GANDHI AND MASS MOBILIZATION - PART I
PEASANTS, LABOURERS AND THE LEFT

The issue of mass mobilization is discussed under two heads. In this chapter we discuss the mobilization of peasants and labourers. As the Leftists had their own programme for organizing the peasants and labourers, we have included a discussion on their activities to see in what way they differed from Gandhi. The Revolutionaries also had their own programme of mass mobilization. But they failed in gaining a significant social base. They were also an important group who were not influenced by Gandhi nor was Gandhi influenced by them. As a discussion on Revolutionaries hampers the structure of the chapter and affect its readability we have appended the discussion of Gandhi’s relation with the revolutionaries at the end of the chapter.

Mass mobilization on a wide scale was undertaken during the Gandhian phase of the movement. It was under the leadership of Gandhi that Indian National Movement became a mass movement. The main contribution of Gandhi to India and Indian masses had been through the powerful movements which he launched through the National Congress. Through nation-wide action he sought to mould the millions and he
largely succeeded in doing so. He changed them from a demoralized, timid and hopeless, mass, who were bullied and crushed by every dominant interest into a people with self-respect and self-reliance. He transformed the people who were considered as incapable of, resistance to a people who were capable of united action and sacrifice for a larger cause.\textsuperscript{1} In this chapter we discuss in detail the movements through which these different groups were organized and Gandhi’s programmes to involve them in political activities.

It is not assumed that mass could be mobilized only by Gandhi or that mass mobilization was Gandhi’s sole contribution to the Indian National Movement.

A) GANDHI AND PEASANTS:

Indian National Congress did not lay much stress on the need for relief for the peasants up to 1919. It was only after the entry of Gandhi into Indian Politics that Indian National Congress took serious steps to widen the mass base of the movement. Till then it more or less remained to an organization for the upper and middle classes of the society. Activities of the Congress were confined to the urban centers only. Rural

\textsuperscript{1} Articles/Speeches by Jawaharlal Nehru, \textit{Jawaharlal Nehru Papers}, Part III, S. No.47, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, (Hereafter NMML).
population remained aloof from the National movement. Peasants formed a major share of Indian population. But they were ignorant about the nation wide anti-imperialist struggle organized by the Congress. Thus, even though Congress organized a nation-wide struggle it remained a struggle of a minority against the British Raj.

Even though the rural population was not much interested in the on going political movement they were not inert. They were involved in their own struggles against their immediate lords. But their struggles were confined to a particular area and over a particular issue.

The nationalist movement led by the Congress had in its early phase an elaborate agrarian programme, but could not provide an appropriate ‘philosophy’ for a broad-based peasant movement. The Congress agrarian programme was mostly confined to a critical analysis of the British land revenue administration in India. Once Gandhi entered in to the scene the situation changed to a large extent. An entirely new dynamic and political revolutionary tendency has come to be imported into peasant struggles by Mahatma Gandhi since his advent on the Indian

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politico-economic theatre in 1916. Gandhi’s entry into India political scene was through three local struggles he carried on in Champaran, Kheda and Ahmedabad.

It was through the Champaran peasant struggle he came into contact with the Indian peasants. Actually the movement was already started before Gandhi’s entrance into the scene. Even before Gandhi was requested to come to Champaran and was prevailed upon to take up the cause of the ryots against the oppression of the European planters there was an effective opposition. It was at the Lucknow session that Raj Kumar Shukla, a peasant from Champaran (Bihar), met Gandhi and acquainted him with the woes of the peasants there, caused by the tyranny and rapacity of the white indigo planters. Shukla requested Gandhi to go to Champaran and see things for himself. He was so persistent in his request that Gandhi at last acceded to his proposal. After reaching Champaran he undertook a detailed enquiry about the conditions of the peasantry. “Mahatma Gandhi initiated a method that was extremely novel and original, of conducting a systematic and authoritative enquiry into the real nature and degree of the sufferings of the peasants at the hands of the

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3 N.G. Ranga, ‘Indian Peasants’ Struggles and Achievements’ in Ibid., p.72.
5 J.B. Kripalani Gandhi His Life and Thought, Publication Division Government Of India, New Delhi, 1970, p.58
planters. The technique he introduced here was first enquiring into the essential facts of the peasants’ grievances, then formulating their demands, educating them as to the nature and magnitude of their needs and immediate demands, training them in the art of internal self-sufficiency pointing out the need for economy in case of a prolonged struggle against the authorities and steeling their mind to the rigours of jails, and other harassments of imperialism.

In this movement he was helped and assisted by the intelligentsia. The most prominent organizers besides Mahatma Gandhi were Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Brij Kishore Prasad, Muzhar-ul-Haq and a number of other people belonging to the intelligentsia.

Gandhi moved among the peasants ‘trudging round on foot or trundling in a bullock cart, Gandhi came where ordinary people lives, and talked about their concerns in the language they understood.’

While carrying on his work Government served him an order under section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code to leave the place. But he

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7 N.G. Ranga, op. cit., p.72
8 Sukhbir Choudhary, Peasants’ and Workers’ Movement in India – 1905-1929, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, p.28
decided to disobey the order. He made it clear in his statement before the court. "As a law-abiding citizen, my first instinct would be, as it was, to obey the order served upon me. I could not do so without doing violence to my sense of duty to those for whom I have come. I feel that I could just now serve them only by remaining in their midst." The news of the order served on him and his refusal to comply with it, his appearance in the court and his unusual statement spread not only in Champaran but throughout the country. Peasants from the surrounding areas began to pour into the town in their thousands; they were no more afraid of the planters or the police. They wanted to know the outcome of the trial and to pay homage to this unique person, who would court imprisonment willingly and deliberately, so that their grievances might be redressed and their lot improved. It aroused the public enthusiasm. Here for the first time was a man who had defied the might of the British Empire and was willing to court imprisonment, and suffer the hardships of jail life. Such a thing had never happened before in India. Whenever a national leader or a worker was charged with any political offence and arrested, he engaged lawyers to defend himself.

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10 CWMG Vol.15, p.345
11 J.B. Kripalani, op. cit., p.63
12 Ibid., p.64
When Gandhi was about to be imprisoned he wrote a letter to the viceroy in which he suggested the appointment of a commission. At last Government agreed to appoint an inquiry committee with Gandhi as a member. The wrongs that must be redressed before a commission accepted were (i) the abolition, not in name but in reality, of abwabs or illegal cesses exacted by the planters, (ii) the abolition of the damages in lieu of the indigo cultivations whether in a lump sum or by way of sharahbeshi, (iii) the abolition of tinkathia in every shape or form, (iv) the abolition of the custom of imposing fines on raiyats, (v) the abolition of force in exacting labour or other obedience to the planters’ will.

On the basis of the report published by the committee the Government passed the Champaran Agrarian Act of 1918. The main recommendations of the commission were incorporated in this Act. Prof. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand Swaraswathi contends that “But just as the earlier Congress agitation led by Ramesh Chunder Dutt against temporary settlements did not embrace the exploitation of our peasants by zamindars, so also this agitation led by the Mahatma in Champaran did not lead up to any fight against the main causes for the terrible poverty and sufferings of Champaran peasants, namely the excessive rents and

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13 Champaran Satyagraha Papers, Private Papers, NAI, New Delhi.
14 Ibid.,
exorbitant incidence of debts. It may be because of Mahatmai’s growing habit which later on came to be considered as one of his political virtues of concentrating upon one thing at a time.\textsuperscript{15}

The success of their movement instilled a new vigour in the peasantry. It was for the first time they were initiated to such a method of struggle. They began to equate their particular struggle to a general movement against oppression. This political consciousness led them to gradually integrate their struggle with the political movement started by Mahatma Gandhi a few years later.\textsuperscript{16} Even though Champaran movement failed in rescuing the peasants completely from the clutches of zamindars peasants were attracted to the national movement. Anyhow, it “....had the excellent result of awakening not only of the Bihar peasantry but also the general public of India to the tremendous revolutionary potentialities latent in the bosom of our peasants.”\textsuperscript{17}

Success of Gandhi lies in the fact that it was with his intervention that violence was checked to a large extent and he was able to make the peasantry political conscious and thereby initiate them to the national movement. It was because of the type of leadership he provided activated

\textsuperscript{15} N.G. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand Swaraswathi, \textit{op. cit.}, p.55
\textsuperscript{16} Sukhbir Choudhary, \textit{op. cit.}, p.35
\textsuperscript{17} N.G. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand Swaraswathi, \textit{op. cit.}, p.55
them. Judith Brown contends that “with the exception of one local man there was nobody who appeared to aspire to more sophisticated ways of expressing peasant grievances nor was there any Bihar politician who thought it worth while to investigate the Champaran situation at all deeply. What actually occurred was the result of Gandhi’s intervention, with his very personal range of interests and type of leadership.\(^\text{18}\)

Gandhi has often called a charismatic leader because of his mass appeal. But more than his charismatic appeal it is his ability to transform individual’s quest for personal spiritual power and self cultivation into techniques for social action is in evidence in this work in Champaran. He was more revolutionary than charismatic.\(^\text{19}\)

Thereafter, Gandhi organized the Satyagraha movement of peasants in Kaira against the collection of land revenue which they could not pay due to failure of crops. In Kaira the state of the crops during the 1917-18 season was the immediate issue at stake in the agitation Gandhi led, though, as in the case of the indigo issue in Champaran, it need to be set in the context of war-time change and distress if its full impact is to be

\(^{18}\) Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p.65
realized. The agitation was first started in January 1918, by the local branch of the Home Rule League, and was taken up by the Gujarat Sabha which advised cultivators to withhold payment of Land Revenue if the anna value of their crops was below a certain figure. People were persuaded by the Sabha not to pay their land revenue and to allow their land and cattle etc. to be forfeited. "In Kheda", Gandhi said "the Government was high-handed and we had no option but offer Satyagraha against it. If we don’t succeed, the reason will be our own limitation and not anything inherent in Satyagraha."

