The Early Years

The socialists organised themselves within the Indian National Congress and the Congress Socialist Party explicitly stated in its constitution that the membership of the Indian National Congress was a precondition for the membership of the Party. The CSP was not organised as an anti-imperialist mass organisation parallel to the Congress. Notwithstanding these declarations, the CSP was not favourably taken by the Congress leadership. The Swarajya Party was acceptable to them, despite its efforts to change the revolutionary policy pursued by the Congress since 1920, but the CSP seemed to be an untouchable. The Congress leadership was terse in its criticism of the socialist programme. But this was not a surprising attitude to the socialists. The history of the Indian National Congress itself records that whenever younger or bolder sections had tried to accelerate the pace of the Congress, the then leadership had always thwarted the move. But 1934 was different from the earlier periods of tussle. While the Swarajists tried to goad the Congress along the path of petty constitutionalism by their programme of Council entry, the CSP was organised to rejuvenate the Congress by revolutionary spirit. The conflict was inevitable.

The CSP confined its movement chiefly within the Congress. But their relation with the latter was never cordial
before 1936 when Jawaharlal Nehru was elected as the President of the Indian National Congress. The socialists were young and naturally over zealous about many things. But the High Command used to look upon every socialist move with suspicion. The old guards of the Congress disliked and disapproved of any proposal moved by the socialists. The Congress at this time hardly functioned in a business-like manner. It claimed to be a mass organisation. But its constitution did not conform to its mass character suited to its ideals. Elections to the AICC used to be held by majority vote from among members of the Provincial Congress Committees. Sometimes even non-members were elected to the AICC. Even before 1934, there were socialist groups in some provinces, but those groups were not large enough to get representation at the AICC. The non-socialists everywhere would take advantage of the method of voting to prevent the socialists from entering into the AICC. Till the amendment of the constitution of the Indian National Congress in 1934, the Working Committee could not be convinced that the single majority vote was unsuitable for the functioning of a mass organisation like the Congress. The conflict came to the fore at the AICC meeting held in November, 1934 in connection with observance of the Armistice Day on November 11. The Day was observed by two minutes' silence at 11 a.m. suspending all business of the meeting. Some socialists, who could get themselves elected to the AICC, proposed to observe the Day as Anti-Imperialist War Day. This proposal was voted down. "One
member of the Working Committee observed that, in speaking as we said", wrote Sampurnanand, "at least four sections of the Indian Penal Code were being violated." But the President of the meeting did not protest against this observation, complained Sampurnanand. This behaviour aggrieved the socialists. The grief turned into anger and the socialists publicly denounced the gentleman as an agent of the Government, obviously to the bitterness of the Congress leadership. The socialists had another confrontation with the official group on the question of amendment of the Declaration of Independence pledge. The socialists did not like the preamble of the Declaration which ran as follows: The British Government had not only deprived India of freedom, but had injured it socially, economically, culturally and spiritually. Their objection was that the drafting had relegated freedom to a place of secondary importance. It seemed to imply, had the British Government agreed not to inflict economic and other injuries "we would not have minded the loss of freedom so much". However, they accepted it. But some persons very close to the official group, suddenly sensed revolution in the pledge and proposed a change. To this socialists raised a voice of protest: "A Declaration of Independence is a sacred document to be preserved for all time; its wording cannot be modified like that of an ordinary resolution". But the Working Committee changed the wording before the Independence Day, January 26, 1935. This infuriated the socialists and
the Congress seemed to be split up into two warring factions, socialists and non-socialists. The split was not only undesirable, but also harmful to the freedom movement. It might foil the basic purpose of the CSP. Apprehending the worst that might take place, Jayaprakash Narayan in early 1935 issued a circular in which he clearly stated: "Nothing should be done which may antagonise the genuinely nationalist elements and drive them to join hands with the compromise-seeking right-wing. Nothing can be worse than adopting such tactics as may divide the Congress into two hostile camps: Socialists and anti-Socialists. We should, on the contrary, try to take the militant nationalists with us and divide the Congress into the latter and compromising moderates.

I wish further to emphasize that we should on no account isolate ourselves from the Congress."

Although Jayaprakash Narayan managed to clarify the position of the CSP vis-a-vis the Congress, opinion against the Congress High Command was no less strong inside the CSP. Sampurnanand prepared a line of action in which he said that as there was no possibility of capturing the Congress leadership by parliamentary methods, it was better to concentrate on the organisation of labour and the peasantry and "leave no stone unturned to expose the follies and re-actionary policies of the Congress High Command, without deliberately irritating the rank and file." He proposed to raise a labour or peasant issue and create an agitation. "If they Congress
leadership, follow us, no matter what the immediate result may be, we win. If they do not, as probably they will not, if we manage things properly, we shall have to bear all the brunt. We shall probably disappear as a Party for something like two years, but when we return, we shall have captured the machinery of the Congress, even if we do not happen to be in a numerical majority. .... Thus only can we hope to mould the Congress into a Soviet of the representatives of the revolutionary classes and a true instrument for the attainment of independence and socialization." Sampurnanand wanted to get this line of activity adopted by the Party before the release of Jawaharlal Nehru, who was in jail and was to be released soon. After his release, he hinted, the socialist leadership might be swayed by personal considerations. But Sampurnanand's proposed line of action was a work of revolutionary romanticism with little consideration for realities of the situation. The Congress since long was wedded to the method of peaceful struggle and this method brought a large number of people under the banner of Indian National Congress. It was true the Congress leadership detested and turned down every proposal of rapid movement, but the peasants and labourers, on whose support the socialists wanted to build up their organisation, were yet to be made conscious and organised. So any attempt of coup for Congress leadership was sure to be abortive resulting in the expulsion of socialists from the Congress. Notwithstanding its opposition to the left sectarian
line of the communists, the CSP would also have been reduced to a sectarian group like the CPI divorced from the mainstream of nationalist struggle. It was for this reason the Sampurnanand line could not be publicised; instead the Meerut Conference of the Congress Socialist Party in January, 1936 adopted the following thesis: "The immediate task before us is to develop the national movement into a real anti-imperialist movement — a movement aiming at freedom from the foreign power and the native system of exploitation. ..... Consistently with its task, the Party should take only an anti-imperialist stand on Congress platform. We should not in this connection make the mistake of placing a full socialist programme before the Congress. ..... It being the task of the Party to bring the anti-imperialist elements under its ideological influence, it is necessary for us to be as tactful as possible. We should on no account alienate these elements by intolerance and impatience." 13 It was at this conference the AICC was urged upon by a resolution moved by Jayaprakash Narayan to elect Jawaharlal Nehru as the President of the Indian National Congress at its next session to be held at Lucknow in April, 1936. 14 The socialists were quite tactical in their choice of Jawaharlal Nehru as the next President of the Congress. For quite some time Jawaharlal Nehru was popular among the younger section of the Congress for his radical views. The socialists cast much faith in him. For he declared: "India's immediate
goal can only be considered in terms of the ending of the exploitation of her people. Politically, it must mean independence and the severance of the British connection, which means imperialist dominion; economically and socially it must mean the ending of all special privileges and vested interests. The whole world is struggling to this end; India can do no less, and in this way the Indian struggle for freedom lines up with the world struggle." Jawaharlal Nehru had already a term of Presidentship and the conservative leaders suffered him because of Gandhi's deep affection for him. It was, therefore, prudent for the socialists to propose Jawaharlal Nehru's name. Jawaharlal Nehru was elected as the President of the Indian National Congress. But it should not be taken that the socialists made him the President. It was virtually the consideration of Jawaharlal Nehru's recent bereavement by Kamala Nehru's sad death that embarrassed the conservative leaders and they agreed to elect him as the President at Lucknow. Moreover, their consideration enjoyed the blessings of Gandhi, which also was no less a deciding factor.

