Dimitrov who took over the leadership of the Communist International after being released from the Hitlerite prison in Germany, reverberated the whole world. Responding to this call, Communists all over the world were striving to forge unity among the anti-fascist, anti-war democrats in their respective countries. As an impact of these developments, Communists in India engaged themselves in uniting all the anti-imperialist organizations and movements including the Congress. They came to the fore as the most effective propagandists of the anti-imperialist programme formulated at the Lucknow Congress and in the following years.

The leadership of the Congress Socialists could not ignore this. The anti-communism which the Masani & Co tried to display in the national and international politics as a result of its relationship with the bourgeois leadership of the Congress at home and the influence of the Socialist International abroad, failed to be effective. On the contrary, the Congress Socialist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan were of the opinion that Congress Socialist Party and the Communist Party should not only unite with each other but also should build a joint front. This was the basis of the left unity mentioned earlier.

This united action helped to bring certain changes in the Congress Socialist Party. A section of the members of the Congress Socialist Party and even a section of its leadership gave up anti-communism and anti-sovietism, and analyzing the right-wing leadership on the class basis, began to perceive the bourgeois nature of its leadership. They gradually transformed themselves into communists. The present author is one among them. The same change took place among the leadership and ranks of the Congress Socialist Party in Kerala. Thus, after a few years the entire Congress Socialist Party of Kerala transformed itself into the Communist Party. Things moved in the same direction in many other parts of the country. Thus, the cooperation between the Congress
Socialist and Communist parties led to the growth of the Communist Party.

This enhanced the influence of the anti-Communist group of Masani in the leadership of the Congress Socialist Party. They failed to appreciate the fact that this political change was the natural result of joint action and constant exchange of views. Appreciating it would amount to admitting one’s own political weakness! So they carried out an extensive propaganda that this was the result of a ‘Communist conspiracy’. At the same time they would claim that the earlier transformation of a section of Congressmen into Congress Socialists was not the result of a Congress Socialist Conspiracy but the result of political experience and exchange of views. They faild to appreciate the role of a similar political process in the transformation of Congress Socialists into communists.

Consequently, many prominent Congress Socialists including Jayaprakash Narayan who earlier took the initiative to forge political unity with the Communists and who declared at the Meerut conference that their objective was Marxism and not merely socialism, capitulated to the new anti-communist attack. This process reached its culmination after the outbreak of the Second World War. But the attack on the Communists inside the Congress Socialist Party had started long back.

The 1939 Congress presidential election and the subsequent events took place in the political atmosphere in which the Congress Socialists and Communists were jointly building the anti-imperialist front on the one side and engaged in political conflicts between each other on the other. The protest demonstration of 9th July and the disciplinary action taken by the right-wing Congress leadership against Bose and other left-wing Congress leaders resulted in the emergence of a new leftist party distinct from these parties. Forward Bloc did not subscribe to Marxism-Leninism or even to the right-wing Socialism. It was merely based on left-wing nationalism. The common outlook of an anti-imperialist
struggle linked the Forward Bloc with the other three left parties, but it lacked the outlook of workers and peasants struggle which was shared by the latter. Its leaders visualized mass struggles mainly based on the middle-classes.

On the issue of International politics also the Forward Bloc held views which were different from that of the rest of the left parties. The latter parties were striving to unite the revolutionary forces all over the world against fascism and war. The Forward Bloc, on the other hand, was striving to develop friendly relations with the world fascist and militarist forces thinking that the British imperialism was its sole enemy. They were viewing the national and international politics on the basis of the principle that 'one's enemy's enemy is one's friend'. And this was exactly what led Bose to Germany and Japan during the war.

The attitude of Nehru was just the opposite. He was close to Communists in viewing world politics and Indian politics which was a part of it. He was also closer to Communists in holding the outlook of an anti-imperialist front by unifying all anti-imperialist and anti-fascist forces in India and converting the Congress as the platform of such a front in which the fighting organizations of workers and peasants had a significant role to play. But unlike the Communists and Socialists, he was not prepared to clash with the right-wing leadership of the Congress on the issue of this anti-imperialist front. He, in fact, began to engage himself in the world politics as a means to escape from the internal conflicts that surfaced in the Congress before and after the Tripuri session. Nehru's biographer states: The national movement was in a reverse gear and at Haripura Subhas Bose had taken over the Congress presidency. Jawaharlal was pressed hard to become the general secretary but refused. He had even wished to step out of the Working Committee. He had been prevailed upon not to do so, but his interest was elsewhere, and in June, gleefully turning his back on India, he sailed for what to him were the vital centres of activity in Europe.4

It will be rewarding to compare the roles played by Nehru and Bose in the independence struggle and in the Congress organization. Even after 1938-1939 Bose held the logic of 'enemy's enemy', no matter it was fascism. For him, the imminent world war was an opportunity to liberate India. There would be no pricks of conscience for him even in accepting the assistance from the fascist forces for that purpose.