Like Champaran in Kaira also the movement was started by the local people themselves. Gandhi wrote that “This struggle was not started by outsiders. Nobody instigated the Kheda public to launch it. There is no political motive behind it. It did not originate with the Home Rules or with any barristers or lawyers as some people allege. I stand here to vouch for this. It was started by the tillers themselves. After the Political Conference at Godhra, some agriculturists in Kheda decided to request the Government for relief in view of the excessive rains. They wrote to me, informing me that they were legally entitled to relief and asking me

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20 Judith Brown, op. cit., p.93
21 Home Political, Deposit-18, May 1918, NAI
22 CWMG, Vol.16, p. 288
whether I would help." Gandhi in a statement to the Press stated that "behind this movement there is no desire to discredit the Government, but that it is intended to assert the right of the people to be effectively heard. As both the Government and the agriculturists hold themselves in the right, his (Mr. Gandhi's) suggestion was that in deference to public opinion the Government, should appoint as impartial committee of enquiry or gracefully accept the popular view." Government rejected the suggestion and insisted upon employing coercive measures for the collection of revenue. Farmers also did not show any sign of yielding to the threats.

In Kaira also Gandhi got the support of intelligentsia. The alignment of the intelligentsia and peasantry again manifested itself in March 1919 when the Kheda Satyagraha was launched under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Indulal Yajnik, N.M. Joshi, Shanker Lal Pareekh and several others.

Even though Kaira Satyagraha failed in achieving the demand of the suspension of revenue it once again showed the power of the

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23 CWAG, Vol.16, pp.456-457
24 Statesman, 4/4/1918
25 Tribune, 5/4/1918. Home Political Collection, Deposit, No.18, dated May, 1918, NAI.
26 Sukhbir Chaudhary, op. cit., p.36
Satyagraha struggle to organize the peasantry. Kaira hammered home the lesson of Champaran that Satyagraha could be used in virtually any situation of conflict, by literate and illiterate. Satyagraha once again proved to be an effective weapon to organize the rural mass. In Gandhi’s own words: “Be the outcome in the Kheda District what it may, the officials and the people are having a good education. There has been a tremendous awakening among the people. It was disloyalty even to talk of non-payment of taxes, but now people speak of it without fear.”

It was these two movements that gave Gandhi an opportunity to test his political weapons in India and which gave him the confidence to organize movements of all India character. He expressed his views about these two struggles like this: “My experience in Kheda and Champaran teaches me this one lesson, that, if the leaders move among the people, live with them, eat and drink with them, a momentous change will come about in two years. Make a deep study of this struggle; understand the worth of the people of Kheda; give all help you can by way of sympathy and verbal support. We shall not be arrogant in seeking justice. We seek it

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27 Judith Brown, *op. cit.*, p.106
28 Letter to Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, *CWMG*, Vol.16, p.315
by awakening the Government to a sense of truth. The people will keep on fighting till they have secured justice.”

After becoming a leading political figure in the Indian political arena, Rowlatt Satyagraha was the first major movement organized by Gandhi on an all India scale. But this movement couldn’t arouse peasants on a large scale because the issue at stake was not directly related to the rural people and moreover, it was not a carefully planned movement.

It was the Non-cooperation movement of 1920-22 which actually gave all sections of Indian society an opportunity to fight for their grievances. The movement was clearly planned and non-violence was made a necessary pre-condition. In his blue-print for Non-cooperation Gandhi banned violence thus closing the door to the most obvious path of peasant participation. At the initial stages the educated Indians got the greatest opportunity for withdrawing co-operation. The point where peasants could pressurize the government was initially restricted. Even then the peasant participation in Non-cooperation was considerable when compared with the Rowlatt Satyagraha.

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29 CWMG, Vol.16, p.458
31 Judith Brown, ‘Gandhi…, op. cit., p.475
In Non-operation as planned and sanctioned by Gandhi and Congress there was considerable peasant participation. But the peasant movement during the Non-cooperation was largely independent of it. Gandhi himself stated that the kisan movement had received an impetus from Non-cooperation but was anterior to and independent of it. M.N. Roy criticizes the Non-cooperation "Neither was the On-cooperation programme any better adapted to the agrarian condition of the country. On the contrary, it was precisely on the agrarian issue that the reactionary basis of the Congress was revealed.

The discontent of Oudh peasants found its expression in the movement which was organized by the Kisan Sabhas during 1920-22. Baba Ram Chandra was a local leader tried to organize the peasants. In order to broaden the movement he decided to bring in Mahatma and other educated urban leaders. It was the work Gandhi done in Champaran.

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32 Ibid., p.475
35 In order to carryout the message of Home Rule in rural India and also to attract the peasants to the Home Rule Movement they founded the U.P. Kisan Sabha. Apart from this the peasants of Pratapgarh district initiated a Kisan Sabha through which they organized a mass movement. See Kapil Kumar, Peasants in Revolt: Tenants, Landlords, Congress and The Raj in Oudh1886-1922, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, p.71
36 Ibid., p.91
which inspired Baba Ram Chandra to invite him. In Crawley’s words: “to some extent Gandhi appeared a more credible leader for a peasant movement, particularly after his work in Champaran in 1917.38

The movement, started without any outside help, was associated with Gandhi’s name but ‘Gandhi himself eventually repudiated its aims and leadership’.39 Even though the movement was started independent of Non-cooperation, the Kisan Sabha adopted the Non-cooperation programme with its economic struggle.

During his visit to Oudh Gandhi addressed the peasants and gave some instructions to them. The most important among them are:40

1. We may not withhold taxes from the Government or rent from the landlord.

2. Should there by any grievances against zamindars they should be reported to Pandit Motilal Nehru and his advice followed.

3. It should be borne in mind that we want to turn zamindars into friends.

39 Ibid., P.95
40 Young India, 9-3-1921. CWMG, Vol.22, p.404
With the efforts of Baba Ram Chandra the movement of Oudh peasantry intermingled with the national movement led by the Congress. The peasants who participated in the movement indulged in activities which were against the instruction given to them by Gandhi. In fact, they were unaware of the Gandhian Programme. They only knew that Gandhi was a helper of the oppressed and they were anxious about their economic emancipation. Due to the violent activities of the peasants Gandhi avoided all direct contacts with the leaders of the Oudh Kisan Movement during his visit to these areas. Gandhi in his speech at Fyzabad condemned the violence of the peasantry. “Mr. Gandhi condemned violence most strongly and unequivocally, and said that he considered it a sin against God and man. He deprecated all attempt to create discord between landlords and tenants and advised the tenants to suffer rather than fight, for they had to join all forces for fighting against the most powerful zemindar, namely, the Government.

Gandhi was criticized for his attitude towards the Oudh peasantry. Gandhi was much concerned about peasant violence but he ignored the violence practiced by the landlords on their tenants over a long span of

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41 Kapil Kumar, Peasants..., p.120
42 Ibid., p.144
43 Ibid., p.160
44 The Leader, 13-2-1921. CWMG Vol.22, pp.336-37
time. The peasants understood Gandhian non-violence to mean only refraining from the use of violence against human life; the looting and burning of taluqdari godowns was not regarded as a violent action by the peasants. No landlord or his agent was killed or injured during the "crowd action" in Oudh. Thus, as far as the peasants' interpretation of non-violence was concerned, they were perfectly non-violent.\(^{45}\)

Bardoli Satyagraha was the next movement which was organized against the Government highhandedness. Bardoli clearly exposed "the strange way of the British Government in India in enhancing the assessment on land on the reports of irresponsible officers who have no one to control or check them."\(^{46}\) Arrangements were made in Bardoli to start Civil Disobedience Movement in 1922. Due to Chauri-Chaura incident it was cancelled. But the preparation made there politically educated the masses which later on enabled to organize the successful Bardoli Satyagraha and the movement was carried completely on Gandhian method. "Nevertheless, the leaders did not fail to understand the mood of the ryots and launched the famous Satyagraha of 1928 which was

\(^{45}\) Kapil Kumar, 'Peasants...', p.26  
\(^{46}\) Articles/Speeches by Jawaharlal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, (pre 1947) Part III, Sl. No. 25, NMML.
hailed as a model of Gandhian technique." The well advertised triumph of Bardoli peasants put heart into the Indian peasantry and evoked again their hopes of being able to successfully rise against the Government.

After the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation Movement Gandhi started his constructive programme through which he kept in contact with the masses. When in 1930 Civil Disobedience Movement was started Gandhi could array a wide range of masses behind him. "The first phase saw the high point of bourgeois participation in towns and controlled peasant mobilization on issues selected by the Gandhian leadership (salt, no-revenue, picketing of liquor shops, and non-payment of chaukidari tax) in villages." Even though "no rent" was not in the agenda it was later accepted because of the "pressures for no-rent were mounting as prices fell and the U.P. Congress had to reluctantly sanction it in October 1930".

The next important political struggle was the Quit India Movement of 1942. Comparing to all other movements it was in this movement the peasants played a central role. "During the 1942 August Revolution, it

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47 Sunil Sen, *Peasant Movements In India – Mid-Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, K.P. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1982, pp.32-33
48 N.G. Ranga and Swami Sahajanand Saraswathi, *op. cit.*, p.65
50 Ibid., p.296
was the Indian peasant who played the most heroic, dynamic and effective role. Students and urban middle classes too contributed much. But peasants excelled themselves. The 1942 movement demonstrated how Mahatma Gandhi’s faith in peasants has been fully justified and also how peasants have grown to be the principal revolutionary force in nation we owe all this to Mahatma Gandhi. We hail him as the father of our Modern Peasant Movement. They succeeded in establishing their rival Governments in certain areas. But it appeared that the Kisan Sabha had split up into factions. One of the factions had declared itself entirely against the policy of the Congress in regard to the Second World War. It was not open to any Congressmen to associate himself with any organization which deliberately flouts vital decisions of the Congress and runs down the Congress.

Gandhi really wanted to forge unity between all the classes of the Indian society against the common enemy. The class harmony he propagated against the British resulted in a ‘duality’ in Gandhi’s ideology and actions. “Gandhi treated British colonial interests as a distinctly non-
Indian category and so long as peasant interests were adversely and directly affected by the Government, Gandhi defended peasant interests with vigour. But when peasant interests were circumscribed by indigenous landed interests the Congress under Gandhi counseled mutual trust and understanding and compromised continuously in favour of Indian vested interests." He tried to seek a solution to the conflict between zamindars and kisans in a non-violent way by means of converting oppressor and being just and fair to oppressed.

The mobilization of peasantry was based on the principle of non-violent class struggle. Gandhi wanted to avoid the class struggle between the zamindars and peasants because he feared that "for the British it would be divide and rule, while for nationalist forces it would be divide and destroy." Crawley criticized Gandhi's method of resolving the class conflict. He wrote "...it was a Swaraj in which the tenant would still pay his rent and communal and class conflict latent in the agrarian agitation would be unresolved." Whenever there broke out any conflict between the peasantry and zamindars he tried to contain the movement and kept himself away from such movement.