_Lucknow Congress, 1936._

In consonance with his earlier expressions Jawaharlal Nehru in his Presidential address made caustic remarks about the so-called middle class leadership of the Congress. He admitted that revolutionary leadership had always emerged
from the middle class intellectuals, but, paradoxically, in
the same rank there were persons having alliances with the
upper groups. This composition, in his opinion, distracted
the leadership and injured the cause by holding back when a
forward move was called for. "That has been very evident
during our recent struggle when our propertied classes were
hit hard by the Government's drastic policy of seizure and
confiscation of monies and properties, and were thus induced
to bring pressure for the suspension of the struggle". What
Jawaharlal Nehru desired was not the change in leadership,
but the leadership to "look more and more towards the masses
and draw strength and inspiration from them. The Congress
must be not only for the masses, as it claims to be, but of
the masses; only then will it really be for the masses".
Jawaharlal Nehru also wanted the Congress to have intimate
connection with the world's events without which it was diffi-
cult to comprehend the significance of national problems.
But he held that, nothing could be possible without the
adoption of socialism in the scientific sense as the philo-
sophy of life. It was unequivocally declared from the
Presidential chair at the Lucknow Congress: "I should like
the Congress to become a Socialist organization and to join
hands with the other forces in the world who are working for
the new civilization. ...... I shall co-operate gladly and
with all the strength in me with all those who work for
independence, even though they do not agree with the Socialist
solution. But I shall do so stating my position frankly and
hoping in course of time to convert the Congress and the country to it, for only thus can I see it achieving independence." Jawaharlal Nehru also pointed out that unless the Congress agreed to fight the economic battle of the masses by encouraging the formation of peasants' and labourers' unions, freedom would ever remain an impossible dream. It was also the only way to approach effectively the problem of untouchability, as because the mass is free from all caste colour. Economic emancipation of the masses would automatically bring about their social emancipation.

The Presidential address was warmly applauded by the socialist circle. The Lucknow Congress was also significant in that, at this session certain resolutions were adopted which purported to vindicate the socialist approach to problems. Since 1934 the socialists condemned the constitution given by a foreign authority as a sham. It was through the rejection of the Government of India Act, 1935 that the Congress virtually subscribed to the socialist view. Restoring the demand for the Constituent Assembly it was resolved: "The Congress as representing the will of the Indian people for national freedom and a democratic state declares that no constitution imposed by outside authority and no constitution which curtails the sovereignty of the people of India and does not recognise their right to shape and control fully their political and economic future can be accepted. In the opinion of the Congress such
a constitution be based on the independence of India as a nation and it can only be framed by a Constituent Assembly elected on adult franchise or a franchise which approximates to it as nearly as possible". Although Sampuranand's resolution on direct representation of organised peasants and workers into the Congress was lost, a Committee for mass contact was appointed with Jayaprakash Narayan as one of the members. The Labour Committee was resolved to be formed in order to look into the problems of the labourers; the terms of reference of the Agrarian Reform Committee were extended; and a Foreign Department was resolved to be set up. In all the Committees socialists were given representation and Ram-monohar Lohia was appointed by Jawaharlal Nehru as the Secretary of the Foreign Department. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay moved an amendment to the Working Committee's resolution on the election to the A.I.C.C. The resolution sought to replace the system of proportional representation by single majority vote. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay opposed the move, and, while moving the amendment to retain proportional representation, observed that, proportional representation was the only method to ensure the representation of the minorities into the AICC. She made it clear that, her amendment was not moved out of fear that the socialists would go unrepresented in the AICC, there would be other groups as well who would incur identical fate. J.B. Kripalani, on the other hand, opposed the amendment for the complexities in the system. He, however, sarcastically remarked: "If the
Socialists undertook to educate the people about its proper use, it could be re-introduced. But the amendment was carried with the backing of the President of the session by 227 to 207 votes. It was a spectacular victory for the socialists.

Socialists and the Communal Award

The socialists were very much opposed to the Communal Award of 1932. It was another expression of the British policy of divide and rule in India. The following table showing the scheme of weightage for various communities in the Communal Award itself called for opposition to the Award:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communities</th>
<th>% of total population on the basis of 1931 Census Report</th>
<th>% of seats in Assembly</th>
<th>Weightage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>54.8.</td>
<td>47.6.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>44.8.</td>
<td>32.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Christians</td>
<td>0.3.</td>
<td>0.8.</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Indians</td>
<td>0.1.</td>
<td>1.6.</td>
<td>3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>0.01.</td>
<td>25*</td>
<td>25000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Including representation given to European Commerce

The Communal Award was supposed to solve the problem of minorities. But the Award was actually concerned only with the representation of the Muslims, whether they were in majority as in Bengal and Punjab or in minority as in other provinces. The Award also took into consideration the interests of another minority community, i.e., the British. "In Bengal though they
are less than one-tenth of one percent of the population, they are given 10% representation." It was, thus, clear that, position of a community was not estimated according to its numerical strength, but according to its relation with the ruling authority. The socialists on this issue were in full agreement with Madanmohan Malaviya that the Communal Award would give to the country: "Not a Government by the people, for the people and of the people, but a Government of one community over another. In the Punjab, it will be a Government by the Muslims of Hindus, and in the United Provinces it will be a Government by Hindus of Muslims. It will not be democracy. It will be a special kind of despotic Government. It will be tyranny of one community over another and it is this despotism which the Communal Award seeks to instal." The socialists, therefore, held that the Communal problems could not be solved by the recognition of rights belonging to the religious groups. The CSP resolved at its first conference in 1934 to liquidate the problem through the struggle for the emancipation of the masses. But the Congress remained ambivalent to the Communal Award and resolved at the Bombay session in 1934 to adopt the attitude of neither accepting nor rejecting the Award. At the Lucknow Congress when the matter was reviewed the Congress leadership merely reiterated their previous stand. The socialists insisted upon taking a definite attitude in this regard by rejecting the Communal Award. The socialist stand being defeated, Yusuf Meherally announced that they would
remain neutral on the Communal Award voting. This gave a chance to Vallabhbhai Patel to ridicule the socialist attitude as a vote-catching device. The socialists might avert this undermining just by moving an alternative constructive resolution.

**Socialist stand on Office-Acceptance**

On the question of office-acceptance there was a sharp division of opinion in the Congress. T. Prakasham as the spokesman of the supporters of office-acceptance spoke at Lucknow Congress: "All we want is that our enemies should not occupy places of vantage to direct the rifle fire into our bosom, when we are engaged in our work for the country". But this was denounced by M.R. Masani as a completely defeatist outlook. M.R. Masani had reason to be so outspoken. Because the CSP, though accepted parliamentary programme to link up activities inside the legislatures with the activity of the exploited masses outside, was opposed to the acceptance of office. Different organs of the Government being the creation of British imperialism were, in the opinion of the CSP, intended to facilitate and intensify the exploitation of the Indian masses. "The acceptance of Ministerial offices" under these circumstances "will create a dangerous illusion that the Imperialistic State Machine can be utilised for the good of the masses while its essential structure is so designed as to automatically result in their exploitation."

The CSP firmly held that the Congress, that stood for complete
Independence as its immediate objective, must stand apart from the office. But the Congress remained indecisive at this stage.

Socialists in the Working Committee

It was for the first time three socialists namely Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan were nominated to the Working Committee. Jayaprakash Narayan, however, resigned his seat because he was not a member of the AICC. He did not agree to retain his membership by the special facility offered him by Jawaharlal Nehru to get him elected into the AICC. After his resignation Jayaprakash Narayan attended the Working Committee meetings as a special invitee.

Socialist: approach and the vested interest

Meanwhile, Jawaharlal Nehru was in trouble because of his avowed faith in socialism. In his Presidential address he observed that India needed vast and revolutionary changes in her political and social structure in order to bring an end to vested interests in land and industry. This might be done by abolishing "private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of co-operative service". These pronouncements caused a stir among businessmen who apprehended the worst. Jawaharlal Nehru was strongly criticised and businessmen were eager to know whether it was his intention
to commit the Congress to his point of view. To allay this apprehension Jawaharlal Nehru declared in a press interview at Bombay on May 15, 1936 that "he wanted to win over to the Congress as many people as possible to the socialist programme. But he did not intend to coerce the Congress into this programme. Because in order to win freedom support of the various elements was necessary." Although Jawaharlal Nehru tried to pacify the businessmen by the observation that they were no less important in the freedom struggle, his reply to a woman Congress worker regarding omission of women in his Working Committee sharpened the suspicion of the non-socialists in the Congress. He said that "he felt restrained to select members from among men owing to certain circumstances." The leaders of the Congress were already annoyed with Jawaharlal Nehru for his Presidential pronouncements and nominating socialists into the Working Committee, but when he said that he was restrained by circumstances to exclude women from the Working Committee, and that he was opposed to the acceptance of office, particularly when the Congress did not decide on the issue, these leaders were enraged and sought Gandhi's intervention.