Nehru, on the other hand, considered fascism and British imperialism as twin brothers. He could not even imagine opposing imperialism with the assistance of fascism. Nor could he think of accommodating British imperialism on the pretext of preventing the advance of the fascist powers. Apart from this, Nehru and Bose were poles apart in their approach towards the right-wing leadership of the Congress, especially towards Gandhi.

The activists of the Kisan Sabha included people who were holding all these views and outlooks. Consequently there is nothing to mention particularly about its character. Suffice it to say that the inclusion of this organization which was organizing the peasantry against the landownership systems like the Zemindari, etc., added to the strength of the left forces in the anti-imperialist front.
THE WAR AND NATIONAL STRUGGLE

I. THREAT OF WAR: DIFFERENT VIEWS

The aggressive actions of Hitler after his assumption of power in Germany created the fear that a new war more devastating than the First World War might break out soon. In Asia, this fear was strengthened by the Japanese invasion of China.

A section of the Indian bourgeoisie evaluated the new situation on the line that the war which appeared imminent would offer tremendous opportunities for gaining national independence. We have noted earlier that the view that 'England's need in India's opportunity' was widespread among bourgeois political circles in India during the First World War. Besides, basing on the view that 'England's peril is India's opportunity', a section of Indian revolutionaries tried to carry out a programme of creating as much
problem as possible to the British rulers during the war and organizing an armed revolt in India with the assistance of their enemy, Germany, as well as of the U. S. A. and Canada which, though friendly to Britain, were trying to weaken her. The same view was maintained by a section led by Subhas Bose with regard to the military threat posed by Fascist Germany and Militarist Japan now. When Germany had started conquering the European countries one by one and Japan had invaded part of the Chinese territories, this section of the bourgeois nationalists expressed sympathy with these forces which were rising against the world domination of Britain. They calculated that these anti-British forces could be utilized to India’s advantage.

As we have indicated earlier, the attitude of Nehru and the right-wing leaders of the Congress including Gandhi was opposed to this. This does not, however, mean that Nehru or the right-wing leaders never held the view that ‘England’s peril is India’s opportunity’. The difference between Bose and these leaders were, in fact, over the question of how to utilize England’s ‘peril’ as an ‘opportunity’ for India. Unlike Bose, Gandhi and other right-wing leaders did not view the fascist powers as helpful to India’s independence struggle. They were thinking in terms of taking advantage of Britain’s peril to bargain with the British with a view to wrest maximum concession from them and to get the political power transferred from the British to Indians. Before considering the details of the clash between these two approaches, it is necessary to point out that Nehru, the right-wing Congress leaders including Gandhi, and Bose were now representing, in the ways characteristic of each of them, the Indian bourgeoisie which had become more mature and powerful than at the time of the First World War.

The limited programme of industrialization which the British were forced to carry out in India during and after the First World War had helped the growth of Indian bourgeoisie. They registered tremendous growth both in terms of number and assets. In the sphere of politics, a series of
political actions such as the Khilafat-non-cooperation movements, the emergence of the Swaraj Party, the civil disobedience movements of 1930-1932 and the parliamentary programme that followed had made the bourgeoisie a powerful class. It had acquired the capability to rally the entire masses against the imperialist domination and to bargain with British rulers on the strength of this organized popular force. This process reached its culmination towards the end of 1930s when the political party of the bourgeoisie—the Congress—had been able to consolidate its mass base more than ever before. The Congress ministries which assumed power in the provinces in 1937 helped the bourgeoisie to muster enough strength to challenge the British rulers.

In 1937 Congress ministers in the provinces holding the portfolios of Industry and Labour held discussions among themselves under the auspices of the Congress. These discussions were followed by a conference of Congress chief ministers in May 1938. Although the conference brought out a number of economic problems they had to handle as provincial ministers, the conference ended with the formation of a National Planning Committee. In his inaugural address Congress President Bose set the objective of introducing an industrial revolution as rapidly and organized a way as it had happened in the Soviet Union. Jawaharlal Nehru was appointed chairman of the Planning Committee. The formation of the Planning Committee on the initiative of a well known leftist leader and chaired by another was an important event in the history of planning process in India. This was the forerunner of what is known as the Bombay Plan prepared on the initiative of the eminent industrialists Tata and Birla during the Second World War and the country-wide discussions that followed.

The formation of the National Planning Committee marked an important milestone in the growth of Indian bourgeoisie. It was a clear evidence to show that the bourgeoisie had already started making attempts to prepare the outlines of economic development of free India in
parallel the to struggles to get the political power transferred from the British. It may be noted that even before this Sir M. Visveswarayya had prepared a plan for India's economic development on the capitalist lines. But this was the result of his personal efforts. Now following the sharing of power by the Congress in the provinces, the bourgeoisie was getting engaged in a collective thinking on a countrywide activity for economic construction.