55 Abha Pandya, op. cit., p.1077
56 Needless to say, here class struggle is not in a Marxism sense. It denotes a social group.
57 Ibid., p.80
58 W.F. Crawley, op. cit., p.108
Later Gandhi made certain changes in his attitude towards the peasant zamindar antagonism. It was due to the influence of the Congress Socialists on him. The change in his attitude was very much clear from the answers he had given to Louis Fischer's questions. The excerpts of the interview: 59

L.F. What would happen in a free India? What is your programme for the improvement of the lot of the peasantry?

G. The peasants would take the land. We would not have to tell them to take it. They would take it.

L.F. Would the landlords be compensated?

G. No. That would be fiscally impossible. You see, our gratitude to our millionaire friends does not prevent us from saying such things. The village would become a self-governing unit living its own life.

Two difficulties stood in the way of the Congress in laying down the broad outlines of an economic programme for the masses. One was the lack of uniformity of the land laws in various parts of the country and

59 CWMG, Vol.82, p.406
the other was the fear of many Congressmen lest they irritate and antagonize the powerful classes like the big capitalists and the landlords.60

Any movement which seeks to become a mass movement must necessarily have an economic programme for the masses. An appreciation of the fact that the only solid basis of a revolutionary movement is an economic programme of radical betterment of the masses led the Congress to make several vague, but none the less significant gestures which were meant to win over the masses. To some extent they succeeded in winning the sympathy of the people, but they did not translate themselves sufficiently into the day to day economic like of the people to give them to irresistible movement.

Some time in May or June 1928 the A.I.C.C. adopted a resolution in Bombay (at the instance of the U.P.P.C.C.) which dealt with the removal of all exploitation of workers and peasants. In October or November 1928 the outlines of an agrarian programme were discussed in the presidential address of the U.P. Provincial Conference at Jhansi by Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhiji’s eleven points were essentially parts of an economic programme and some of than dealt with the peasantry. They were written however from the view point of the Gujarat Peasantry and

60 Jawaharlal Nehru Papers (pre 1947), Sub. F. No. 50, NMvIL
laid stress on the reduction of land revenue by 50%. Congress did not do anything to irritate any group – Zamindar or Capitalist.61

It was argued that in reality Gandhi exercised a restraining influence on the revolutionary potentiality of the peasants.62 The pacifying influence of Gandhi on peasantry was considered as one of the weakness of Indian peasant movements.63 More over, Kapil Kumar criticizes Gandhi for not taking into consideration the humiliation and exploitation of the peasantry. In his view Gandhi was influenced more by the landlords’ interest than by the plight of the peasants.64

What ever be the criticisms it was Gandhi who for the first time tried to mobilize the peasantry in a big way and make them participate in the national movement. True, the All – India Peasants Congress had come to knit all the peasants together under the aegis of a National Congress which laid the foundations for the growth of the new consciousness and familiarized the peasants with the potent idea of their national unity.65 His concepts and ideas of the political struggle were capable of moving the

61 Agrarian Movement in U.P. and the Oudh Rent Amendment Act, 1931, Jawaharlal Nehru Papers, Part III, Sub. F. No. 50
62 Kapil Kumar, ‘Peasants’…, p.19
64 Kapil Kumar, ‘Peasants’…, p.25
65 N.G. Ranga, ‘Indian…, p.84
peasantry. "Certainly the Gandhi ideal of non-violence, firmly linked up with the religious beliefs of the peasantry, contributed to the development of a mass struggle for emancipation and helped to draw the peasantry."  

Ulyanovsky considers that Gandhi and Gandhism were a strong connecting link between the national bourgeoisie and the broad masses of the peasantry. Gandhi with his unique method of struggle mobilized the peasantry of rural India who were the bulk of the population thus giving the national movement a true national character.

B) GANDHI AND LABOURERS:

The working class in India constituted only a small part of the total population. Modern industries began to develop in India only during the second half of the 19th century. The industrial development took place in the field of cotton and jute. The important industries were the textile industries of Bombay, Kanpur and Nagpur and the jute industry of Bengal. The working class of these industries and the railway employees constituted the major share of the working class. But the workers of these industries were not organized on modern lines.

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67 Ibid., p.9
68 The numerical strength of the industrial workers remained insignificant and moreover they were semi-proletariat in the sense that they were not completely
The first labour organization to be formed in India was the Bombay Millhands’ Association which was established by Lokhanday in 1890. A number of Unions came into existence after that. But the first organization on the lines of a modern trade union was the Madras Labour Union which formed at the behest of B.P. Wadia in the year 1918.

Most of the earlier organizations were established by the ‘outsiders’. And they established it out of humanitarian considerations. The ignorant, illiterate workers were not in a position to take upon themselves the task of organization. These ‘trade Unions’ ‘were not as organic growth out of the working class’.

Indian National Congress, being middle class organization, was not much interested in the struggles of industrial workers during the early years. Situation changed after the partition of Bengal in 1905 and with the

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69 Harold Crouch, *Indian working Class*, Sachin Publication, Ajmer, 1979, p.58. Chamanlal Revri refuted the assertion that Bombay Mill-hand, Association as the first labour Organization on the basis that it had no organized body, no roll of membership, no funds and no rules and moreover it had hardly any influence over the masses Chamanlal Revri, op. cit, p. 34.


71 Harold Crouch, op. cit., p.58.
emergence of Tilak as a leader. The mass base of the Congress now
widened. When Tilak was sentenced to a term of eight years in jail in
1908, the textile workers of Bombay went on a strike for about a week.\(^\text{72}\)
This was one of the first occasions that the workers were drawn into
nationalist politics.\(^\text{73}\)

The First World War marked a remarkable change in the character
of the Indian Working Class. Economic conditions of the workers became
worse during the years of war due to the rise in prices. With the entrance
of Mahatma Gandhi the national movement spread far and wide and the
workers in the cities were drawn into the movement. The soldiers' who
had been to Europe during the war, brought with them the ideas of racial
equality and aspiration for a better life. These ideas and aspiration which
spread in cities and villages affected the outlook of many workers.\(^\text{74}\)

It was the middle class leaders who organized the workers. Most of
them did out of humanitarian consideration. The Congress leaders took
interest in the working class question only to widen the mass base of the
movement. And often they subordinated the social conflicts to the

\(^{72}\) V.B. Karnik, \textit{op. cit.}, p.11.

\(^{73}\) Harold Crouch, \textit{op. cit.}, p.59.

\(^{74}\) For detailed description of the factors which helped the growth and development of
Trade Unions see, V.B. Karnik, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.28-30.
political objective. They never became full time working class leaders. It was also true in the case of Gandhi also. Gandhi who became the prominent leader of the congress also followed the basic attitude of the Congress in the working class question.

Workers movement in Ahmedabad Textiles Industry was the first instance in which Gandhi came in contact with the working class of India. In contrast to the earlier movements which he organized against the imperialists this was against the indigenous capitalist class. Gandhi, who became a powerful leader after the successful Satyagrahas of Champaram and Kheda, was contacted by Ansuya Sarabhai, sister of Ambalal Sarabhai and a social worker working in the working class districts of Ahmedabad. Gandhi was involved in the Kheda Satyagraha at that time. So he dismissed the suggestion of Ansuya Sarabhai to organize the workers movement. But after the Kheda dispute was settled Gandhi took up the issue at the behest of Ambalal Sarabhai, the mill owner and the Collector of Ahmedabad.75

The dispute at Ahmedabad started when the mill owners announced in January 1918 the withdrawal of the 'plague bonus' which

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had been granted to the workers during the previous year following the outbreak of an epidemic. But the workers protested against this and demanded a 50% increase in their wages. But Gandhi after studying the situation advised the weavers to demand only 35% increase instead of 50%. 76 "As in Kaira, so in Ahmedabad, Gandhi prepared a pledge for the satyagrahis, the Ahmedabad pledge stating that they would not resume work without a 35% increase and that they would remain law-abiding during the lock-out. This was the anchor of the Satyagraha, but its strength depended on the daily mass meetings Gandhi began to hold for the weavers, at which he gave a daily discourse and issued a series of leaflets 77 on the situation. 78

The workers have resolved:

(1) that they will not resume work until a 35 per cent increase on the July wages is secured;

(2) that they will not, during the period of the lock-out, cause any disturbance or resort to violence or indulge in looting, nor damage any property of the employers for abuse anyone, but will remain peaceful. 79

76 Judith Brown, Gandhi's..., p.116.
77 There were all together 17 leaflets of which one was written by Shankarlal Banker and the rest by Gandhi. CWMG, Vol.16, Leaflet Nos.1-17, pp. 285-348.
78 Judith Brown, Gandhi's..., pp.116-117.
But mill owners were not ready to concede their demand. "It is in this context that Gandhi first introduced the concept of arbitration."\(^{80}\) As days went the movement organized by Gandhi began to decline. The number of workers who enthusiastically participated in the mass meetings organized by Gandhi began to decline. "Clearly, Gandhi had lost his hold over the workers".\(^{81}\) When Gandhi became aware of the fact that the workers were moving away from him and his movement is going to decline "Gandhi declared a general strike and shifted his meetings to the mornings to prevent the workers from breaking the strike.\(^{82}\) When Gandhi found that this also couldn't make much difference in the attitude of the workers and they were going back to the mills 'Gandhi announced his intention of fasting until a settlement was reached or all the workers left the mills.\(^{83}\) The purpose of the fast was defined in the leaflet no.15 issued on March 16, 1918. This leaflet was self explanatory about the ideas and aims of the fast. The contents of the leaflet No.15 follows:

"It is necessary to understand the motive and significance of Gandhiji's vow to fast. The first thing to remember is that this is not intended to influence the