Jawaharlal Nehru in conflict with other Congress leaders

Amidst this increasing campaign of whispers about his statements on those points, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to Gandhi on May 25, 1936 in clarification: "I said that it was
formed under peculiar circumstances when I had to play an unusual part. A HAYADAR "self-respecting" president would probably have resigned and I being BE-HAYA "shameless" stuck on even though the majority of the Congress had decided against me on some vital issues. This peculiar position was reflected in the formation of Working Committee, which certainly could not be under the circumstances of my choice, although technically I was responsible for it. ..... I would like to have a woman in the Working Committee but as matter developed and numbers of other names appeared and stayed, there was little choice left. ..... The Committee as it took shape was not my child. ..... Yet ultimately I submitted but inevitably with the thought that I was surrendering to others and almost against my own better judgement."

But Gandhi evidently was not satisfied with this explanation. He, in reply, charged Jawaharlal Nehru in his letter written on May 29, 1936 with violating the convention of nominating a woman into the Working Committee. Gandhi, on the contrary, suggested, "you had the unfettered choice of omitting a socialist name and taking a woman." It was further written, "I may say that your statement which your letter confirms has given much pain to Rajan Babu, C.R. "C. Rajagopalachari" and Vallabhbhai. They feel, and I agree with them, that they have tried to act honourably and with perfect loyalty towards you as a colleague. Your statement makes you out to be the injured party." He, therefore, suggested, "I wish you could
see this viewpoint and correct the report if it is at all possible."

But the difference between Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders continued. This came to a head at the Working Committee meeting held at Wardha in the last week of June, 1936 which resulted in the resignation of Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhbhai Patel, C. Rajagopalachari, J.B. Kripalani, S.D. Deo, Jairamdas Daulatram and Jamnalal Bajaj from the Working Committee. They resigned for they allegedly felt "the preaching and emphasising the socialism particularly at this stage by the President and other socialist members of the Working Committee while the Congress has not adopted it is prejudicial to the best interest of the country and to the success of the national struggle for freedom which we all hold to be the first and paramount concern of the country." They refused to be a party to the weakening of the Congress throughout the country without any compensating gain by the speeches delivered by Jawaharlal Nehru and the socialist members of the Working Committee. However, on Gandhi's intervention the resignation was withdrawn. But the matter was too bitter to be swallowed by Jawaharlal Nehru. He wrote a long emotional letter to Gandhi on July 5 in which he complained of the tiresome behaviour of his Working Committee colleagues. He compared himself to a discharged battery after every Working Committee meeting. As regards his pronouncements, on socialism in particular, he wrote: "Because I attached importance to a large unity I tried to express them in the mildest
way possible and more as an invitation to thought than as fixed conclusions. I felt definitely that my approach was a definite asset to us as it enthused the masses. But my approach, mild and vague as it was, is considered dangerous and harmful by my colleagues. I was being told that my laying stress always on poverty and unemployment in India was unwise, or at any rate the way I did it was wrong. He considered it a question to the freedom of expression than to that of the views themselves, particularly when he made it clear at the Working Committee meetings held at Delhi and Lucknow prior to the assumption of Presidential office respectively that, "I must have freedom to express my views on social matters." He, therefore, thought it better to put the matter before the AICC at its next meeting and take its direction. "Presumably the result of this will be that," wrote Jawaharlal Nehru, "I shall retire and a more homogenous Committee will be formed."

The controversy ventilated into the Press

The controversy had also been ventilated into the Press. The Daily Herald, Lahore, wrote on June 15, 1936, in its editorial, Do not Gag Congress: "Socialism, the burning topic of the day, will before long be banned in Congress circle. Pandit Jawaharlal's emphasis on a socialistic solution of the problems of India has unnerved certain vested interests. Curiously enough a double-sided attack has been launched against him." On the one hand, Jawaharlal Nehru was reported
to be condemned as an agent of Russia. A lurid picture was drawn of a bloody armed mass revolution planned with the help of Soviet money and resources. On the other hand, he was represented as a "dupe of British manufacturers out to kill Bombay industrialists through class strife, for the benefit of Lancashire people." To both the groups of people he was an enemy of the country and religion. Vested interests were, therefore, up in arms and threatened dire consequences. Jawaharlal Nehru and the socialists, who had no ambition to bother about, commented the Editor, might not care for these threats, "but Congress Parliamentarians..." Vallabhbhai Patel was the Chairman of the Congress Parliamentary Committee, who rule the roost, have become nervous. They do not like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru going about the country and spoiling their chances of success at the polls. They are, therefore, arranging for ukase to gag Congress on the issue." The editorial note added that, the conservative leaders "have succeeded to a considerable extent and that explains the pitiable plight of the Political Secretary of the Foreign Department "Rammanohar Lohia of the Congress. He cannot suppress the utterances of the Congress President but must dissociate himself from all of them." As to the comments regarding the Political Secretary, Rammanohar Lohia sent his note of protest to the Editor of the Daily Herald, which was published on June 22, 1936: "I do not know how and on what data you could have concluded about the pitable plight of the Political Secretary of the Foreign Department
of the Congress about his having to dissociate himself from all utterances of the Congress President. No such situation has arisen in the past and I can assure you that none such shall arise in the future. ..... You must take it from me that President Nehru's views are to me the most important of all the opinions being expressed in our country today."

The Pioneer, Lucknow, in its editorial, Socialist Propaganda Abroad, though criticised the Foreign Department of the AICC on July 7, 1936 for "its functioning not on behalf of the country, or even the Congress, but propagating the ideals of a group which are not acceptable to the main body of the people of the country", did not spare the Congress leadership quoting C. Rajagopalachari's views on the issue of socialism being irrelevant in India that "the Congress has become so accustomed to internal dissensions that it cannot feel complete without them."

Gandhi intervenes

In view of these developments Gandhi felt it wise to pacify Jawaharlal Nehru by an appeal to his sentiment, at the same time pointing to some of his actions that he did not approve of. He wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru on July 15, 1936: "Your letter is touching. You feel to be the most injured party. The fact is that your colleagues have lacked your courage and frankness. The result has been disastrous. I have always pleaded with them to speak out to you freely and
fearlessly. But having lacked the courage, whenever they have spoken, they have done it clumsily and you have felt irritated. I tell you they have dreaded you, because of your irritability and impatience of them. They feel that you have never defended them from Socialists' ridicule and misrepresentation. They were fully conscious of your dynamism and your hold over the masses and the youth of the country. They know that you cannot be dispensed with. And so they wanted to give way by resignation from the Working Committee. He looked upon the whole affair as a *tragi-comedy* and advised Jawaharlal Nehru "to look at the whole thing in a lighter view. Resume your humour at the Committee meetings. That is your most usual role."  

The whole episode, it may be pointed out, is an interlude. But the significance of it lies in that Jawaharlal Nehru was involved into such a conflict chiefly because of his association with the socialists. The socialists might not have a direct role in the conflict, but they provided the ground for it. However, the difficulty with Jawaharlal Nehru was that without being a Gandhian he could never set himself free from Gandhi's influence. Gandhi was aware of it and took full advantage of it. Whenever he was found acting independently, it was because Gandhi did not try to check him. This time also the conflict was avoided, at least apparently, and unity was maintained by Gandhi's playing upon his sentiment.
Problem of civil liberties and the socialists

During this time the question of Civil liberties became a burning issue. In Britain the National Council for Civil Liberties was formed as early as 1934 and a Vigilance Committee was organised with Harold Laski, H.G. Wells as members among others "to report on cases of violence or irregularity on the occasion of simultaneous fascist and anti-fascist demonstration in the Hyde Park of London." But strangely enough "the Indian people and their leaders were denied the simple liberty of movement from one place to another and had been either interned or imprisoned." The Foreign Department of the AICC under the able leadership of Rammanohar Lohia launched a vigorous campaign for the establishment of civil liberties in India. Through News Letters and brochures he complained to the world against the invidious discrimination made by the British Government in the field of civil liberties. The world could know that in India security of person and sanctity of dwelling and liberty of movement were practically non-existent. Position was worst in Bengal and the Punjab. The number of Bengal detenus was computed at over 2,000 at the end of 1936 and in the month of July alone about 40 socialists were interned at their own homes or villages in the Punjab. Many Congress Committees and ancillary bodies, declared illegal during the Civil Disobedience Movement, continued to be so even at the
end of 1936. Subhas Chandra Bose was declared an undesirable person and ordered, without any specific charge levelled against him, not to enter the country. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, a member of the Congress Working Committee and M.R. Masani, General Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party were denied entry into the Punjab on the plea that they might endanger public safety, though both Abdul Gaffar Khan and M.R. Masani were members of legal and open organisations and not connected with any subversive activity. The Foreign Department, however, did not expect that publicity to these incidents of repression would induce the British Government to change its policy. But by publicising these incidents a world opinion might be created in favour of civil liberties in India and the Indian movement for freedom and mass emancipation might be linked up with the world movement for democracy and socialism. That Rammanohar Lohia greatly succeeded in his efforts were evident from the contacts that the Foreign Department of the AICC established with the socialists and radical leaders of Britain and other countries.