As soon as the thinking on planning started, difference of opinion surfaced between the Planning Committee and Gandhi on the one hand and between members of the Committee and Nehru, on the other. These were the manifestations of the differences that existed among the different sections of the bourgeois leadership on the direction of planning. But all of them agreed on the point that since the transfer of power to the Indians would take place before long, it was necessary right now to start thinking as to how Indian economy had to be reconstructed after the transfer of power. In other words, the leaders belonging to different political persuasions who agreed on the need to formulate a plan for reorganizing the society in post-independent India, differed from each other on the question of the nature of this reorganization.

Yet, the problem remained as to how to get the power transferred to the Indians. Two methods were suggested. One of the methods suggested was to seize power from the British by organizing armed revolts with the assistance of the fascist forces on the basis of the logic of 'enemy's enemy'. Subhas Bose was the main spokesman of this method. Nehru and the right-wing Congress leaders including Gandhi, on the other hand, regarded the war as an opportunity to effectively bargain with the British. Consequently, they remained in the camp of the world revolutionary movement against the fascist forces which were opposed to Britain.

This difference of opinion came into the open only after the war broke out. Till now the Congress had been taking decisions on international issues unanimously. All the
resolutions adopted by the Congress sessions and the AICC meetings on each of the aggressive actions taken by Italy, Germany and Japan were in consonance with the attitudes of the world anti-fascist movement. Although it was Nehru who was in the forefront in drafting and explaining these resolutions, they had enjoyed the support of Bose as well as the right-wing leaders including Gandhi. This was because the imperialist powers including Britain had been abetting the fascist aggressions. The rebellion in Spain led by Gen. Franco, Hitler’s actions against Austria and Czechoslovakia and Japan’s invasion of China had the backing of Britain. Therefore the movement against fascism and war turned out to be a movement against British imperialism also. The entire anti-fascist movement took the form of anti-imperialism. Thus even to those who were thinking in terms of seeking the assistance of the fascist forces after the breakout of the war it was not difficult to take an anti-fascist stand before the war.

However, Bose and the right-wing Congress leadership came to a clash with each other over the question of how to utilize the situation that might arise out of the war between the fascist forces and the imperialist forces including Britain, which they knew was inevitable, to the advantage of India. Gandhi and the right-wing leaders were thinking in terms of effecting the transfer of power by bargaining with Britain which was caught up in a dangerous crisis. As we have repeatedly pointed out earlier, Bose was trying to organize an armed revolt in India with the assistance of the fascist forces.

Bose’s approach was partly shared by Jinnah who was suspicious of Britain’s “semi-honeymoon” with the right-wing Congress leadership. He sent A. R. Siddiqi and Khaliquzzaman to Europe in 1939 to contact the Italian and German governments. But there was a significant difference between Bose and Jinnah, which needs particular mention. Unlike Bose, Jinnah was not seeking the assistance of the fascist forces.

forces to organize an armed revolt in India. He was also thinking in terms of a bargain with the British. But when he felt that the British rulers were showing the tendency of moving closer to the Congress, he contacted the fascist forces as a counter-move. In other words, Jinnah simply began to make an attempt to bargain with the fascist forces as part of the policy of bargaining with the British, which he shared with Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders. When the "semi-honeymoon" of the British with the Congress ended, he re-established relations with the British.

As distinct from the right-wing Congress leaders, Bose and Jinnah, the Communists had taken a stand which was simultaneously anti-fascist and anti-British. Theirs was an approach which linked together the objective of preventing the advance of fascism and strengthening the anti-British struggle. They opposed both the right-wing policy of bargai ning with the British and the policy of liberating India from the British rule with the assistance of the fascist forces pursued by Bose. The method adopted by the Communist was to organize workers' strikes, peasants' struggles and other forms of revolutionary struggles and to link the Indian independence struggle to the growing world movement against fascism. The right-wing leadership of the Congress Socialist Party and Nehru adopted the same stand until the war broke out. But owing to their relationship with the right-wing leadership of the Congress, they failed to adopt the policy of an uncompromising struggle against imperialism. Thus, soon after the war started they and the Communist Party began to move along different paths.

II. THE IMPACT OF THE WAR

Before the outbreak of the war in September 1939 it was anticipated that the Second World War would be fought out between Nazi Germany on the one side and the Soviet Union and other European Powers like Britain and France
on the other. It was in anticipation of such a war that the
Soviet Union and the Communist International were work-
ing. But the war did not start that way.

On 24th August 1939 the news broke out surprising the
world that the Soviet Union and Germany had signed a no-
warpact. By securing her eastern borders through this pact, 
Germany turned towards the west.

The Nazi forces attacked Poland first. Soon after the
attack, the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain
made a statement that since Poland was an ally of Britain,
the attack on Poland was an attack on Britain. He issued
an ultimatum to Germany that if the Nazi forces did not
withdraw from Poland immediately, Britain would declare
war on Germany. As Hitler did not heed the ultimatum,
Britain declared war on Germany.