\(^{81}\) Ibid., p. 854.
\(^{82}\) Ibid., p.854.
employers. If the fast were conceived in that spirit, it would harm our struggle and bring us dishonour. We want justice from the employers, not pity for us. If there is to be any pity, let it be for the workers. We believe that it is but the employers' duty to have pity for the workers. But we shall be ridiculed if we accept 35 per cent granted out of pity for Gandhiji. Workers cannot accept it on that basis. If Gandhiji exploited relations with the employers or the people in general in this manner, he would be misusing his position and would lose his good name. What connection could there possibly be between Gandhiji's fast and the issue of workers' wages? Even if fifty persons resolve to starve themselves to death on the employers' premises, how can the employers, for that reason, give the workers a 35 per cent increase if they have no right to it? If this becomes a common practice for securing right, it would be impossible to carry on the affairs of society. Employers cannot and need not pay attention to this fast of Gandhiji, though it is impossible that Gandhiji's action will have no effect on them.
We shall be sorry to the extent the employers are influenced by this action. But, at the same time, we cannot sacrifice other far-reaching results that the fast may possibly bring about. Let us examine the purpose for which the fast has been undertaken. Gandhiji saw that the oath was losing its force with the workers. Some of them were ready to break their pledge out of fear of what they thought would be starvation. It is intolerable that ten thousand men should give up their oath. A man becomes weak by not keeping a vow and ultimately loses his dignity as man. It is, therefore, our duty to do our utmost to help the workers to keep their oath. Gandhiji felt that, if he fasted, he would show through this how much he himself valued a pledge. Moreover, the workers talked of starvation. ‘Starve but keep your oath’ was Gandhiji’s message to them. He at any rate must live up to it. That he could do only if he himself was prepared to die fasting. Besides, workers said they would not do manual labour, but said, all the same, they stood in need of financial help. This seemed a terrible thing. If the workers took up such an attitude, there would be utter chaos in the country. There was only one way in
which Gandhiji could effectively teach the people to submit
to the hardships of physical labour and this was that he
himself should suffer. He did manual work, of course, but
that was not enough. A fast, he thought, would serve many
purposes, and so commenced one. He would break it only
when the workers got 35 percent (increase in wages) or if
they simply repudiated their pledge. The result was as
expected. Those who were present when he took the vow
saw this well enough. The workers were roused; they
started manual labour and were saved from betraying what
was for them a matter of religion. The workers have now
realized that they will secure justice at the hands of the
employers only if they remain firm in their oath. Gandhiji’s
fast has buoyed them up. But they must rely on their own
strength to fight. They alone can save themselves.\textsuperscript{84}

A settlement was reached in the morning of March 18.\textsuperscript{85} “The mill
owners decided to send the issue to the arbitration board of Anandshankar
Dhruv. Meanwhile, at Gandhi’s insistence, the workers were paid a 35 per
cent increase on the first day, 20 percent on the second, and the mean of

\textsuperscript{84} CWMG, Vol.16, p.337-38.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 337.
the two 27.5 per cent for the rest, to prove that neither party had finally won. Sujata Patel says that “While the mill owners were completely taken aback by the strength of organization and continuity of purpose shown by the workers, some of them, specifically Ambalal Sarabhai, were worried about the implications of the working class mobilization on the hitherto elite-oriented politics of the city. They were sure however, that they had won the first round of struggle. It was only the moment that made them yield and agree to the establishment of the arbitration board of Anandshankar Dhruv in 1918. Also, the industry was making high profits and the workers held the key to this prosperity. By the reasoning of some of the mill owners led by Sarabhai, if Gandhi held the loyalty of the workers, then they should come to an understanding with Gandhi. A 35 per cent increase was indeed “a small matter” if an alliance with him could guarantee a strike moratorium. In Sujata Patel’s opinion the Gandhian method of solving the dispute between the capitalists and the working class benefited the capitalist and not the working class. Chandavarkar also enjoyed a similar view when he said that “the mill

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86 Sujata patel, op. cit., p.854
87 Ibid., p. 854.
owners, like local officials, recognized as early as 1918 that Gandhi’s charisma might serve to restrain the working classes.\textsuperscript{88}

After the Ahmedabad mill strike Gandhi never tried to interfere in the question of the working class and he tried to confine his trade union activities within Ahmedabad and that too in a restricted manner. “In the Ahmedabad strike Gandhi had seemed to be rising as a champion of the Left. Actually it stopped him from becoming so. To make a policy of leading one section of Indians against another – even against the pernicious pupils of western capitalism – would have meant too sharp a rupture with his habits of mind. Instead he devoted himself to national rebirth and tried to infuse it with his own spirit. He never engaged so deeply again in the battles of industry. But he did not desert the workers of Ahmedabad.”\textsuperscript{89} The Marxist writers criticized Gandhi by saying that he organized the movement in such a way as to protect the interest of the bourgeoisie. E.M.S. points out that “the way in which he led this struggle and gradually evolved what is commonly known as “Gandhian trade unionism” is of great importance in the evolution of our national movement, in the evolution of bourgeois leadership over the working-

\textsuperscript{88} Rajanarayan Chandavarkar, Imperial and Popular Politics, Class, Resistance and the State in India, c.1850-1950, Cambridge University Press,1998,p.303

\textsuperscript{89} Geoffrey Ashe, Gandhi – A Study in Revolution, Asia Publishing House, Bombay,1968, p.171
In the words of Irfan Habib, “It seems, however, that despite this first use of fast as a weapon, the Ahmedabad success had no important sequel in trade unionism; his anxiety not to hurt that Indian mill-owners’ interests unduly always inhibited any support to militant working-class action.” But Gandhian method “has resulted in good relations between the textile workers and mill owners of Ahmedabad.”

In the leaflet which was issued on March 19, 1918 Gandhi laid down his own ideas about the employer-employee relationship. It was through the leaflets that he issued during the Ahmedabad Mill Hand’s strike he put forward his ideal of industrial relations and the methods through which and industrial dispute should be solved. Gandhi believed that an objectively correct wage could be determined. He insisted the workers that only ‘truthful’ claims should be made. The wage demand should be made on the basis of the financial condition of the employer and of the industry as a whole. But once it is decided it should be an uncompromisable objective. Then both the parties should convince each other of their claims. And they should appoint a respected arbitrator. If the employers refused to accept the arbitration, the workers had to go on

90 E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism*, People’s Publishing House, New Delhi, 1958, p.21
91 Irfan Habib, ‘Gandhiji’, *Addressing Gandhi (125 years of Mahatma Gandhi)*, Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, New Delhi, 1995, p.13
92 J.B. Kripalani, *op. cit.*, p.78
strike which would continue until their demands were met. In Gandhi’s view a strike was justified only if other means of settlement had failed.

The system of dispute settlement through arbitration was considered as the main contribution of Gandhi to industrial relations. But it had its own disadvantages also. According to Chandavarkar “arbitration proceedings, which appeared equitable in theory, were quite the opposite in practice, for they tended to favour the stronger side in any dispute – which for the most part meant the employers.93

Labour and Capital:

Gandhi believed that “in the struggle between capital and labour it may be generally said that more often than not the capitalists are in the wrong. But when labour comes fully to realize its strength, I know it can become more tyrannical than capital. The mill-owners will have to work on the terms dictated by labour if the latter could command intelligence of the former. It is clear, however, that labour will never attain to that intelligence. If it does, labour will cease to be labour and become itself the master. The capitalists do not fight on the strength of money alone. They

93 Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, op. cit p.284
do posses intelligence and tact. He believed in reality class war was one between intelligence and unintelligence. The solution he recommended to better the conditions of labour were:

(1) The hours of labour must leave the workmen some hours of leisure.

(2) They must get facilities for their own education.

(3) Provision should be made for an adequate supply of milk, clothing and necessary education for their children.

(4) There should be sanitary dwellings for the workmen.

(5) They should be in a position to save enough to maintain themselves during their old age.

In order to settle the disputes between the capitalists and the workers Gandhi advised the traditional method of settlement and along with that he supported the organization of Labour Unions. In his words:

"Strikes, cessation of work and hartal are wonderful things no doubt, but

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95 Ibid., p.387.
96 The method of arbitration is considered as 'indigenous' and sometimes as uniquely Indian. In the words of Harold Crouch: Infact the Gandhian approach is not distinguished from the western approach by this concept which of course is quite compatible with the western approach. The differences go much deeper and concern attitudes more than the formal machinery of settlement. A western trade unionism would be quite prepared to accept voluntary arbitration if, in the circumstances, he thought it would lead to higher wages or better conditions, but he would be equally prepared to use other tactics if the circumstances were different. Although in practice Gandhian trade unionists do use other methods, they tend to believe that voluntary arbitration is somehow superior. The western trade unionist is concerned with results. The Gandhian is concerned with means and ideally would be prepared to sacrifice results if the means were not entirely pure. Harold Crouch, op. cit., p.110.
it is not difficult to abuse them. Workmen ought to organize themselves into strong Labour Unions, and on no account shall they strike work without the consent of these Unions. Strikes should not be risked without previous negotiations with the mill-owners. If the mill-owners resort to arbitration the principle of *panchayat*\(^7\) should be accepted. And once the *panch* are appointed, their decision must be accepted by both the parties alike, whether they like it or not.\(^8\) But when Anasuyabehn made preparation to found a union Gandhi's advise to her was that “it was responsible work and that, though we may have taken it up with the idea of serving the workers, if later we failed to shoulder the responsibility adequately we might, instead of serving the workers, do them much harm”.\(^9\) In his speech at the meeting of Mill Hands, Ahmedabad, on February 25, 1920\(^10\) he clearly stated that “to those of you who believe that the unions we are establishing are for the purpose of fighting or coercing the mill-owners or that we shall be able to use these unions for such purpose, I would advise not to join the proposed union at all. I have never done anything in my life to coerce owners or harm their interests,

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\(^7\) The traditional Indian practice of getting local disputes settled by the *panch*, a permanent committee of five elders chosen by members of the community.

\(^8\) *CWMG*, Vol. 19, p.388.

\(^9\) *CWMG*, Vol. 19, p.420

\(^10\) This was the meeting in which the workers of the spinning departments of various mills had met to consider the formation of a labour Union, to approve its rules and adopt the necessary solutions.
and I will never allow myself to be an instrument in this. Only, if they try to suppress the workers, I will be ready to gave up my life to save them. By establishing unions, we do not wish to intimidate the mill-owners but to protect the workers, and we certainly have the right to do this.\textsuperscript{101} In a speech on Rights and Duties of Labour, Madras on August 15, 1920 Gandhi said that 'A nation may do without its millionaires, without its capitalists, but a nation can never do without its labour'\textsuperscript{102} as labour becomes organized, strikes must becomes few and far between and as your mental development progresses further you will find immediately that the principle of arbitration replaces the principle of strikes.\textsuperscript{102} His advice to the strike leaders were:

(1) There should be no strike without a real grievance.

(2) There should be no strike, if the persons concerned are not able to support themselves out of their own savings or by engaging in some temporary occupation, such as carding, spinning and weaving Strikers should never depend upon public subscriptions or other charity.