Election campaign and the socialist strategy

Time was ripe for election under the Government of India Act, 1935. Although the Congress rejected the federal scheme of the Act of 1935, it decided after considerable hesitation to take part in the provincial election. The socialists also had no objection to the electoral programme. Because it was made a part of their activities for linking up
of the legislative activities with the mass movement outside. They proposed to contest the election and enter the Councils without having any *illusion of bettering the existing laws*, but to "explain to the voters that these are your grievances and these should be your demand. The New Constitution *Government of India Act, 1935* makes no provision for these, therefore you must oppose it. Therefore, you must give your votes to us. Our problems can only be solved when we have wrested the right of forming our own constitution through a body which is called by the people, is of the people and for the people. This Assembly which we call the Constituent Assembly is our right and should be our main demand. The only anti-imperialist body contesting the election is the Congress and to it we must give our votes." During the election campaign Jayaprakash Narayan directed the socialists to utilise the campaign without prejudice to the election itself, to popularize the Left programme and ideology. Because the resolutions of the Congress and Election Manifesto gave sufficient opportunity and scope for that. Wherever the Congress declarations were general and vague, Jayaprakash Narayan advised the socialist workers to give *specific content to them and explain their implicit meaning*. The suggested strategy was to "try to induce the Congress Committees to invite the co-operation of other anti-imperialist organizations. The local CSP branch should co-ordinate the election work of these other organizations, such as trade unions, students' associations, Kisan
unions etc., by forming a Co-ordinating Committee of their representatives." But these Committees were advised not to act publicly. Demonstrations, meetings, and other forms of action were suggested to be undertaken in the name of all the organizations concerned and not in that of the Committee.

Anti-Constitution Day and the socialists

Side by side the election campaign, the socialists launched campaign for hartal / strike on April 1, 1937 when the Government of India Act, 1935 was to be invoked. The decision to observe general strike on April 1 was taken at the Faizpur Conference of the Congress in December, 1936. Jawaharlal Nehru issued a circular so that April 1 might be observed as the Anti-Constitution Day and the strike might be a grand success. He directed: "Every co-operation to make the day a success must be invited and welcomed. All those who want to get rid of the constitution and stand for a free India should be invited to join, such as Trade Unions, Merchants' Associations, Peasant Unions, Students' Associations and like bodies." In pursuance of the Presidential circular the programme for the observance of hartal was: "The hartal should be complete and militant. It should include closing of shops, factories, schools and colleges, local transport, municipal establishments, etc. In the villages hartal not being a practical programme — except to the extent of the closing of local bazars — attempts should be made to organize processions which should converge on local Government
offices and outposts. In the cities too in addition to the hartal there should be demonstrations, including meetings, processions, burning of effigies. In the provincial capitals the processions should converge on the Legislatures." In view of this programme it was decided to form strike committees in different professional fields in co-operation with local Congress Committees.

The result of the election was declared in February, 1937. The Congress got clear majority in Bihar, U.P., C.F., Orissa and Madras. In Bombay the Congress captured about 50 percent seats and with the support of a few more it might form the ministry there. In N.W.F.P. and Assam Congress became the largest single group in the legislatures. The question of office-acceptance on which the Congress so long remained indecisive then arose. Jawaharlal Nehru and the socialists were opposed to the formation of ministry by the Congress. They, therefore, were all out to make the hartal on April 1 a notable success. Their preparation startled a section of government officers. Hand, an officer of the Home Department anticipated that, if the CSP's programme of actions "did take place, they might result in serious disturbances, and in Government offices in isolated places being put in a precarious position." Even if it did not become so disastrous as in Chauri Chaura, observed Hands, "it might well be seriously detrimental to the morale of Government officers and the prestige of Government in the locality in which it occurred."
R.M. Maxwell, the then Home Secretary, however, did not attach much importance to the proposed hartal because, it was chiefly the All India Congress Socialist Party and Jawaharlal Nehru who laid much more stress on this proposed hartal than the general body of the Congress. Although "Jawaharlal Nehru has been doing everything in his power to queer the pitch of those who are in favour of office-acceptance", R.M. Maxwell had no doubt that, the Congress must accept office, where they obtained substantial majority, and in those places the call for the hartal would not create much enthusiasm. He, therefore, favoured to leave the matter to be tackled by the provincial governments. As regards the hartal R.M. Maxwell's appreciation of the situation was not wholly true. The call for the hartal by the Congress President was honoured by the country and the strike was a success in most of the places. Although demonstrations were peaceful, the Government made massive arrests in different places. Jayaprakash Narayan was arrested in Patna while leading a procession. But the curious thing was that the call for the strike was not enthusiastically responded to in Bombay, the main centre of Indian business. This indicated the businessmen's reluctance to oppose the new Act. Besides, the strike could not be a total success throughout the country because of the luke-warm attitude of other leaders of the Congress to it.

**Question of Office-Acceptance in the fore**

The question of acceptance of office under the new Act led to fierce debate inside the Congress. Beside locating
sovereignty expressly outside India the Governor-General under the new Act was vested with a bundle of discretionary powers by which he might bring the whole administration under his full control. "The full bloom of Provincial Autonomy is considerably tarnished by possession of extraordinary power by the Governor." Over and above, overriding power of the Governor-General controlling every field of provincial government reduced the real scope of self-government by the people in provinces to nil. "Provincial Autonomy, under the Constitution of 1935, is not a mere name; it is much less and much worse. It is a cloak for the refusal on the part of British Imperialism to part with any substance of power to the people of India in the management of their own concerns. It is an apology for a flagrant deception."

It was, therefore, felt plausible by the Congress leaders to negotiate with the Viceroy for an assurance that the Governor would not use extraordinary powers, and interfere in the day-to-day administration, in case the Congress formed ministries in the provinces where it would win majority. This decision to negotiate with the Government was taken as per Gandhi's advice. Gandhi was perhaps guided by the impression that the Government would not dare to ignore the tremendous mass support that the Congress was enjoying. But the British were no less cunning. R.M. Maxwell made out a case against Gandhi that he was trying to influence the situation in such a manner that a via media between the
opposing views / pro-acceptance and non-acceptance groups might be found out. In so doing "he is influenced by his usual desire to set up a negotiating point on which he would either be called upon to arbitrate in future between the Governors and their ministries or at any rate which would make it appear that the Government had to some extent yielded to Congress stipulation." The Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, therefore, refused to give to the Congress any such assurance. The result was an impasse. The matter was raised in the British Parliament on April 6, 1937 when Montague Butler, the Under Secretary of State for India, said: "Provincial Governors with the full approval of the Governor-General .... declined to give any undertaking in regard to the use of the powers conferred upon them by the Act and the obligations imposed upon them by their Instructions issued with the approval of Parliament. But the Governors offered, subject to their obligations, the fullest assurance of sympathy and support to any Ministry which might be formed. The Congress leaders were unfortunately unable to accept such assurances as adequately fulfilling the requirements prescribed by the All-India Congress Committee." To the suggestion made by George Lansbury that the Viceroy might take some special measures in consultation with the Congress leaders to end the impasse, Butler's reply was: "If the Viceroy were to receive such a request from the Congress leaders, I feel sure he would give it every consideration." When Lansbury further
suggested that the Viceroy, being in the stronger position, might make the approach, the reply was emphatically: "No". This clearly revealed that the Government had no desire to part with any amount of substantial power. But Indian public life, observed Jawaharlal Nehru, was never in dearth of persons who were politicians and nothing more, careerists both in the good and bad senses of the word. Finding the Congress hesitant the provincial Governors formed the ministry with these people, even in provinces in which the Congress had won a majority of seats.