Thus the war started between Germany and Britain and
not between Germany and Soviet Union. The Soviet Union,
the only power capable of rescuing Poland by joining hands
with Britain, was keeping out of the war. Britain, on the
other hand, could not come to the rescue of Poland because
she had no direct access to that country without crossing
other countries. Thus, the British assurance to Poland and her
declaration of war on Germany remained only on paper. In
a few days Germany conquered Poland.

There is relatively long history behind such a turn of
events. Right from the days of the October Revolution, the
imperialist powers including Britain had adopted different tac-
tics to destroy the Soviet Union. When all these tactics failed,
they encouraged Hitler’s aggressive activities as part of
their foreign policy of providing all opportunities for Ger-
many to became a mighty military power against the Soviet
Union and the world communist movement and aiding her
aggressive acts while pretending to oppose them. When
Germany conquered Austria and Czechoslovakia, Britain
approved of these actions through the League of Nations.
The Munich Pact is a standing testimony to their betrayal
of Czechoslovakia to the Nazis. When world public
opinion, including that of their own, became irresistible, the rulers of the West European countries took an apparently anti-fascist stand. They nominally put forward the opinion that the Soviet Union in the east and Britain and France in the west must join hands together and co-operate militarily in order to stall the advance of Hitler. Apart from declaring their wish they refused to take any action in this regard. Instead of holding discussions in a serious way to face the dangerous situation, they were putting them off indefinitely.

There was a reason behind this ambivalence on the part of Britain. They wanted to push the Soviet Union, the consistent enemy of fascism, into a war against Germany while keeping themselves aloof from it and provide an opportunity to Hitler to destroy the Soviet Union. Leaders of the Soviet Union saw through this imperialist design. The Soviet-German non-war pact was a clever counter-move to this imperialist design.

Hitler could now turn westwards. A few months after the fall of Poland, Hitler conquered the entire western Europe including France and made an unprecedented bombardment on Britain with a view to conquering her. The German army even landed on the British Isles. It was feared that Britain too would be conquered soon. All this exposed the bankruptcy of the policies Britain and France had been following in the pre-war years. Chamberlain who gained notoriety as being the author of this policy was removed from the Prime Ministership. Churchill who stood for halting the Nazi onslaught with the cooperation of the Soviet Union took over as the Prime Minister.

Later when Hitler turned eastwards and attacked the Soviet Union, the anti-fascist front envisaged by the Soviet Union and the Communist International came into being in 1941. In the historic counter-attack launched by the Soviet people combined with the guerilla attacks organized by the people in the German occupied countries and the onslaughts of the American and British forces, the Nazi forces were completely destroyed.
To anyone who examines the later events it would be clear now that the Soviet-German no-war pact was a clever move on the part of the Soviet Union to expose and oppose the strategy of the imperialist powers of turning Hitler against the Soviet Union without engaging themselves in the war. But the situation prevailing then was different. The news that the Soviet leaders who were engaged themselves for a long time in rallying the people around the world against Hitler suddenly entered into a pact with him shocked the world. This created confusion even in the Communist parties in many countries. Non-communist anti-imperialists added to the anti-Soviet feelings by their sharp criticism of the "opportunist policy of the Soviet leaders". This was reflected in Indian politics too. Indian Communists too were confused. The anti-Communists among the socialists and in other left parties, on the other hand, used this opportunity to whip up anti-communism and anti-Sovietism that was growing in the left-parties. The left-unity which was built up with strenuous efforts reached a near collapse.

There were serious differences within the Congress leadership too, which were not confined to the problem of the Soviet-German pact. The entire approach towards the war and towards Britain which was involved in the war became the subject for discussion. Gandhi and other right-wing Congress leaders expressed the opinion that it would be wise to cooperate with the British in their war efforts. The Congress ministers in the provinces came forward to carry out the programmes prepared by the Governors and the British officials for the prosecution of the war. The Madras Chief Minister Rajagopalachari was ready to take certain actions (such as detaining Germans which even the Governor considered high handed). But Nehru and some other Congress leaders were opposed to this. They were not prepared to be drawn into the war which was declared without consulting the people of India, their elected representatives, and to allow Indian men and materials to be used for the prosecution of the war. They argued that there was no question of the
Congress cooperating with the British in the war unless the government was prepared to concede the main demand raised by the Congress before the outbreak of the war, namely, the transfer of the administration at the Centre to the Indian people's representatives. In the words of Pattabhi Sitaramayya:

Gandhi was of the view that we must offer our moral support, allow the ministries to function and he had the confidence that through the ministers, he could manoeuvre a declaration of Poorna Swaraj or Dominion Status, a declaration of the next step of the same that Jawaharlal expected by negotiation. In both cases the contingency of a promise not being fulfilled did exist, but under Gandhi's technique, the chance of the fulfilment of such a declaration was certainly greater.  

In other words, it was the aim of both the left and right-wing leadership of the Congress including Gandhi and Nehru to utilize the war situation and get power transferred from the British. While Gandhi believed that it would be useful to assure unconditional assistance to Britain in her was efforts for achieving the objective, Nehru thought it more prudent to ask the British to declare her war aims clearly.