(3) Strikers must fix an unalterable minimum demand and declare it before embarking upon their strike.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} CWMG, Vol. 19, p.422.
\textsuperscript{102} CWMG, vol. 21, pp.167-170,
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., vol.24, p.285.
In an interview to “The Bombay Chronicle” when Gandhi was asked to further his own independent ways of organizing labour he replied that: “I want real co-operation between labour and capital. I shall convince the labourers that in many things they are to blame themselves instead of blaming the capitalists. As in the political so in the labour movement, I rely upon internal reform, i.e., self-purification. Such reform will command equitable treatment from employers. Throughout my experience both in South Africa and India, I have always laid the greatest stress on the principle that labourers must evolve strength from within. Then capital will become a real servant of labor. I seek to achieve co-operation between capital and labour, in the same way as I seek to bring co-operation between India and England. 104 Gandhian hold on the Ahmedabad workers was consolidated through the Textile Labour Association of 1920. 105 According to J.B. Kripalani “In India today there is no union better organized and more financially stable than the Ahmedabad Mill Mazdoor Union. None has more real and paying membership. None has again more institutions attached to it in the shape of crutches, day and night schools for children and adults, boarding

105 Sumit Sarkar, op.cit., p.186
houses, Harijan institutions, cooperative stores and the rest.”

But the view of the Marxist historians was in contrast to this view. They criticized Gandhi for curbing the revolutionary spirit of the workers and thereby placing bourgeoisie in a dominant position. According to E.M.S., “This was, of course, not the first time that Gandhiji resorted to a fast. This, however, was the first time that he resorted to it in order to check the militancy of the fighting people. It has added significance in that he was using it, not in relation to a movement in which all classes were participants, but in a working-class struggle. His success in this experiment was an invaluable lesson for the class of which he was the representative, the bourgeoisie. It showed them that here was a technique of struggle which could at once rally the masses and keep them away from militant action.” And some of them consider this as a factor which confined the Gandhian trade unionism within Ahmedabad. In the words of Sumit Sarkar, “It is significant, however, that this Gandhian model, which rejected not only politicization along 'class-war' line but also militant economic struggles, never spread beyond Ahmedabad. Gandhi himself, unlike many other nationalist leaders, kept strictly aloof from the AITUC right from the beginning, long before the Communists became

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107 E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *op. cit.*, p.22
important within it." But Gandhi was of the opinion that the situation was not yet ripe for the organization of the labourers as whole. It becomes very clear from his own words that he organized the Ahmedabad mill workers on an experimental basis. Gandhi in one of his letters to Shapurji Saklatvala replied that "...do not think that my labour work unlike khaddar work is merely confined to Ahmedabad. If labour elsewhere will accept my guidance, I would certainly organize it all over. But I am content with guiding Ahmedabad and hope that if Ahmedabad proves successful, it will be copied by the whole of India."  

As against the view of the Marxists that Gandhi was trying to control the workers, Chandavarkar points out that within Gandhi's account there was a possibility that once the worker became aware of his strength and attain the 'intelligence and tact' of the capitalists they would be in a position to demand to own capital that they had helped to create. So what Gandhi aimed was the greater empowerment of the workers. But this was overlooked by the Marxist critics. The subordinate position that the working class question got in the ideology of Gandhi led them to believe that Gandhi as a spokesperson of bourgeoisie. It was serious error

108 Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p.186  
109 CWMG, Vol.39, p.302  
110 Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, op. cit., p.287
made by his critics that they failed in contextualising the working class-capitalist conflict in the wider political context.

C) GANDHI AND THE LEFT:

Withdrawal of the Non-cooperation Movement disillusioned many who had enthusiastically participated in it. Simultaneously, socialist principles also started gaining momentum in India. After 1923, several socialist forces came into existence. Communist Party of India as a party based on Marxist ideology was formed in 1925. They asked its members to enroll themselves as the members of the Congress and work within the Congress and form a strong leftwing within the Congress. They were of the opinion that the failure of the Non Cooperation movement was due to the lack of support of workers\(^{111}\). So they tried to organize workers and peasants. Their motto was “No life without Swaraj and No Swaraj without workers.”\(^{112}\) Up to 1928 Indian communist groups on the whole tried to work in the nationalist mainstream even while sharply criticizing the Congress leadership for its many compromises with imperialism.

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\(^{111}\) President’s address during the first Indian Communist Conference, in 1925, *First Indian Communist Conference Papers – 1925*, NMML, New Delhi.

\(^{112}\) *Ibid.*
The influence of communism over the national movement was checked during 1929 by the government's policy of repression and also due to the sectarian policy followed by the communists and they themselves stayed away from Congress by declaring it as a class party of the bourgeoisie\textsuperscript{113}. Communist Party of India considered the "left" element in the Indian National Congress - Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose etc., as the most dangerous obstacle to the victory of the revolution and that a ruthless war must be waged on the left national reformists\textsuperscript{114}. The Ultra-leftism of early 1930s resulted in splitting the CPI into mutually hostile groups and general isolation from the nationalist mainstream. The Comintern dismissed Civil Disobedience Movement as an "operational manoeuvre" forced on a reluctant Congress by the "pressure of the masses"\textsuperscript{115} But most of the communist participated actively in Civil-Disobedience Movement\textsuperscript{116}. After the withdrawal of the movement many young persons who participated in it or in Revolutionary terrorist

\textsuperscript{113} Bipan Chandra, et.al, \textit{India's Struggle for Independence}, Penguin Books, New Delhi, p.302
\textsuperscript{114} 'India and Communism' compiled in the Intelligence Bureau, Home Department, Government of India, 1933. \textit{History of Freedom Movement Papers, B37/3, NAI}
\textsuperscript{116} Soli Batliwala, a Parsee member of the leading committee, told Victor Kiernan that during Civil Disobedience some Communist like himself had rubbed shoulders in jail with Congressmen, and a sort of 'Old prison tie' freemasonry had emerged. Victor Kiernan, 'The Communist Party of India and the Second World War – Some Reminiscences, 1987' Typescript, Acc. No. 1132, NMML, New Delhi.
organizations were attracted by Socialism and Marxism and they joined the C.P.I after 1934. The model of Soviet Union, unaffected by world economic depression and achieving progress through centralized planning, also attracted them towards Communism. But the government declared CPI illegal in 1934\textsuperscript{117} and it remained illegal up to 1942. From 1935 onwards, as a part of their United Front Policy CPI started working in the Congress and CSP.\textsuperscript{118}

Nehru, who was influenced by socialist ideas, gave the Congress a left direction. Subhas Chandra Bose also stood for a leftward direction of the Congress. Both of them formed the Independence of India League in 1928. The League operated as pressure group within the nationalist movement.\textsuperscript{119} In 1929, Nehru became the President of the Congress,

\textsuperscript{117} On the 23\textsuperscript{rd} July 1934 the Government of India declared the Communist Party of India, its Committees and Branches to be unlawful associations under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908. \textit{AICC File No.16/1935}

\textsuperscript{118} "..... in 1936 Communists in India became more friendly to the Congress, exhorted people to join it, and tried to enter its local executives. From then onwards till the middle of 1939 that is for a little over three years, there was often much friction between the Communists and other elements in the Congress, but on the whole they functioned together and no major crisis arose. In particular, the stress by Communists on violent methods was in conflict with the Congress policy of peaceful action. But in practice this did not usually lead to conflict in action, except occasionally in local areas." \textit{AICC files P-1, P-3, P-4/1945, NMML, New Delhi.}

\textsuperscript{119} At the end of the year 1928, when the annual session of the Congress was held in Calcutta, Mahatma Gandhi moved a resolution putting forward a national demand on the basis of Dominion Status. This was opposed by Bose, who pressed for a national demand on the basis of full independence. Though the latter was defeated by 900 votes to 1400, it was clear that the "independence school" in the Congress was by no means negligible. 'Azad Hind', \textit{History of Freedom Movement Papers, B4/3, NAI}
which adopted the resolution of ‘Purna Swaraj’. It was Gandhi who insisted on making. Jawaharlal Nehru president of the Congress so that he could extend his hegemony over potentially divisive and rebellious forces.\textsuperscript{120} Some of the Socialists viewed Nehru’s acceptance of President ship as a loss to the socialist cause. V. Chattopadhyaya wrote to Nehru “What we feared seems to have happened. When the cunning Mahatmaji proposed your name for the Presidency of the Congress, it was obvious that it was a move to kill you and opposition…….In your present position of President elected on the initiative of Gandhi, your hands will be completely tied and any action that you might have otherwise taken as a leader of the independence movement will be paralyzed by the very necessity of having to remain impartial inside the Congress.”\textsuperscript{121} But this fear appeared to be unwarranted at least in the period immediately following his accession. In the presidential address Nehru attacked Gandhi’s pet ‘trusteeship’ solution for zamindar – peasant and capital – labour conflicts.\textsuperscript{122}

Gandhi suspended the Civil-Disobedience Movement and replaced it by the constructive programme and also supported the council – entry

\textsuperscript{120} Sumit Sarkar, \textit{op. cit.}, p.282
\textsuperscript{122} Sumit Sarkar, \textit{op. cit.}, p.283
programme of the Swarajists. The leftists considered that it would sidetrack the basic issue of struggle against colonial rule. Instead they want to continue the Civil disobedience movement. Subhas Bose and Vithal Bhai Patel issued a statement from Europe repudiating Gandhi’s leadership. M.N.Roy contended that “The Civil Disobedience campaign has failed under the burden of its own contradiction. It will fail again and again, unless it is freed from the cult of non-violence. But as soon as the Congress will throw off the paralyzing ballast of Gandhian ideology, it will find innumerable channels of mass activity open before it.” Nehru considered it as a ‘spiritual defeat’ and a surrender of ideals, a retreat from the revolutionary to the reformist mentality, and a going back to the pre-1919 moderate phase. He also attacked the notion of winning freedom through stages. To Gandhi’s strategy of struggle - truce - struggle, he counter posed the strategy of struggle - victory or the permanent waging of mass struggle till independence was won. Even though Nehru

123 The All India Swaraj Party had been revised in order to enable the Congressmen, who were not offering individual civil resistance. AICC file no. G-21/1933
124 Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p. 331
126 Bipan Chandra, et. al., op. cit., p. 312. Later not only he accepted Gandhi’s decision but also criticized the leftists for criticizing Gandhi. “It was little irritating to find people, who did little themselves, criticize others who had shouldered the burden in the heat and dust of the fray, as reactionaries. These parlour socialists are especially hard on Gandhiji as a arch reactionary, and advance arguments which in logic, leave little to be desired.” Nehru, An Autobiography, (11th impression), Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, New Delhi, 1997, p.406
127 Bipan Chandra, et. al., op. cit., p.314
pointed out the inadequacy of the existing nationalist ideology and stressed the need to inculcate a new, socialist or Marxist ideology. He did not approve of the moves being made then to start a separate socialist party.