This naturally alarmed the Congress leaders who were in favour of accepting office. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad came forward to be the spokesman of this section. He held that the Congress, which had so long pursued negative policy, should not fail to adopt a positive policy by agreeing to enter into the Government. Gandhi agreed to the argument and wrote in *Harijan* on May 1, 1937: "The boycott of legislatures, let me tell you, is not an eternal principle like that of truth and non-violence. My opposition to them has lessened but that does not mean that I am going back on my former position. The question is of strategy and I can only say what is most needed at a particular moment." Gandhi was at this time more interested in his Constructive Programme. He wondered whether, with all its deficiencies, new constitution could encourage "village industries, introduce prohibition, reduce the burdens of the peasantry, promote the use of home-spun cloth, extend
education and combat untouchability." Moreover, Gandhi felt, though the country vibrated with a new political consciousness under the impact of the civil disobedience campaign, the spirit of non-violence had been slow in influencing the people, even his closest associates in whom "violence seemed not only latent, but near the surface, erupting unexpectedly; the atmosphere requisite for the launching of a Satyagraha campaign was not easy to create." This beside, the new Constitution, though far from offering political freedom to India, had at least "created an electorate of thirty millions; these millions and the many millions who had still to win vote could all be affected by provincial governments. The new constitution could be construed, wrote Gandhi, as an attempt, however, feeble and limited, to replace the rule of the sword by the rule of the majority." In the meantime, a verbal assurance was elicited from Lord Linlithgow that the Governors instead of provoking conflict would be anxious to avoid it. This conciliatory gesture was difficult to be construed as something concrete; yet, as J.B. Kripalani observed, it was felt to be so. For the minority governments formed by the Governors were sure to be voted out by Congress on the day the legislatures met. After that, either the Congress was to be invited to take power or the Constitution would be suspended. This would deepen the crisis. The Viceroy perhaps made this gesture in recognition of the realities of the situation. The Congress, pledged to independence and to combat the Act, was compelled to accept
Provincial Autonomy, just by the pressure of majority in July, 1937. It had been described by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad as a historic decision. But M.R. Masani sarcastically commented on this decision that, the Congress, which got the vote for its pledge to wreck the Constitution, allowed its ministers to take the oath of loyalty to "His Majesty, the King Emperor and to work the constitution for the real welfare of His Majesty's subjects."

But it did not take a long time to prove that a government offered by the foreign authority could not have even the limited authority. The experiences of Congress Ministries at least in two provinces, namely, Bihar and U.P., had shown that there were interferences by the Governor in the day to day work of the ministers. The Governors were aware that release of political prisoners would form one of the major items of the Congress Election Manifesto. And the acceptance of office by the Congress implied the implementation of that item as a part of their day to day administration which necessarily required no endorsement by the Governors. But the Governors insisted upon it and annoyingly delayed endorsement. The matter at last came to such a pass that Ministries in Bihar and U.P. had to tender resignation. The Haripura Congress under the Presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose ratified the decision. Warning by the CSP came true. The matter was later somehow smoothed over.
**Congress foreign policy and the socialists**

During this time the Foreign Department of the AICC, which was in charge of Rammonohar Lohia, did laudable work. The Madras Congress in 1927 resolved against the then warlike preparations in India and the eastern seas and demanded the withdrawal of Indian troops from Mesopotamia, Persia and other places. It also declared the refusal of Indian people to participate or cooperate in any such warlike adventures embarked upon by the British government. But in subsequent Congress sessions only strong comments were made on international issues without making any attempt to develop a positive policy on that line. The socialists tried to mould the internal policy of the Congress keeping in view the international situation, but as most of the Congress leaders, with the honourable exception of Nehru, had little interest in international developments, socialists' attempts were not fruitful. Jawaharlal Nehru for the first time in his Presidential address at Lucknow Congress laid stress on international developments and tried to connect the struggle for freedom with the world movement for new order. Approaching the Indian freedom movement from that point of view Rammonohar Lohia with the patronage of Jawaharlal Nehru succeeded in 1938 to prepare the Indian Foreign Policy based on the Madras Resolution of 1927. The broad points of the Congress foreign and defence policy were as follows:—

"1) India is determined to participate in world affairs as a free and sovereign nation."
2) So long as British Imperialism lasts in this country India is determined to resist by countrywide direct action any attempt to force her into Britain's war. It must, therefore, be clearly understood by the whole world that for purposes of international diplomacy and war, India does not form part of the British Empire.

3) India desires the transformation of the League of Nations into a League of Peoples and supports it.

4) India does not recognise the sanctity of international treaties but declares that aggression can be easily named.

5) India offers her support to all the national democratic and socialist forces in the world that are working for peace, freedom and democracy and puts on record her readiness to associate whole-heartedly in any scheme of international economic sanctions against an aggressor.

6) India regards the present Indian army as an army of foreign occupation and cannot in any way support its maintenance or strengthening. The Congress declares that the only way to meet imperialist attacks from without is arms to the people and adult military training."

**Tripuri Congress and the socialists**

The most critical period for the Indian National Congress came in 1939. It was the time when England somehow managed to escape war by signing the Munich Pact. But none
could deny that war had been knocking at the door. The Fascist force was rampant and gripped every issue with its vicious fangs. It was a trying situation. Subhas Chandra Bose sought another term of Presidentship at the Tripuri Congress. But Gandhi was opposed to it. On the eve of the Tripuri Congress, the feeling of the Working Committee meeting at Bardoli was, wrote Pattabhi Sitaramiyya, "that the overriding necessities of the National demand and its fulfilment by Britain would dictate that the nation's unanimous choice should fall upon a Muslim of outstanding position. In Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the nation had one such .... Gandhi instinctively felt that Maulana's Presidentship at Tripuri might ease the communal situation and help to solve the communal problem. That is why he did not encourage Subhas Babu's candidature." The argument was quite plausible. But the curious thing was that Gandhi informed Pattabhi Sitaramiyya before leaving Bardoli that, in case Maulana Abul Kalam Azad declined the offer, the former should be ready to be the President at Tripuri. It was difficult to understand how could the election of Pattabhi Sitaramiyya, equally a Hindu in religious conviction like Subhas Chandra Bose, might ease the communal tension. However, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, though at first agreed, withdrew later from the contest, leaving Subhas Chandra Bose and Pattabhi Sitaramiyya into the field.

Inspite of Gandhi's support to Pattabhi Sitaramiyya, Subhas Chandra Bose won with the backing of socialists and other radical elements in the Congress. This led to the
resignation of the members of Working Committee. But at the
Congress session Govindaballav Pant moved a resolution, a
brain child of C. Rajagopalachari, that the President should
appoint the Working Committee in accordance with the wishes
of Gandhiji. It was proposed that:

"In view of various misunderstandings that have
arisen in the Congress and the country on account of
controversies in connection with the Presidential
election and after, it is desirable that the All
India Congress Committee should clarify the position
and declare its general policy.

"The Committee declares its firm adherence to the
fundamental policies of the Congress which have
governed its programme in the past years under the
guidance of Mahatma Gandhi and is definitely of
opinion that there should be no break in these policies
and that they should continue to govern the Congress
programme in future. The Committee expresses its
confidence in the Working Committee which functioned
during the last years and deplores that any aspersions
should have been cast against any one of its members.

"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 country
to victory during such crisis, the Committee regards
it as imperative that the Congress Executive should
command his implicit confidence and requests the President to nominate Working Committee in accordance with the wishes of Gandhi."

Though the resolution was ruled out by the President at the AICC meeting, it was again moved at the Plenary session. The country was faced with a very critical situation. Acceptance of the resolution meant supporting exclusive Gandhian leadership while opposition to it meant advocacy of an alternative leadership. The attempt of the socialists who were opposed to both to persuade the movers of the resolution to soften the language of the resolution were met with the reply: Not a comma less. They, therefore, felt it correct at this stage to remain neutral. Even today Achyut Patwardhan vindicate the socialist stand on the issue for the sake of national unity. But Jayaprakash Narayan, upheld national unity as the prime need of the time, but could not find any justification for such a stand, "unless the entire left, at least its major components, were persuaded to follow it."