Since the difference between these two approaches could not be resolved, the leadership could not decide its attitude towards the war immediately after it broke out. Meeting the Viceroy in response to his invitation in early September, Gandhi told him that his sympathies were with England and France. Contradicting the views expressed by Gandhi in several of his statements, Nehru issued a number of statements sharply criticizing the roles being played by Britain in world politics and in the affairs of India. After all these controversies, the Congress Working Committee which met on 14th September adopted a resolution which may be summarized as follows.

1. The Congress is sympathetic to the objective of the war in which England and France are involved. It is a war for

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2. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, op cit, p. 130.
democracy and against the imperialist and fascist powers. However, India is a country which has been fighting against the denial of freedom and peace in the country for about a century and a half. In this war the people in the Dominion States who are participating on the side of Britain are doing it in accordance with the decisions taken by their respective parliaments. India, on the other hand, had been forced into the war by the imperial power without consulting her people. The government at the Centre which is not responsible to the people is taking all the decisions in this regard. India cannot submit to this.

2. In the final analysis, it is for the provincial governments to take all actions with regard to the war. These governments must have the necessary powers to function accordingly.

3. Past experience, particularly of the First World War, does not allow the Congress to take the war-time declarations being made by the British government at their face value. Therefore, along with making an unambiguous statement about the future of India, the rulers should make clear what they propose to do to implement the principles contained in the declaration immediately.

The Working Committee declared that as long as the government was not prepared to make its stand clear, the Congress would not be able to fully co-operate with the government in its war efforts.

It is clear that the resolution embodies more of the approach of Nehru than Gandhi’s. Accordingly Gandhi proposed that Nehru should take over the presidency from Rajendra Prasad and nominate a Working Committee of his choice. Rajendra Prasad offered his resignation but for various reasons the proposed change did not take place and the existing team continued.

Thus, in the first weeks of the war considerable confusion and uncertainty prevailed in the bourgeois leadership of the Congress too. The official policy of the Congress during this time was characterized by the presence of a number of
contradictory elements such as agreement with the war objective of the British, non-cooperation with Britain's war efforts in protest against her policies towards India, while at the same time the continuance of the provincial ministries which were expected to play significant roles in the prosecution of the war.

The bourgeois leadership was not prepared to rally the people in an anti-war movement making use of the revolutionary idea contained in the slogan of 'Britain's war is India's opportunity'. Nor were they prepared to unconditionally cooperate with the British as proposed by Gandhi now and by the moderates earlier. But matters were moving in such a way that it was impossible to hold on the existing policies.

III. THE POLITICS OF RESIGNATION

The resolution adopted by the Working Committee on 14th September left the door open for negotiations with the British rulers. Following, both the parties raised arguments and counter-arguments through press statements. The politics showed that the gulf that existed between the two camps was unbridgeable. The British government was not prepared to declare its war aims as demanded by the Congress. Nor did it concede the demand raised by the Congress with regard to the administration at the Centre. The Congress, on the other hand, held firm the position that unless these two demands were conceded, it would be impossible for it extend cooperation to the British in their war efforts. The opinion spread in the Congress ranks that it was not proper for the Congress ministries to continue in office in the prevailing circumstances. Nehru and many other Congress leaders were in favour of this opinion.

Besides, the Communist Party, the Congress Socialist Party and Subhas Bose had been conducting powerful agitations against the continuance of the Congress ministries.
All this compelled the right-wing leadership including Gandhi to adopt the policy of resignation of the ministries. A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of the AICC held on 9th-10th October. In the light of the statements issued later, the Working Committee confirmed the decision.

The decision was that the ministries should submit resignation by 31st October. It was also proposed that an extraordinary meeting of the provincial legislatures should be called before the resignation of the ministries to adopt the following resolution.

This Assembly regrets that the British Government have made India a participant in the war between Great Britain and Germany without the consent of the people and have further in complete disregard of the Indian opinion passed laws and adopted measures curtailing the powers and activities of the Provincial Governments.

The Assembly recommends to the Government to convey to the Government of India and through them to the British Government that in consonance with the avowed aims of the present war, it is essential in order to secure the co-operation of the Indian people that the principles of democracy with effective safeguards for the Muslims and other minorities be applied to India and her policy be guided by her people; and that India should be regarded as an independent nation entitled to frame her own constitution and further that suitable action should be taken in so far as it is possible in the immediate present to give effect to that principle in regard to the present governance of India.