A group of young Congressmen who were disenchanted with the Gandhian strategy and leadership and attracted by the socialist ideology but were not in agreement with the prevalent political line of Communist Party of India tried to work out for an alternative strategy and formed Congress Socialist Party in 1934 under the leadership of Jaya Parkash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Dev and Minoo Masani. Ambiguities were there from the beginning, for the CSP wanted to remain within the Congress, but was sharply opposed to its leadership and ready to cooperate with non-Congress Leftist groups.

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128 Ibid., p.313
129 Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p. 332
130 They declared their task in the Meerut Thesis thus: “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. For this it is necessary to wean the anti-imperialist elements in the Congress away from its present bourgeois leadership and to bring them under the leadership of revolutionary socialism”. This task was adopted in the Meerut session on 20 Jan. 1936. Rai Akhilendra Prasad, Socialist Thought in Modern India, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1974, p.277, Minoo Masani, Bliss Was It In That Dawn, New Delhi, 1977, pp.43-47
131 Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p.332. CSP’s decision to function “simultaneously as the Left wing of the Congress and as a Marxist Socialist Party are responsible to a large extent firstly for the delay in the crystallization of the left wing and secondly for confusion regarding its aims and tasks”. V.B. Karnik, ‘The Right and the Left’, Independent India, 8th March, 1939, p.147
In Sampurnanand’s Thesis it was said that “if we are to function usefully as a Party, we must, while concentrating on the organization of Labour and the Peasantry, leave no stone unturned to expose the follies and reactionary policies of the Congress High Command, without deliberately irritating the rank and file. Comrade Jayaprakash is right enough in saying that the Congress should not be split up into socialists and anti-socialists but this is hardly avoidable, now that we are no longer a diffused group but a well organized party. This kind of behaviour on our part will either bring down upon us outlawry from the government or the Congress.”

Ideologically it was Nehru who “prepared the ground for the emergence of the forces of contending hegemony inside the Congress.”

But Nehru refrained from joining the Socialists. “This was largely due to the Gandhi’s skill in handling Nehru and to the latter’s devotion to the nationalist cause above all other considerations” But it was above all Nehru’s understanding of the situation and his unwillingness to disrupt

134 John Patrick Haithcox, op. cit., p.240. Nehru wrote in his autobiography “Gandhiji had stated that there were temperamental differences between us. They were perhaps more that temperamental, and I realized that I held clear and definite views about many matters which were opposed to his. And yet in the past I had tried to sub ordinate them.”- Jawaharlal Nehru, op. cit., p.507
nationalist unity which made him to refrain from Socialists. He was convinced that the left could not provide an alternative either to Gandhi's leadership or methods and that only Gandhi could hold together the disparate groups, which together comprised the Congress, and only tactics based on non-violence offered any prospect of success.

Gandhi welcomed the formation of Congress Socialist Party. Even while welcoming the formation of the Congress Socialist Party Gandhi made it clear that he had some fundamental differences with them on the programme published in their authorized pamphlets.\(^{135}\) He really had some basic ideological differences with the party, the most fundamental being his view that they were not pledged to non-violence.\(^{136}\) Gandhiji had said that while disapproving of the methods of the socialists he approves of their aims.\(^{137}\) The qualified welcome of CSP by Gandhi really made some of the Socialist leaders angry. Kamla Shankar Pandya said that "under the pretext of benevolent mentality and advice, the whole programme and the Socialist Party is sought to be ridiculed and prejudiced before the public."\(^{138}\)

\(^{135}\) *CWMG*, vol. 65, p.6, statement to the press September 17, 1934.
\(^{137}\) P. Spratt, 'The History of Non-Violence', in *The Indian Review*, vol.XL, no.1 January, 1939,p.18
\(^{138}\) Kamla Shankar Pandya quoted in K.C.Mahendru, *Gandhi...,* p.29
Gandhi disapproved the frequent and unwarranted attack on the Congress Executive and its programme by the Congress Socialists. Gandhi told them plainly that “they should either be prepared to abide by the Congress decision without attempting to create unnecessary splits in Congress ranks or take over charge of the Congress machinery including its executive. He and other members of the executive were prepared to hand over control and make room for them if they so desires.”\textsuperscript{139} And later he made it clear that “If they gain ascendancy in the Congress, as they well may, I cannot remain in the Congress. For me to be in active opposition should be unthinkable. Though I have identified myself with many organizations during a long period of public service I have never accepted that position.”\textsuperscript{140}

After the withdrawal of Civil Disobedience Movement sharp difference of opinion started among the leftists and Swarajists within Congress. To avoid a split Gandhi supported the council-entry programme of Swarajists and also succeeded in convincing Nehru and the leftists that the withdrawal of the civil disobedience was dictated by the reality of the political situation.\textsuperscript{141} That only civil disobedience had been discontinued,

\textsuperscript{139} Discussion with Socialists’ Deputation, July 27, 1934. CWMG Vol. 64, p.237
\textsuperscript{140} CWMG, Vol. 65, p.6
\textsuperscript{141} The Hindu reported that Civil Disobedience “has outlived its usefulness as a
the war continued.\textsuperscript{142} More over, Gandhi championed Nehru for President in both 1936 and 1937 by overcoming considerable opposition from the right wing leaders. Gandhi felt that Nehru’s elevation to the presidency would serve to wean him from the socialists and he assured his colleagues that if placed at the helm, Nehru would act responsibly and impartially in response to majority opinion among party leaders.\textsuperscript{143} Gandhi’s move irritated some of the Socialists especially when he backed Nehru second time for the Presidentship. M.R.Masani lamented that Nehru’s acceptance has deprived the Congress Socialist Party “of its natural leader, who was so well fitted to lead it, to rally the radical forces.”\textsuperscript{144}

By 1935 most of the left groups joined the Congress. Despite their ideological and organizational differences the CPI, CSP, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and other Left groups and leaders all shared a common political programme which enabled them to work together after 1935 and make socialism a strong current in Indian politics. M.N.Roy also joined the Congress after his release from jail in 1936 and stressed the usefulness of the National Congress as an instrument in the struggle. He

\textsuperscript{142} Bipan Chandra, et. al., \textit{op. cit.}, pp.314-315
\textsuperscript{143} John Patrick Haithcox, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.240-241
\textsuperscript{144} M.R.Masani quoted in \textit{Ibid.}, p.241
also argued that National Congress was a movement embracing a variety of classes and sub-classes. It was not the political party only of the bourgeoisie as regarded by the official Communists. All of them formed a strong left wing within the Congress. The stage has thus been set for a major confrontation between Right and Left within the national movement.

In 1935 the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act of 1935. The Government thought of using the reforms in the Act to promote dissensions and a split within the Congress ranks on the basis of constitutionalist vs. non-constitutionalist and Right vs. Left.

Sharp difference of opinion started when Government announced election to provincial legislatures in 1937. Nehru, Subhas Bose, Socialists and Communists were against office acceptance. But the counter-strategy that Nehru and leftists recommended was to enter the assemblies with a view to creating deadlocks and making the working of the Act impossible. Even though Gandhi opposed office acceptance he decided to

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146 Ibid., p.319
give a trial to the formation of Congress ministries especially the overwhelming mood of the party favoured this course.¹⁴⁷

Congress won a majority of seats in the election. The election tour and election results heartened Nehru, lifted him from the slough of despondency, and made him reconcile to the dominant strategy of S-T-S.¹⁴⁸

By early September 1938 Gandhi took an uncompromising attitude towards the left wing. Z.A.Ahmed of the Economics Department, AICC, and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Secretary, Foreign Department, of the AICC were forced by the working committee to resign their posts on the basis of a newly established policy that active socialists were to be excluded from the AICC Secretariat.¹⁴⁹ A day after the resignation Gandhi wrote in the Harijan that in order to “preserve the purity of the Organization” all those who did not believe “in the necessity for observing truth and non-violence as condition of attainment of Swaraj...should automatically cease to belong to the Congress”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp.321-322
¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p.322
¹⁴⁹ John Patrick Haithcox, op. cit., p.279
¹⁵⁰ CWMG, Vol.73., p.434
In late September 1938, Gandhi came to the Delhi AICC meeting with a number of proposals which were intended to purify the Congress. He offered the resolution on civil liberties. Even though all attempts to defeat the resolution failed “fifty members of the AICC, including the Socialists, Communists, Royists and Sabhaites, staged a walkout amidst shouts of “Down with the Right Wing” and other slogans.”

This incidence convinced Gandhi that “the time had come for a showdown with the party left wing.” According to E.M.S. Namboodiripad after the formation of Congress Ministries and after conflicts developed on a large-scale between the provincial ministries and the rank and file Congressmen, the right-wing leadership thought that the phase of concessions to the left should end.