As the Royists and the Subhasists vehemently opposed the resolution and encountered defeat, the whole purpose of neutrality was foiled. The CSP had to pay a heavy penalty for overlooking this fact. The rank and file of the Party not only revolted against the leadership, but also raised ideological questions. The CSP, which had already incurred great loss by communist disruptions, suffered another. It was for this reason, the socialists could not become a strong
force in Bengal. However, after the conclusion of Tripuri Congress letters and telegrams were exchanged between Subhas Chandra Bose and Gandhi, but the latter stuck to his decision: "Knowing your own views and knowing how you and most of the members differ in fundamentals it seems to me that if I gave you names it would be an imposition on you." Subhas Chandra Bose, therefore, thought it better to tender resignation. But the socialists at this stage requested him not to resign. As the whole Congress organisation was in a deadlock, everybody had been trying to overcome the crisis. The socialists seemed to have reached a compromise. On this issue Jayaprakash Narayan wrote: "Subhas Babu himself would have been the President, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru would have been the General Secretary, Sjt. Sarat Chandra Bose and two leftists would have been among the members. It will be remembered that this was the minimum arrangement to which the old guard was agreeable." However, Subhas Chandra Bose did not agree to that. He was, perhaps, so mortified by Gandhi's persistent opposition to him that he could not think of anything but resignation.

Incidentally, it may be interesting today to make a dispassionate evaluation of the whole episode. The argument that Gandhi did not want to sponsor Subhas Chandra Bose for the second term of Presidential office, and wanted to replace him by a Muslim President for easing the communal tension had been repudiated by his own act of sponsoring Pattabhi Sitaramiyya. It might be argued that his attitude was stiffened by the
resolution of the Bengal delegates adopted at Jalpaiguri under the patronage of Subhas Chandra Bose urging the Congress to give a six months' notice to the British for withdrawal to be followed by mass disobedience. This restlessness was not acceptable to Gandhi. But Jawaharlal Nehru was no less restless. It has already been noted, how Gandhi regarded the conflict between Jawaharlal Nehru and other Congress leaders in 1936 with generosity. But he could not be that magnanimous in the case of Subhas Chandra Bose. Had he been a little kind to Subhas Chandra Bose, the course of Indian freedom movement might have been different. During the partition of India in 1947 even the socialist leaders, who disappointed Subhas Chandra Bose by remaining neutral, felt his absence. Nirmal Kumar Bose wrote: "quite often he would say that there was only one imperfect Gandhian, and that was himself." Gandhi's Tripuri action at least justified this self-criticism.

War bewilderment of the Congress leadership and the socialists

When the Congress leaders were engrossed in the conflict of leadership, storm clouds gathered in the sky over their heads, and the air was rent by bombardments. The operation theatre was still in Europe, but it might take a global shape any day. when the Congress leaders in the legislatures were gloating on their triumph over the opposition on a trifling issue, Indian troops were being despatched, without their knowing it, to Singapore and the Middle East. Fascism was definitely a menace and India's freedom would not be worth
the name if Fascism or Nazism was allowed to dominate the world. Jawaharlal Nehru warned: "It is not Hitler or Mussolini who have created the present crisis in Europe. Eventually it is the policy of the British Government supported by the French Government." If there had been any single person to be blamed, it was Neville Chamberlain who in the name of defending freedom against the onslaught of Fascism had been encouraging Fascism. Not only that, it was the British Government that instigated the communal problem to be turned into a political one in India.

The socialists were aware that such things might develop any day. And it was with this apprehension the CSP developed their anti-war policy as early as 1934, the year after the rise of Hitler. A full dress resolution on War Danger was moved by the socialists at the Bombay Congress in 1934 urging the Congress to declare its opposition to India's participation in any war, in the event of its sudden outbreak. The Congress was urged "to undertake forthwith the preparation of the entire Indian Nation to resist actively the utilisation of Indian men, money and resources for the purpose of such a war and to utilise such crisis for securing Swaraj." But the Congress leadership could not be enthused to adopt the resolution. Another socialist attempt in this regard failed at the AICC meeting in 1935 held at Jabalpur. And it was only at the Lucknow Congress in 1936 that the Congress could recognise the importance of the issue because of Italian
attack on Abyssinia and fresh aggression by Japan in China. The Lucknow Congress reiterated the Madras Resolution of 1927 that India was opposed to participation in any imperialist war. The attitude of the Congress towards the war was further clarified in the subsequent sessions at Faizpur in 1936 and Haripura in 1938: "India can be no party to such an imperialist war and will not permit her man-power and resources to be exploited in the interest of British Imperialism. Nor can India join any war without the express consent of her people. The Congress, therefore, entirely disapprove of war preparations being made in India and large-scale manoeuvres and air-raid preparations, by which it has been sought to spread an atmosphere of approaching war in India. In the event of an attempt being made to involve India in war, this will be resisted." The Tripuri Congress met in the background of numerous massacres in Europe to record its opposition to imperialism and Fascism alike and declare the urgency for India to direct her own foreign policy as an independent nation for the pursuit of peace and freedom as against imperialism and Fascism. But the saddest thing was that the Congress, though acknowledged the war danger, did nothing to prepare the country for that contingency. The Working Committee advised the provincial ministries only in August, 1939 not to assist the war preparations, which had already been started. But it, at the same time, sought a declaration from the British Government of its war aims.
It was a confusing situation. The Congress within itself was divided into three groups holding different views on the question of war. The first one was that of Gandhi, who favoured expressing full meal sympathy with Britain and France. The second was that of the socialists, who were thoroughly opposed to war and the British Government's attempt to drag India into it. And the third opinion was held by the Working Committee, who virtually steered, though unconsciously, a middle course. On the one hand, the Working Committee condemned the war preparations, and on the other hand, it sought clarification from the British Government as regards its war aims. The socialists repeatedly pointed out that when the Congress was opposed to war, imperialist or Fascist, it should prepare the country against the war. The British indifference to the repeated Congress demand was also a good ground to undertake massive anti-war preparations. But the Congress leadership remained indecisive. This indecision was the natural corollary of the Congress decision to stick to office. That such an eventuality might occur was hinted at by the socialists in their opposition to office-acceptance.

Then came the war in early September, 1939, and the Viceroy in India instantly declared his Government's belligerency with Germany. Jayaprakash Narayan made an appreciation of the situation: "In view of the declared Congress position the one and only thing that could have been expected of the Working Committee, was a declaration of Indian Non-belligerency
and the prompt mobilisation of the country, to have that position respected at the hands of the British in India, which would no doubt, have made a clash with the Government inevitable. But the British told us that they were fighting for democracy. Britain that had let down democratic Czechoslovakia, was fighting for democracy, because Hitler had turned round and attacked Poland, that had itself fallen as a vulture on Czechoslovakia and was eating out of Hitler's hands till the other day! .... The fact that Britain had decided to fight was due to the danger to Britain, which was becoming more imminent, because it had been found out that Hitler could never be appeased."

But this appreciation of the situation made no appeal to the Congress leadership. The Working Committee in its meeting of September 8-15, 1939 criticised the Viceroy for his unilateral declaration of Indian belligerancy and embarked upon negotiation with the British Government. At the AICC meeting on October 9 when Jayaprakash Narayan moved an amendment for immediate mass resistance to all war measures to the Working Committee resolution adopted in September, it was rejected. The measures of negotiation continued till early November, 1939 when the Congress provincial ministries resigned, in order to create a mild pressure on the British Government. But the Working Committee was opposed to any measure calculated to embarrass British war efforts.

The CSP, however, went on with its anti-war propaganda within the limited scope provided by the Congress declaration
of anti-war policy. And this led to the arrest of many socialist workers and leaders including Jayaprakash Narayan. But this action could not be appreciated by Congress leadership. Even Jawaharlal Nehru, who was the patron of socialist activities, criticised the socialists for undertaking such inexperienced actions. His views were summed up in the following words: "...they discussed world affairs without knowing much about them, they were immature and lacked ballast." In this background the Congress met at its Ramgarh session in March, 1940. The Congress leadership took stock of the humiliating situation for them and resolved that civil disobedience under Gandhi's leadership was the only course of action left to the country.

The socialists planned to take advantage of the Ramgarh decision and turn the proposed civil disobedience movement into a movement of anti-imperialist revolutionary uprising of peasants and workers. Their plan of action was based on the following analysis: "The whole world is passing through times of rapid changes. The war continues as a crowning proof of the contradictions of world capitalism, the whole structure of which has been shaken to its roots. British imperialism is in the midst of the greatest crisis of its life and no one believes that it is going to emerge from it without being drastically transformed. The impact of these world-shaking events cannot but be deeply felt in our own country. And the masses of India must be enabled to take full advantage
of every situation that may arise." But Gandhi was in no mood to launch the movement all at once.