This Assembly regrets that the situation in India has not been rightly understood by His Majesty’s Government when authorising the statement that has been made on their behalf in regard to India and in view of this failure of the British Government to meet India’s demand, this Assembly is of the opinion that the Government cannot associate itself with the British policy.³

³ ibid p. 142
It is clear that the resolution is an expression of the views and demands of that section of the bourgeois which was represented by the Congress. It was in fact a compromise between Gandhi who wanted to extend unconditional cooperation to the British government and Nehru who argued that Britain's attitude towards India should be considered as a touchstone to test the sincerity of the British claim that it was fighting against fascism and for democracy. Like the 14th September resolution, this resolution also was one that left the door open for negotiations even after the resignation of the Congress ministries. For the same reason, the Congress leaders did not provide an answer to the question: 'After the resignation, what?'.

In addition to the British, the Congress had to face also the Muslim League which had been growing as a political party in all provinces since the 1937 elections. Its leadership had been bargaining with the British on the one side and with the Congress on the other. It did not oppose the resolution moved by the Congress in the provincial legislatures regretting the British action of declaring "India a belligerent country without the consent of the Indian people". They simply introduced an amendment which reads as follows.

This Assembly recommends to the Government to convey to the Government of India and through them to his Majesty's Government that they should, when considering the question of India's constitution either during the duration of the war and after it is concluded, bear in mind that the democratic parliamentary system of Government under the present constitution has failed, being utterly unsuited to the conditions and genius of the people and, further, apart from the Government of India Act of 1935, entire problems of India's future constitution should be wholly reviewed and revised de novo and the British Government should not make any commitment in principle or otherwise without the approval and consent of the All India Muslim League, which alone represents, and can speak
on behalf the Mussalmans of India, as well as without the consent of all important minorities and interests.4

It is clear form this amendment that the Muslim League had now entered the political scene as the representative of a section of the bourgeoisie with interests which are different and even opposed to that of the Congress. This section of the bourgeoisie also could not compromise with the interests of the British bourgeoisie. They could not express their contradictions with that section of the bourgeoisie which was represented by the Congress without taking an attitude against the British bourgeoisie. At the same time, they feared that if power was transferred as a result of the bargain between the Congress as the sole representative of the Indian people and the British, it might adversely affect their own interests. Therefore, the section of the bourgeoisie represented by the League claimed their right to intervene effectively in the negotiations between the Congress and the government.

Although, in the final analysis, the Congress and the Muslim League represented the same bourgeois class, there was a significant difference between the policies and approaches of the leaderships of this class. The Congress possessed a leadership which had been bargaining with the British government on the basis of the mass strength gained through drawing the people in struggles and agitations. It has an organization which has conducted numerous countrywide struggles in the 1921-22 and 1930-32 periods; it has a supreme leader, Gandhi, who has led a number of struggles beginning with the struggles of the South African Indians, and several others who have given active leadership to many struggles as his trusted colleagues. All these were being utilized for bargaining with the British government. Although the League also is at the bargaining counter—that is the only similarity between the two—but it lacked a programme of struggle and an outlook as compared to that of the Congress.

There was another difference between the Congress and the League. The Congress was a political party which was fighting against the British government by rallying under its own leadership all the left forces inside and outside its organization. Its leadership would adopt the leftist phraseology and programmes as and when found necessary for this purpose. It considered that the fundamental contradiction was between itself and the British government.

As for the Muslim League, its fundamental contradiction was with the Congress. It was mainly concerned about the future of that section of the bourgeoisie which it represented in the event power was transferred to the Congress. They were trying to establish that in this respect there were other minority interests also with them. That was why in the amendment to the Congress resolution in the legislatures, the Muslim League warned the British government against giving assurance to the Congress on the Indian constitution without obtaining the consent of the minority interests.

The British government used this situation in a clever way. On 1st November—the day after the date fixed for the resignation of the Congress ministries—the Viceroy invited Gandhi, the Congress President Rajendra Prasad and the League President Jinnah for a talk. In the meeting the government proposed to expand the Viceroy's Executive Council to include immediately the representatives of the Congress and the League. It was also suggested that in order to pave the way for this, the Congress and the League start negotiation between themselves with a view to reaching an agreement at the level of provincial administration. This meant that the Congress and the League should participate in the existing Executive Council without the government making the declaration on its war aims and without introducing any change in the Central administration and that the Congress and the League should similarly form coalition governments in the provinces.

The latter part of the proposal was in fact suggested by the League following the 1937 election and rejected by the
Congress. If it were to be accepted now, it would amount to an admission of defeat on the part of the Congress. The former part was also unacceptable to the Congress, because it was a negation of the policy which was adopted by the Congress as a compromise between the views of the right and left wings of the Congress. Following this, there was a war of statements between the Congress leaders and the government. Gandhi was forced to issue several statements justifying the attitude of the Congress to which he was opposed in the beginning. All this created the impression among the ranks of the Congress that another round of mass struggle against the British was inevitable. This impression was strengthened by the speeches and statements of leaders like Nehru inside the Congress and by others like Bose outside. On the other hand, the government utilized the statements made by the leaders of the Muslim League and other minorities and interests to reject the claim made by the Congress. As a reply to this, the Congress repeated the same old argument which it had presented at the Round Table Conferences earlier that the problem of the different communities was an internal problem of the Indian people, which will be resolved by the Indian people themselves.