The confrontation between the Left and Right became severe during the Congress Presidential election of 1939. Gandhi did not press the Congress ministries for ameliorative measures like tenancy reform and labour legislation; and this led to a crisis at the Tripuri Congress session where a majority of delegates, disenchanted with his stance, re-elected

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151 John Patrick Haithcox, op. cit., p.281
152 Ibid., p.281
Subhas Bose as President against Gandhi’s candidate, Sitaramayya.\textsuperscript{154} Gandhi and Right wing of the Congress disfavored President Subhas Chandra Bose’s re-election in 1939. Gandhi and right wing equally and strongly felt that the Congress had enough radicalism as it had socialists as Presidents of the Congress from 1936 to 1938. Moreover, Gandhi feared that, in the impending war situation, a leftist President could possibly bring a head on collision with the British and that may prove to be major set-back to the cause of independence.\textsuperscript{155}

Gandhi’s leadership was specifically recognized by the same session, and Bose was soon compelled to resign\textsuperscript{156}. Bose’s success proved a failure to himself, because he could not form the working committee for which he wanted to secure Gandhi’s prior assent, which however the latter was not willing to give. So Bose had to resign.\textsuperscript{157} Bose could not get the support of the Congress Socialists and the Communists at Tripuri or after for they were not willing to divide the national movement, and felt that its unity must be preserved at all costs.\textsuperscript{158} CPI General Secretary P.C.Joshi wrote in April 1939 that ‘the greatest class struggle today is our national

\textsuperscript{154} Irfan Habib, \textit{op. cit.}, p.21
\textsuperscript{155} \textit{Ibid.}, p.213
\textsuperscript{156} Irfan Habib, \textit{op. cit.}, p.21
\textsuperscript{158} Bipan Chandra, et. al., \textit{India’s...}, p.447
struggle’ of which Congress was the ‘main organ’ and its unity must be preserved.\textsuperscript{159} CSP remained neutral as they hoped that their neutrality would avoid disunity in the congress and also have an additional advantage of bringing Bose near to Gandhi.\textsuperscript{160} But M.N. Roy criticized the leftists for supporting Gandhi in Tripuri and said, “The resolutions of the Tripuri Congress destroy the internal democracy of this great organization. It subordinates a gigantic mass organization to the will of an individual.\textsuperscript{161}

Rajendra Prasad was elected in Bose’s place. He nominated a working committee, consisting exclusively of right wing leaders that even Jawaharlal Nehru was kept out of it. And the new working committee was to convene a meeting of the AICC and adopt resolutions which prohibited Congressmen from offering, or organizing, any form of Satyagraha in the administrative provinces of India without the sanction of the Provincial Congress Committee concerned. This was intended to prevent Congressmen from participating in the innumerable peasant actions that were developing. Bose protested against this resolution. Considering his protest as a “grave act of indiscipline”, Bose was

\textsuperscript{159} Sumit Sarkar, \textit{op. cit.}, p.374
\textsuperscript{160} K.C.Mahendru, \textit{Gandhi...}, p.218
\textsuperscript{161} \textit{Amrit Bazar Patrika}, 3-6-1939.
“declared disqualified as the President of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee and to be a member of any elective Congress Committee for three years as from August 1939”\textsuperscript{162}

When Second World War broke out government declared India as a party of the war. This declaration made the Congress ministers angry and they resigned from the office. Both Gandhi and CSP opposed the war and Indian involvement in it. Gandhi’s opposition was more because of his creed of non-violence, while for the CSP it was for their anti imperialism. Even though he opposed war he made it clear that “there could be no question of striking a bargain with the government”.\textsuperscript{163}

With the exception of the M.N.Roy group\textsuperscript{164}, which demanded unconditional support to Britain, the entire left stood for militant anti war struggle.\textsuperscript{165} But there were difference of opinion among them. Bose wanted the left to split the Congress if it did not launch a struggle, to

\textsuperscript{162} E.M.S. Namboodiripad, ‘Tripuri…, pp.30-31
\textsuperscript{163} CWMG, October 17, 1938. The AICC in its Bombay resolution did not press the country’s claim to Swaraj for the duration of the war but demanded only the right to free expression of opinion about the war. Acharya Kirpalani’s Presidential Address in Nawadah Political Conference, \textit{AICC file no. G-19/1934}
\textsuperscript{164} M.N.Roy advocated unconditional support to the anti-fascist war. Suneera Kapoor and Kiran Kanta, \textit{op. cit.}, p.21
\textsuperscript{165} Sumit Sarkar, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 382. The Communist Party of India, characterizing the war as an imperialist war, bitterly attacked the Congress and Mahatma Gandhi for not launching a mass struggle immediately after the war began for the emancipation of India. \textit{AICC Files, P-1, P-3,P-5/1945},NMML.
organize a parallel congress but both CPI and CSP differed in this view. They don’t want to disrupt the ‘national united front’ but to persuade and pressurize its leadership to launch a struggle. 166

Left as a whole criticized Gandhi and Congress leadership for not launching a mass movement. The CSP decided upon offering healthy and constructive criticism to Gandhian negotiations – approach and delaying of action. They were not hostile towards Gandhi. CSP decided to prepare the people for launching a movement. In which they considered support as invaluable and they worked for bringing Gandhi to mass civil disobedience. But Gandhi was trying to postpone struggle. Gandhi’s attitude really irritated the socialist leaders.

The repressive policies of the Government changed the overall political situation. It made the Congress leadership to think of starting a movement against the British. By the end of 1940 Congress once again asked Gandhi to take command. 167 Gandhi decided to start a limited Satyagraha on individual basis. 168 Individual Satyagraha had a dual purpose – while giving expression to the Indian people’s strong political feeling, it gave the British government further opportunity to peacefully

166 Bipan Chandra, et. al., op. cit., p. 451-52
167 Ibid., p. 453
168 AICC Files P-1,P-3,P-5/1945
accept the Indian demands.\textsuperscript{169} Gandhi restricted the scope of the movement. It was not to be a mass movement and it would avoid as far as possible causing embarrassment to the Government.\textsuperscript{170} But the individual Satyagraha did not satisfy the Congress Socialists who had aimed at mass civil disobedience.\textsuperscript{171} Jayaprakash Narayan felt that individual Satyagraha had become a farce.\textsuperscript{172} The general attitude of the CSP was to take advantage of its ‘failure’ and move towards some sort of direct action.\textsuperscript{173} Communist party also got angry over the Congress decision.\textsuperscript{174}

With the entry of Japan in the war and the German invasion of Russia, the situation changed altogether. The Communists began to characterize the War as a ‘Peoples War’. The Polit Bureau of the CPI formally adopted the ‘People’s War’ policy on December 15, 1941.\textsuperscript{175}

\textsuperscript{170} Acharya Kripalani’s Presidential Address in Nawdah Political Conference, \emph{AICC file no. G-19/1934}, NMML. Francis G. Hutchins, \emph{Spontaneous Revolution: The Quit India Movement}, New Delhi, 1971, p. 227
\textsuperscript{171} K. C. Mahendru, \emph{Gandhi…}, p. 260
\textsuperscript{172} \emph{Ibid.}, p. 261
\textsuperscript{173} \emph{Ibid.}, p. 263
\textsuperscript{174} The Communist of October 1940 wrote on the Individual Satyagraha “The struggle is a jolly merry-go-round. Shut up you irrelevant scoffer. It is a nation’s solemn… non-violent… suicide. In the phase of its decay Gandhism can pursue an anti-struggle and compromising policy…. The future under Gandhism is to lose all that the Congress has built up so far.” \emph{AICC Files, P-1, P-3, P-5/1945}, NMML
\textsuperscript{175} Gene D. Overstreet and Marshall Windmiller, \emph{Communism in India}, Bombay, 1960, p. 193
January 1942 CPI decided to support Britain in anti-Fascist war.\textsuperscript{176} Nehru also wanted to extend support to the British efforts.

To seek the support of India in war, Britain sent Cripps Mission to India. The Cripps Mission failed in its attempt. The failure convinced even Nehru and Gandhi, who did not want to do anything to hamper the anti-Fascist war effort, the inevitability of a struggle.\textsuperscript{177} Things were now moving towards total confrontation. Gandhi urged the British withdrawal from India. Gandhi also feared that the "presence of the British in India is an invitation to Japan to invade India. Their withdrawal removes the bait."\textsuperscript{178} In this he was supported by the CSP in what finally emerged as the Quit India movement of August 1942.\textsuperscript{179} Nehru remained opposed to the idea of a struggle at the initial stages, but gave up at the end\textsuperscript{180} because he felt that the bitter anti-British feeling among Indian people was likely to develop rapidly into pro-Japanese feeling.\textsuperscript{181}

Gandhi made it clear that he was not going to be satisfied with anything short of complete independence. He gave the mantra of 'Do or

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{176} AJCC Files, P-1, P-3, P-5/1945, NMML
\item \textsuperscript{177} Bipan Chandra, et. al., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 457-58
\item \textsuperscript{178} \textit{Harijan} dated 10\textsuperscript{th} May, 1942. Resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee on July 14, 1942. \textit{CWMG} vol.82, p.258
\item \textsuperscript{179} K.C.Mahendru, \textit{Gandhi...}, p. 265
\item \textsuperscript{180} Bipan Chandra, et. al., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 458, and Sumit Sarkar, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 389
\item \textsuperscript{181} M.S.Venkataraman and B.K. Shrivastava, \textit{Quit India – The American Response to the 1942 Struggle}, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi,1979, p.206
\end{itemize}
Die7 to his followers. According to Sumit Sarkar, "The summer of 1942 found Gandhi in a strange and uniquely militant mood."

Quit India resolution made it clear that if the Congress leadership was removed by arrest "Every Indian who desires freedom and strives for it must be his own guide urging him on along the hard road where there is no resting place and which leads ultimately to the independence and deliverance of India." K.C.Mahendru says that "......it was Narendra Deva who exercised his influence on Gandhi to bring him to overcome the strong adherence to non-violence." Narendra Deva and Gandhi jointly prepared the draft resolution that Gandhi sent to the July 1942 meetings of Congress Working Committee. This resolution contains some socialist demands also. The Princes, Jagirdars, Zamindars and propertied and moneyed classes derive their wealth and property from the workers in the fields and factories and elsewhere, to whom essentially power and authority must belong. According to E.M.S.Namboodiripad "Gandhi’s two hour speech at the AICC session had not a word addressed to the workers or the peasants" and that "the overwhelming majority of the

182 Message to the country on Aug.19, 1942. CWMG, vol.83,p.208
183 Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., p. 388
184 CWMG vol.83, p.454
185 K.C.Mahendru, Gandhi..., p. 271
186 Ibid., p. 272.
187 CWMG vol.83, p.446
people, i.e., the workers and peasants, did not come into Gandhi’s picture at all; they had no special role to play except in making sacrifices around the slogan of “Do or Die”.  

Government reacted quickly and arrested all top order leaders of the Congress. The movement then came under the control of Congress socialists like Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Meherally, Purushottam Trikamdas, Ram Manohar Lohia and some second rankers in the then Congress hierarchy. The movement was mostly carried on by workers, who had been driven underground. The ‘Congress Radio’ that was set up by Usha Mehta broadcasted speeches prepared by Lohia and Patwardhan in Gandhi’s name.  

In the whole movement Congress socialist were in the lead, but also active were Gandhian ashramites, Forward Block members and revolutionary terrorists as well as other congressmen.  