War situation was fast deteriorating for the Western powers and in May, 1940 France collapsed. On June 1 Gandhi wrote in *Harijan*: "We do not seek our independence out of Britain's ruin." The Working Committee met on June 18 to make fresh offer on full co-operation to Britain, if the latter agreed to India's complete independence after the war and establish a National Government in the interim period. Gandhi, being opposed to any type of violent warfare, asked to be absolved of the leadership of the proposed civil disobedience programme adopted at Ramgarh, and he was relieved. The Congress leadership was, perhaps, guided by the impression that Britain in her panic would catch at any straw thrown at it. Gandhi's exit gave an added strength to them. Because in no event would Gandhi allow the Congress to enter into a bargain with the British Government when it was engaged in a life and death struggle with the Fascist forces of the world. So the Congress leadership did not let the grass grow under its feet. The Working Committee at its Delhi meeting of July 7, 1940 urged the British Government to make an unequivocal declaration of complete independence at the end of the war and "immediate setting up of a Provisional National Government at the Centre which would command the confidence of all the elected members of the Central Legislature." If these terms were accepted, of these the Congress would offer
its cooperation in the war effort. It may be mentioned that the Provisional National Government was the joint product and brain-work of C. Rajagopalachari and Vallabhbhai Patel and was opposed by Jawaharlal Nehru and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. C. Rajagopalachari went further and declared at a press conference that "...... if the government put up a National Government viz., government representing the various groups in the present Central Legislative Assembly, we would take the declaration of Independence as made."

But Gandhi could not endorse this line of approach and was evidently annoyed. He wrote in Harijan on July 7: "The temptation is irresistible. Congressmen can again become Cabinet Ministers. They may also be Ministers or Members at the Centre. They will have an insight into the War machine. They will watch from inside (again to the extent allowed) the Englishmen at work when engaged in a life and death struggle. They will have to raise crores of rupees and dispose of them in the war effort. If I have my way, I would have the Congress to resist the irresistible temptation and not grudge those who believe in the accepted method of filling all these posts." The CSP also vehemently criticised the Working Committee's decision and observed that the so-called National Government would be far from helping the masses and "have as its main function more intense exploitation of the country, its resources and its man-power, ..... giving a democratic trimming to the British
apparatus of repression. In short, a National Government under
the Union Jack would be an anti-National Government. ...."

But Lord Linlithgow stopped all speculations by an
express declaration that under the prevailing circumstances
he might only set up a War Advisory Council and that also
with an assurance to the Muslim League that Britain would not
transfer power to any Indian Government which did not enjoy the
confidence of all sections of the population.

The British rejection of the Delhi offer frustrated
the Congress leadership. The only honourable course left
before them was to stage some kind of opposition to the
British power. They, therefore, persuaded Gandhi to accept
again the Congress leadership to launch the civil disobedience
movement. But the socialists did not countenance this move
as part of a struggle to overthrow imperialism. In their
opinion: "It is a struggle first, to save the prestige of
the leadership which had bent so low before imperialism,
second, to hold the sympathy of the politically undeveloped
masses of India by a show of "suffering and sacrifice", and
third, to exert pressure on imperialism for compromise." 133
However, they participated in individual civil disobedience
started on October 17, 1940. Instead of launching a mass
movement the Congress leadership staged individual civil
disobedience, as per Gandhi's advice, to register protest
against British indifference to the Congress, but not to
134 disturb the Allied war efforts. The movement continued
till the end of 1941 when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour.
Meanwhile the jails overflowed with the prisoners and the British Government refused to make any further arrest. The British refusal to make arrest evidently indicated the British attitude to the movement. Although the Government did not bend at all to compromise, the war reversal raised new hopes in the Congress leadership and they again unilaterally extended their hands of cooperation; but it was to no avail. The beginning of 1942 recorded further Allied War reversals and on March 7 Rangoon was captured by the Japanese causing great panic in India. The British Prime Minister refused to introduce any change in the imperial policy in India. However, he agreed to the persuasion of the American President, Roosevelt, Chinese Generalissimo, Chiang-Kai-shek and the Labour Members of the British War Cabinet to send Stafford Cripps to India to negotiate with the Indian leaders.

The Cripps Mission comes to India.

Stafford Cripps was a socialist and his was no new name in India. In December, 1939 he came to India and made extensive tour throughout the country and became acquainted with different shades of opinion belonging both to the right and the left. Among the socialist leaders who met him were Narendra Deva, Jayaprakash Narayan, Yusuf Meherally, Rammonchar Lohia and M.R. Masani. Although this time in meetings and public speeches he spoke chiefly of democracy and freedom, he said that the majority of the House of Commons favoured granting self-government to India immediately after the war was over.
Stafford Cripps supported the Congress demand for the Constituent Assembly and appreciated Satyagraha as a form of movement. His impression about the Muslim League was not at all favourable. After his return to England Stafford Cripps wrote an article in The Tribune to denounce the Muslim League demand for the partition of India as reactionary and impracticable. Because the Muslim League, in his opinion, was drawn entirely from the professional, landlord and industrialist classes whose interests were fundamentally different from that of the Muslim mass. 137

It was with this background that Stafford Cripps came to India in 1942 as an official representative of the British War Cabinet. But this time Stafford Cripps was a different personality. The Declaration that he brought with him had virtually nothing in it to improve the prevailing situation. The best that the Declaration proposed to do then was to set up a provisional Indian Government, which would, however, have no control over Defence. The Cripps Proposal was fell short of complete independence. It promised Dominion Status to be wrought by a treaty between His Majesty's Government and the Constituent Assembly to be set up on the basis of electorate of 1935 after the war was over. While making that treaty His Majesty's Government would, however, be anxious to protect and safeguard the interest of racial and religious minorities. Not only that, the Princely States and Provinces might opt out of the proposed Government. 138

This naturally could not be acceptable to the Congress, particularly at a time when Indian feeling against the British
was very strong. C. Rajagopalachari tried his best to get the Cripps' Proposal accepted. Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad were no less inclined to its acceptance. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, however, tried to explain that, anxiety for the interests of democracy made him and Jawaharlal Nehru favourably disposed to the Cripps' Proposal. But because of Gandhi's positive indifference to it and popular anti-British feeling, the Cripps' Proposal was rejected.

The failure shocked Stafford Cripps so much that he could not conceal the British imperial motive. He said:

"The Muslims, of whom there are at least 80,000,000 are deeply opposed to Hindu domination as are also tens of millions of Depressed classes. To have agreed to the Congress Party's or to Mr. Gandhi's demands would have meant inevitable chaos and disorder." It was the same person who, as a non-official British leader in 1939, considered the Muslim masses to be in line with the Hindus in their opposition to the demand of the Muslim League for the partition in India. Not only that, he even applauded the Gandhian technique of satyagraha then. But this time he said: "We cannot allow the actions of visionary ...... to thwart the United Nation's drive for victory in the East. ...... American, Chinese, Indian and British soldiers must not be sacrificed in their gallant struggle for the liberty of the world by a political party maneuvering in India. ...... " The American President or the Chinese Generals might be proud of being able to change the British attitude towards India, but it was "a
market place half-truth”, viewed Rammonohar Lohia, to regard the Cripps Mission as "a concession made by Churchill to un­　welcome American or Chinese pressures or to clamourings among his own people." If the concession was at all made, it was made to the British Empire in order to safeguard its own interests in the East. As the economic and geo-political factors compelled England to maintain a far-flung Empire, it was impossible for any British citizen to run counter to the imperial needs. Because, asked Rammonohar Lohia, "What will the factory-worker together with his exploiting master, the trader, the administrator, the seaman and above all, the book-writer and political gentry do without an Empire?" England was coeval with the Empire. "To save Britain and to save the Empire are interchangeable terms. It is the life cry of existing Britain" that prompted the British Prime Minister to undertake a move that might pacify the Indian leaders without weakening the imperial interest. But neither the people nor their supreme leader, Gandhi was in mood to respond to it. They could not agree to anything short of complete independence. Mass movement was, therefore, the only alternative left before the Indian leaders to attain independence.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

2. The Role of the Socialist Party in Triveni, Madras,
   December, 1938, pp. 30-31
4. Memoirs and Reflections by Sampurnanand, p. 77 / Asia
5. Ibid., p. 78.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 79.
9. It was first adopted at the Working Committee meeting of
10. Memoirs and Reflections by Sampurnanand, p. 79.