Thus the policy of the Congress reached a blind alley. It became clear that the aim with which the Congress leadership decided to relinquish office in the provinces was not going to realize. The statements issued by the leaders before and after the resignation of the ministries did not bring about any change in the attitude of the government.

On the other hand, the grip of the repressive laws was becoming tight day by day, following the resignation of the ministries. The situation in the country was becoming worse. Following the declaration of the war, prices of essential commodities were shooting up. The people were discontent at the resulting rise in the cost of living. Trade Unions and other mass organizations began to demand higher wages in proportion to the rise in prices. Communist, Congress Socialists and other left-wing Congressmen were in the forefront
of the agitations and struggles of the people in defence of their demands. Basing on the confidence of the people they were able to earn through these struggles, the leftists had been bringing pressure to bear upon the right-wing Congressmen to start a country-wide mass movement.

In this background, the Congress Working Committee was forced to review the situation and move along the path of anti-war struggles. At the same time, the leadership was doubtful if they would be able to control the struggle as before in the new international and national situations. After prolonged discussions, it was decided to call a Congress session at Ramgarh in Bihar in March 1940.

IV. RAMGARH AND LAHORE

The disputes among the government, the Congress and the League led finally to two important developments. The Congress, tired of the British obstinacy, decided at its Ramgarh session in March 1940 to launch a satyagraha movement. The League adopted the historic ‘Pakistan’ resolution at its Lahore conference which was also held in March 1940. The Lahore resolution which changed the entire course of Indian history stated:

It is the considered view of this session of the All India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country or be acceptable to the Mussalmans unless it is designed on the following basic principles, namely, that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions, which should be so constituted with such territorial readjustment as may be necessary that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in majority as in the northwestern and eastern zones of India should be grouped to constitute “independent states”, in which the constituent unit shall be autonomous and sovereign.

We shall return later to the agitation launched by the Leaguers under Jinnah to get India devided into two
independent states in accordance with this resolution and to the discussions held in this connection. Here we shall deal briefly with the background of the League's Lahore resolution and its immediate repercussions in the Indian politics.

As we have noted earlier, ever since the idea of transfer of power from the British to the Indian hands and the political movement based on it emerged, there emerged the Islamic politics in India which was also connected with the same idea of transfer of power. We have also noted that under the pressure of the national movement the British government had been forced to propose one constitutional change after another. At each such stage, two sets of views—Hindu and Islamic—had also appeared, which were cleverly made use of by the British to protect their own interests. Whenever the Indian national movement against the British led by the Congress gained in strength, the Islamic politics also got strengthened in parallel. The amendment introduced by the League members to the resolution moved by the Congress in the legislatures on the eve of the resignation the Congress ministries was the final form of this process. It must, however, be noted that even at this stage, the reference was to the future constitution of an undivided India. What was pointedly stated in the amendment was the decisive role the League should have in the discussions relating to the future constitution.

The situation radically changed with Lahore resolution of the League. Now, there was no question of an undivided independent India; India should be divided as she gained independence. In order to understand the reason behind this change, it is necessary to look back at the changes that had taken place in the course of the European war immediately before the Lahore conference of the League and the resultant changes in the Indian politics as well as in the policies of the Congress. As we know, the Congress decision to relinquish office in the provinces came in the midst of bargaining with the British authorities on the future constitution of India in the new situation created by the war. The resolution moved by
the Congress in the provincial legislatures was a move in the pressure politics which was part of the strategy of bargain. The amendment moved by the League to that resolution was the Islamic form of the same pressure politics.

When the initial form of this pressure tactics failed and the Congress felt that it was necessary to strengthen the pressure tactics in the form of a satyagraha movement, the League also felt the need to strengthen its own pressure tactics. The League felt that efforts were being made to shape the future constitution in a manner visualized by the Congress through a mass struggle more powerful and widespread than those of the 1921-1922 and 1930-1932 periods and that the defeat in the European war was forcing Britain to yield to this. Therefore, the ‘Pakistan’ resolution of the League was designed to build a base for mass struggle to face the new situation and to shape the future the way it visualized.

The Ramgarh session of the Congress was held while the Islamic politics was moving in that direction. The speech made by the Chairman of the Reception Committee Rajendra Prasad, the new president Abul Kalam Azad and Gandhi who had played a decisive role in the proceedings of the session were full of exhortations to the masses as well as warning to the rulers. A consideration of an anti-compromise conference held immediately before the Ramgarh session would help to gauge the feelings expressed in these speeches. The anti-compromise conference was presided over by Subhas Bose who was under the disciplinary action by the Congress leadership. Bose and other leftist leaders participating the proceedings of the conference accused the Congress leadership of trying to reach a compromise with the British rulers. They reminded of the leadership’s withdrawal of the 1932 struggle on the pretext of Harijan Seva (service to the depressed castes) and the subsequent entry in the legislature and called upon the people to ensure that history was not repeated this time.

