INTRODUCTION

I

The Indian Freedom movement is a long and continuous history. It started almost simultaneously with the birth of the British empire in India. But movements like the Sepoy Mutiny or the Revolt of the Sannyasis were sporadic in nature, and like volcanic eruptions, were soon extinguished. It was largely because these movements lacked constructive and continuous programmes, and were geared mostly by the promptings of patriotic sentiments. The process of crystallization definitely began when the Indian National Congress was called into existence in 1885. The party was rid of the local colour and gained an all-India stature. Again, it was not merely intended as a trinket of time, but aimed at a lasting result.

But, though the ultimate objective was clear, the way to achieve it was shrouded in obscurity till 1930. The leaders of the Congress Party were accused of an attitude of compromise and complacency as may be obvious from such programmes as office acceptance, and then demand for representation in Government. The freedom movement may be said to have been really spearheaded when Gandhi raised the slogan — "Quit India" in 1942. It was in this context that the Congress Socialist Party, which had since 1934 been endeavouring to run the Congress on socialistic lines, gained an important lead in the arena of Indian politics.
Socialism most certainly is an imported ism. The brand of this imported socialism exhibited itself in the activities of the Royists and the communists in India. The grand achievement of the Congress socialists lies in that they pioneered the orientation of this imported doctrine and tailored it suitably to fit in with the particularly Indian conditions. For instance, it was the Congress socialists who advocated the view that Indian conditions should favour a peasants' revolt and not a proletariat revolt as championed by the communists.

But the socialists also suffered from the curse of an inherent contradiction. They were not at any time sure of the means they should adopt to achieve the end, and moved to and fro like a weaver's shuttle between the Gandhian way and the socialist way — they could neither accept Gandhi wholeheartedly nor could reject him altogether. Their dilemma seemed to cripple their movements on many an occasion, most particularly at the time of the partition of India. The socialists were frantically searching for an equilibrium and could discover none. Had they been able to do so, then they would not be reduced to a mere slogan-raising party as they are now; on the contrary, they would emerge as the most potent force in the context of the Indian politics, having an all-India character and enjoying mass support. Interestingly enough the principle of socialism for which they struggled and for which they even had to tear themselves away from the Congress was tacitly accepted by the ruling party first in the
outline of their thesis of 'a socialistic pattern of society'
\[1955_7\], and then in a more confirmed way in 1963 when they
gracefully countenanced the principle of democratic socialism.
In this supreme triumph of the socialists was their ultimate
defeat. The acceptance by the Congress of a sort of socialistic
principle went all way to minimise the importance of the
Socialist Party in the Indian political scene.

II

In the pages following I have endeavoured to trace
clearly the history of the Congress Socialist Party from the
time of its rise to its disintegration. In sketching the
outline I have adhered to the art of dramatic construction.
Every student of literature knows that the movement of dramatic
action passes through five distinctly defined phases — viz.,
exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and cata-

trophe. I have followed the same principle in developing my
thesis. Starting with an exposition of the historical back-
ground against which was projected the socialist drama, I have
meticulously dwelt on the factors responsible for the growth
and development of the socialist movement in India, and thence
to an examination of the most glorious moment of the movement.
Thereafter, I have traced the gradual disintegration of the
socialist movement in the post-war period. I have appended
an epilogue wherein I have incorporated all the foregoing con-
clusions for the sake of an overall assessment. In my attempt
to analyse the various factors that influenced Indian politics
in the thirties and forties, I have taken all pains to maintain
an open mind.
III

In preparing the thesis I have depended on the original writings of the socialist leaders like Jayaprakash Narayan, Narendra Deva, Rammanohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Meherally, M.R. Masani, Asoka Mehta and Purushottam Tricundas. The writings of Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and M.N. Roy have been consulted and quoted in proper places. As regards the history of the Congress I have chiefly depended on Gandhi: His Life And Thought by J.B. Kripalani, and The History of the Indian National Congress, Vols. I & II by P. Ramabai Sitaramiyya. Besides these, informations regarding the Congress have also been obtained from Mahatma Gandhi: The Last Phase, Vols. I & II by Pyarelal; Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi by D.G. Tendulkar, and India Wins Freedom by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. But the main source of my materials for the work relating to the Congress, socialist and communist movements are the Government of India, Home (Pol.) Department Files kept at the National Archives of India, New Delhi, and the AICC Files, J. Nehru Papers and Jayaprakash Narayan Papers kept at the Nehru Memorial Museum, New Delhi. Materials relating to the Royists have also been collected from the M.N. Roy Archives, Indian Renaissance Institute, Dehradun. I have interviewed Acharya J.B. Kripalani, Sri Achyut Patwardhan, Sri Gangasharan Sinha and Sri N.G. Goray. I have also been benefitted by discussions with Late Saumyendranath Tagore, Dr. Usha Mehta, Professor, Department of Political Science & Civics, Bombay University, Dr. D.P. Chattopadhyay, Minister of

I must not fail to record the help and guidance that I have received from my teacher, Prof. Nirmal Chandra Bhattacharyya. Practically it is he who inspired me to undertake the work. He has always been and is the source of inspiration to my work.