The original pledge: "We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that, if any government deprive a people of these rights and oppress them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence.

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"India has been ruined economically. The revenue derived from our people is out of all proportion to our income. Our average income is seven pice (less than two pence) per day, and of the taxes we pay 20 per cent are raised from the land revenue derived from peasantry and 3 per cent from salt taxes, which falls most heavily on the poor.

"Village industries, such as hand spinning, have been destroyed, leaving the peasantry idle for at least four months in the year, and dulling their intellect for want of handicrafts, and nothing has been substituted, as in other countries, for the crafts thus destroyed.

"Customs and currency have been so manipulated as to heap further burdens on the peasantry. British manufactured goods constitute the bulk of our imports. Customs duties betray clear partiality for British manufacturers, and revenue from them is used not to lessen the burden on the masses but for sustaining a highly extravagant administration. Still more arbitrary has been the manipulation of the exchange ratio which has resulted in millions being drained away from the country.

"Politically, India's status has never been so reduced as under the British regime. No reforms have given real political power to the people. The tallest of us have to bend before foreign authority. The right of free expression contd... P/174
of opinion and free association have been denied to us and many of our countrymen are compelled to live in exile abroad and cannot return to their homes. All administrative talent is killed and the masses have to be satisfied with petty village offices and clerkships.

"Culturally, the system of education has torn us from our mournings and our training has made us hug the very chains that bind us.

"Spiritually, compulsory disarmament has made us unmanly and the presence of an alien army of occupation, employed with deadly effect to crush in us the spirit of resistance, has made us think that we cannot look after ourselves or put up a defence against foreign, or even defend our homes and families from the attacks of thieves, robbers and miscreants.

"We hold it to be a crime against man and God to submit any longer to a rule that has caused this fourfold disaster to our country. We recognise, however, that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. We will, therefore, prepare ourselves by withdrawing, so far as we can all voluntary association from the British Government, and will prepare for civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes. We are convinced that if we can but withdraw our voluntary help and stop payment of taxes without doing violence, even under
provocation, the end of this inhuman rule is assured. We, therefore, hereby solemnly resolve to carry out the Congress instructions issued from time to time for the purpose of establishing Purna Swaraj." — quoted in I.A.R., 1930, Vol.I, p. 334.

Amended pledge: "We believe that it is an inalienable right of the Indian people as of any other people to have freedom and enjoy the fruits of their toil and have necessaries of life so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any Government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them, the people have a further right to alter it or to abolish it. The British Government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe, therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence.

"We recognise that the most effective way of gaining our freedom is not through violence. India has gained strength and self-reliance and marched a long way to Swaraj following peaceful and legitimate methods and it is by adhering to these methods that our country will attain independence.

"We pledge ourselves anew to independence of India and solemnly resolve to carry out non-violently the struggle for freedom till Purna Swaraj is attained."
"We believe that non-violent action in general and preparation for non-violent direct action in particular require successful working of the Constructive Programme of Khadi, communal harmony and removal of untouchability. We shall seek every opportunity of spreading good will among fellow-men without distinction of caste or creed. We shall endeavour to raise from ignorance and poverty those who have been neglected and to advance in every way the interests of those who are considered to be backward and suppressed. We know that though we are out to destroy imperialistic system, we have no quarrel with Englishmen whether officials or non-officials. We know that the distinction between the caste Hindus and Harijans must be abolished and Hindus have to forget these distinctions in their daily conduct. Such distinctions are a bar to non-violent conduct. Though our religious faith may be different, in our mutual relations we will act as children of mother India, bound by common nationality and common political economic interest.

"Charka and Khadi are integral parts of our Constructive Programme for the resuscitation of seven hundred thousand villages of India and for the removal of the grinding poverty of the masses. We shall, therefore, spin regularly and use for our personal requirements nothing but khadi and so far as possible products of village handicrafts only and endeavour to make others do likewise. We pledge ourselves to the disciplined observance of Congress principles and contd... P/177
policies and to keep in readiness to respond to the call of the Congress whenever it may come for carrying on the struggle for the independence of India." — quoted in History of Indian National Congress, Vol.II by Pattabhi Sitaramayya, pp. 294-295.

The socialists were opposed to the amendment also for the reason that the amended pledge fully committed the Congress to non-violence and the Constructive Programme. — ref. Memories and Reflections by Sampurnanand, p. 79.

11. Quoted in Memories and Reflections by Sampurnanand, p. 78.
13. Meerut Thesis — see Appendix I p. 11
15. Whither India? by Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 21 Kitabistan, Allahabad, 1933.
17. Ibid., p. 78.
18. Ibid., p. 78.
19. Ibid., p. 81.
20. Ibid., p. 82.
21. Ibid., p. 84.
22. Ibid., p. 103.
25. Ibid., pp. 278-292.
28. Ibid., p. 75.
33. Ibid., pp. 283-284.
34. Ibid., p. 280.
35. Ibid., p. 281.
38. Presidential Address by Jawaharlal Nehru at the Lucknow Congress, 1936 in India And The World by Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 83.
39. Times of India, May 1, 1936.
40. Ibid., May 18, 1936.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Gandhi: His Life And Thought by J.B. Kripalani, p. 171.
47. Ibid., pp. 185-188.
48. Jawaharlal Nehru's Correspondence with Gandhi in Nehru Papers - Part I, Vol.XXIV.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Jawaharlal Nehru's correspondence with Gandhi in Nehru Papers - Part I, Vol. XXIV.
53. The Struggle for Civil Liberties by Ramanohar Lohia with a foreward by Jawaharlal Nehru, pp. 27-28 Foreign Department, A.I.C.C., Allahabad, 1936.
54. Ibid., pp. 42-46.
55. AICC File - F.N. F.D. 12/1936.

59. The Election Manifesto was more or less based on the Karachi Resolution of 1931 (ref. I.A.R., 1936, Vol. II, pp. 188-191) and therefore, in the Socialist opinion, there was ample gap, which Jayaprakash Narayan wanted, to be filled up by the socialist programme of activities adopted at the Conferences of the Congress Socialist Party.


61. Ibid.


64. Gandhi: His Life And Thought by J.B. Kripalani, p. 172.


66. Ibid.

67. Times of India, Bombay, April 3, 1937.

69. Ibid.

70. Gandhi: His Life And Thought by J.B. Kripalani, p. 173.


77. Ibid., p. 388.

78. Ibid.


80. The Discovery of India by Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 439.


82. NO "Gentleman's Agreement" by M.R. Masani in Congress Socialist, March 13, 1937, pp. 5-6.


85. Gandhi : His Life And Thought by J.B. Kripalani, p. 175.
87. The Discovery of India by Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 501.
88. Presidential Address of Jawaharlal Nehru at the Lucknow Congress, 1936 in India and The World by Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 67.
89. Salient points of the Indian Foreign, a brochure by Rammonohar Lohia with a foreward by Jawaharlal Nehru was published in Advance, July 15, 1938.
91. Ibid.
94. Ibid.
96. Observation of Achyut Patwardhan in a private interview in 1969.
98. Ref. Gandhi : His Life And Thought by J.B. Kripalani, p.179.

103. The Discovery of India by Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 510.


105. Ibid.


113. Gandhi: His Life and Thought by J.B. Kripalani, p. 185.


115. Ibid., F.N. 219/1938-47.


120. The Discovery of India by Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 454.

121. War Circular No.2 issued by Jayaprakash Narayan, General Secretary, on behalf of the All India Congress Socialist Party from Lucknow on December 31, 1939.

122. The Discovery of India by Jawaharlal Nehru, p. 513.
123. *Gandhi: His Life And Thought* by J.B. Kripalani, p.186.
125. Quoted in *Gandhi: His Life And Thought* by J.B. Kripalani, p. 186.
127. Ibid., p. 187.
128. *Jayaprakash Narayan and Jawaharlal Nehru Correspondence of July 20, 1940 in* Nehru Papers – Part I, Vol. LIV.
130. *Harijan*, July 7, 1940.
134. *Gandhi: His Life And Thought* by J.B. Kripalani, p.188.
135. Ibid., pp. 188-190.
136. Ibid., p. 190.


142. Sir Stafford Cripps' broadcast to America in July, 1942 - quoted in The Mystery of Sir Stafford Cripps by Rammonohar Lohia, p. 69.

143. The Mystery of Sir Stafford Cripps by Rammonohar Lohia, p. 12.

144. Ibid., p. 10.

145. Ibid.