The Ramgarh session which was held in this atmosphere gave a clarion call to the coming struggle of the Indian
people against the war efforts of the British. At the same time, it imposed severe Gandhian type of restrictions and controls on the volunteers and issued caution against 'violent tendencies'. Gandhi made himself clear that he was a leader who was not at all prepared to give any concession with regard to the form of struggle and the behaviour of those who were expected to participate in the struggle. The Congress decided to launch the struggle under the leadership of such a person like Gandhi.

The speeches made by Gandhi in the Subjects Committee and in the open session threw light on his own views and on the nature of the forthcoming struggle. Gandhi made it clear that the struggle which he was going to lead would not be the kind of mass struggle which the Communists, Congress Socialists and other left-wing Congressmen were visualizing.

Warning the delegates that the forthcoming struggle would a hard one, Gandhi pointed to two difficulties, "external difficulties" and "internal difficulties". The former, according to him, were due to the fact that "the British Government are engaged in a war and naturally, if we engage them in a fight, we ask for enough trouble". Regarding the "internal difficulties", Gandhi said: Our Congress registers are full of bogus members who have swelled them because they know that getting into the Congress means getting into power. Those who, therefore, never before thought of entering the Congress have come into it and corrupted it.\footnote{D. G. Tendulkar, \textit{Op. cit}, Vol. 5, P. 260}

Suggesting observation of strict discipline and avoidance of groups in the Congress, Gandhi continued:
There is no discipline in our ranks and they have been devided up into groups which strive to gain more and more power. Non-violence as between ourselves does not seem to us to be necessary. There may be groups, but then they should strengthen and not weaken and destroy the organization. Ours has been both a democratic organization, ever since we reorganized it in 1920... I have said
times without number that, if you will be soldiers in my army, understand that there is no room for democracy in that organization. The army may be a part of a democratic organization, but there can be no democracy in it... In an army, the general's word is law, and his condition cannot be relaxed. I am supposed to be your general, but I do not know a more feeble general in history. My only sanction is the love and affection in which you hold me... I know that you love me. Does your love translate itself into action? If it does not, if it does not mean ever increasing discipline and ever-increasing response to what I say, then let me declare to you that I cannot launch civil disobedience and you must select another general. You cannot make me your general on your terms.  

It may be noted that these are not mere metaphorical expressions used while comparing the struggle with a battle. The underlying politics is clear from what he continued to say: Compromise is a part and parcel of my nature. I will go to the Viceroy fifty times, if I feel like it... I could not have fought the Dutch and the English without love in my heart for them, and without a readiness for compromise.  

Here Gandhi was expressing his fundamental disagreement with the leftist view of waging an uncompromising struggle until the final victory was achieved, considering Britain's difficulties as the opportunity for India.

Many delegates both in the Subjects Committee as well as in the general session criticized the resolution for not specifically characterizing the struggle a "mass" struggle. To them Gandhi replied: Well, if it is not mass civil disobedience, is it to be the civil disobedience of a handful? In that case I should not have come to you." Continuing, Gandhi said that every Congress committee should become a "satyagraha unit". "If it does not become such a unit", he said, "millions of our dumb countrymen will be sacrificed. None of my campaigns has crushed or ruined the masses."
Later Gandhi explained what he meant by the proposal that every Congress committee should become a satyagraha unit. "Every Congress committee should become a satyagraha committee and register such Congressmen who believe in the cultivation of the spirit of goodwill towards all, who have no untouchability in them in any shape or form, who would spin regularly, and who habitually use khadi to the exclusion of all other clothe. I would expect those who thus register their names with the committees, to devote the whole of their spare time to the constructive programme. If the response is sincere, these satyagraha committees would become busy spinning depots." Gandhi explained how these constructive programmes had to be carried out and how to centralize these activities.

It is clear from the above that except those who got immersed themselves in the Gandhian constructive programmes, none else would have any role in the struggle to be launched by the Congress under Gandhi’s leadership. Further, in the midst of such a "mass" struggle, Gandhi would not miss even a slight opportunity to arrive at a compromise with the British rulers.

This and the intolerance displayed by Gandhi towards the existence of the different mutually competing groups demonstrated the real nature of the political approach of Gandhi and the right-wing Congressmen led by him. They were jittery about the different groups based on communism, socialism and other revolutionary ideologies, the growth of the organized strength of the working class and peasantry under the influence of these ideologies and the eagerness shown by the ordinary Congressmen to oppose the compromising attitude of the right-wing leadership. They were aware of the possible consequences of launching a struggle without being cautious of these forces.

However, the bourgeois leadership was confident of organizing a struggle under their full control by removing these "obstacles". The leadership was also confident that if
they could carry forward such a struggle, the British rulers would be forced to relax their rigid attitude. That was the reason why they adopted a resolution couched in the language of struggle. And it was for the same reason that Jinnah and the Muslim League led by him adopted a new approach suited to protect their own interest by facing the new move made by the Congress.