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188 E.M.S. Namboodiripad, ‘Quit India Struggle – Revolutionary or Gandhian?, in New Age, June, 1954, p28
190 K.C.Mahendru. Gandhi..., p. 278. It was Gandhi’s message of “Do or Die” which kept them going even at the face of Government repression. “Congress Radio Calling” Typescript, Misc. Items Acc.No.99, NMML, New Delhi.
191 Bipan Chandra, et. al., op. cit., p. 463
Gandhi at initial stage did not try to protest against the people who indulged in violence. Viceroy told Gandhi that he and Congress were responsible for the disturbances. Even when British Government asked him to condemn the violence of the people in the Quit India Movement he refused to do so, instead he held government responsible for it. He commenced a fast in February 1943 as a protest against the repressive measures of the government. Meanwhile the Congress socialists criticized the Gandhi for disowning violence. When R.R. Diwakar met Gandhi during the fast, he told Diwakar to stop violence to property also. This created a rift between Gandhi and Congress Socialists. Soon after the end of fast in March 1943 the Congress Socialists and Gandhites parted their company. After coming out of the jail he perceived violence as the cause for the failure of the Quit India Movement. This made the Congress Socialists feel that Gandhi had let them down.

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193 In his letter to Lord Linlithgow dated Jan.29, 1943, he wrote that “the Government goaded the people to the point of madness. They started leonine violence in the shape of the arrests ……” *CWMG* vol.83, p.281
194 *CWMG*, vol.83,p.281
195 *CWMG*, Gandhi’s reaction to violence, March 3, 1943
196 K.C.Mahendru, *Gandhi…*, p. 280
197 Ibid., p. 281
198 *CWMG*, May 6, 1944, and in a letter in June 9, 1944
199 Pyarelal, *op. cit.*, p. 39-40
Jayaprakash Narayan felt that Congress disowned the movement because it had failed.200

Despite the official position taken by the Communist Party, "Hundreds of communists at local and village levels participated in the movement."201

Leftists criticized Gandhi for making compromise with Government and halting the movement. For them any shift from the mass movement "meant abandonment of the goal of Swaraj".202 Leftists believed that "the masses were always ready to go forward, to ceaselessly struggle till victory was achieved".203 But Gandhian strategy was based on a "specific understanding of the limits to which both the people and Government could go".204

Gandhi was aware of the class conflicts that existed in the Indian society. But he did not want to foment and keep it up.205 He opposed the

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200 A Revolution is disowned because it failed’, Extract from an article written by Jaiprakash Narain during his detention in Lahore, Home Political (I) 1945 – 4/3/45, NAI.
201 Bipan Chandra, et al., op. cit., p. 468
202 Bhagwan Josh, op. cit., p.79
203 Ibid., p79
204 Bipan Chandra, et al., op. cit., p.511
205 CWMG, Vol. 68, p.74
Socialist theory of class-war\textsuperscript{206} and said the "class war is foreign to the essential genius of India."\textsuperscript{207}

A.K. Das Gupta compared Gandhi and Marx on the ground that both believed in class conflict. He argued that both "Marx and Gandhi accept the existence of social conflict as a fact, and both bring a scientific attitude to bear on their programme for resolving it."\textsuperscript{208} But the way they intended to resolve the conflict was different.

Gandhi opposed the Marxian theory of class war\textsuperscript{209} which resulted in the violent elimination of one class by another. Against this he stood for non violent class-struggle. He believed that non violent non cooperation was the best way to stop economic exploitation. According to him, "If capital is power, so is work. Either power can be used destructively or creatively. Either is dependent on the other. Immediately the worker realizes his strength, he is in a position to become a co-sharer

\textsuperscript{207} The Pioneer, 3-8-1934
\textsuperscript{209} The discourse of class was alien to Gandhi’s intellectual and political idiom. When he addressed the issue, it was within terms whose scope and reach were wider and more expansive. It would be highly reductivist to measure his precepts and practice, and their appeal to workers, strictly by the ideology of class. On the other hand, its is important to recognize that the ‘class interests’ of the working classes, far from being uniform and homogeneous, were themselves fractured by relations of power, emanating from village and neighborhood, caste and religion, gender and, indeed, the very process of production. – Rajnarayan Chandvarkar, \textit{op. cit.}, p.285
with the capitalist instead of remaining his slave. In his class war there were victory for both the exploiter and the exploited. "Based upon soulforce, it is an unique way of conflict resolution understanding between the so called antagonistic classes."

According to Gandhi our socialism should be based on non violence and the harmonious cooperation of labour and capital and the landlord and the tenant. His non violent class struggle implied in the double refusal – the refusal to accept wrong and refusal to commit wrong i.e. the total refusal to be a party in wrong both as does or as done to.

Instead of accentuating the class antagonisms he wanted to unite all the classes. For this he asked the capitalists and landlords to hold the wealth they acquired as a trust on behalf of the toilers in factories and fields, who produced that wealth. The Trusteeship Formula is:

1. Trusteeship provides a means to transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism, but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.

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210 CWMG, Vol. 51, p.296
212 CDWMG, Vol. 64, p.232
213 K.C. Mahendru, Gandhi..., p.83
2. It does not recognize and right of private ownership of property, except inasmuch as it may be permitted by society for its welfare.

3. It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.

4. Thus, under State-regulated trusteeship, an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interest of society.

5. Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that could be allowed to any person in society. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable and equitable and variable from time to time, so much so the tendency would be towards obliteration of the difference.

6. Under the Gandhian economic order, the character of production will be determined by social necessity and not by personal whim or greed.214

Gandhi always stood for the unity of the opposites. His concept of trusteeship is an example of that. "It reveal a leading feature of his revolutionary tactics, in which the apparent opposites – the intuitive and

214It was published by Pyarelal. Harijan, 25 October, 1952.
alienated components of human nature – are yoked together.**215** As a
practical man Gandhi knew that total renunciation was an abstraction.
Therefore, he put up with private possessions as a concession to those
who would voluntarily used the whole of it for the benefit of mankind.
Actually, his trusteeship implied an attitude of non possession.**216** Even
though his concept of trusteeship was based on a very good ideal the
practicability of this concept is in doubt.

Many of the Socialists ridiculed Gandhi’s idea of trusteeship. Only
a very few capitalists came forward to translate this concept into action.

Gandhi criticized the Socialists and Communists for propagating
the class-war ideal. He said that “It is solely out of a desire for cheap
leadership that these so-called leaders have brought the working class
under their influence.”**217** Against the class-war approach of the CSP he
drafted a resolution on the subject and got it passed by the Congress
Working Committee on June 18, 1934 at Bombay which maintained that
“confiscation and class-war are contrary to the Congress creed of non-
violenc.**218** To appease the Congress Socialists he later on clarified that the

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Vol.15, No.2, April, 1971, p.116
216 K.C. Mahendru, *Gandhi...*, p.86
217 *CWMG*, Vol.96, p.156
218 K.C.Mahendru, *Gandhi...*, p.70
Resolution did not relate to the "bonafide non-violent Socialists."\(^{219}\) This was seen as a kind of strategy to unite the classes as also to dislodge the Marxian/Socialist propaganda for class conflict.\(^{220}\)

Gandhian strategy was designed to keep the antagonistic classes together and united. It was during the Gandhian "that the capitalists as a class also came into the movement and came to support it actively."\(^{221}\) His movement was very well funded by the capitalist classes. So he did not want to annoy them. The Leftists often criticized Gandhi for helping capitalists. The extension of the social base of the movement to the capitalist class was as important and a new feature of the movement in its Gandhian phase as its extension to the workers and peasants.\(^{222}\) Bipan Chandra argues that "the right was to be criticized and opposed when it objected organization of the exploited classes or class struggles around their class demands or opposed the ideology of class struggle but not when it proposed class adjustment and confining of class struggles within the parameters of broad unity of all sections of the Indian people."\(^{223}\)

\(^{220}\) Ibid., p.286
\(^{221}\) Bipan Chandra, *Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1996 (Reprint), p.137
\(^{222}\) Ibid., p.137
\(^{223}\) Bipan Chandra, *Indian...*, p.75
The Socialists and Communists criticized Gandhi without considering the importance of class collaboration of the Indian people at that period when the nation movement was going on. They accepted the Marxian principle of class antagonism as such and dubbed Gandhi as an agent of the bourgeoisie without analyzing the existing political condition of India.

Even though leftists found many of Gandhi’s principles unacceptable and tried to oppose his programme they failed to provide an alternative or positive programme. They failed to understand that “it is not possible to organize an effective movement on the basis of a negative programme – a mere programme of opposition to policies and actions of the present leaders of the Congress.”224

Left also failed to get a mass following. Throughout the period they remained weak both organizationally and ideologically. Disunity among the Leftists also led to their failure. CPI’s decision to penetrate the CSP and capture it caused disunity among the Leftists. CSP leaders considered the move of the CPI to penetrate the CSP as dangerous to the

224 V.B. Karnik, ‘The Right and the Left’ in Independent India dated 8th March 1939, p.147
very existence of CSP. Masani was determined to keep the Communists out of CSP. Masani’s stand really irritated the Communists. In a letter to Bradley Joshi wrote that ‘you know how our boys feel about Masani, they would tear him limb from limb’.226

It was the failure of the left parties to work in unity and also the influence of Gandhi which never let them to emerge as a full fledged movement. Birla told Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, after the second Round Table Conference that “He alone is responsible for keeping the left wing in India in check.”227 Also both of them, some of the left critics and Gandhi, moved to each other in later periods. For example M.N.Roy who began his career as an outspoken critic of Gandhi gradually came to appreciate Gandhian methods and Gandhi also moved in his final years towards a more socialistic understanding of the need for an element of class conflict in the struggle for greater social equity.228

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225 Masani’s Statement, AICC 36-38/1945
226 Victor Kiernan, op. cit.
227 G.D. Birla quoted in S.K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, op. cit., p.34
228 David Hardiman, Gandhi: In His Time and Ours, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2003, p.6
Gandhi, before starting the Non-Cooperation movement was well aware of the fact that unless he could gain the support of the revolutionaries, his movement, especially in Bengal, where the revolutionaries were strong enough, could never be a successful one. He invited the revolutionaries also to participate in the struggle and give his Non-Cooperation movement a trial. The request of the Jugantar delegates to add in the draft of the non-cooperation resolution the demand for Sawaraj in addition of the reprisal of Punjab and Khilafat wrongs, was readily accepted by Gandhi. Jugantar delegates supported the resolution in the Calcutta session of the Congress.

Some of the eminent leaders from Bengal like B.C Pal, C.R. Das etc. and Bengal delegates voted against the resolution. C.R. Das asked the Anushilan Samiti delegates to oppose the resolution in the Nagpur session. But the efforts of the revolutionaries to oppose Gandhi were foiled, as C.R. Das himself became a convert to Gandhi’s policy. The reasons for

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1 Young India, August, 11, 1920.
this change are not clearly understood. Instead of the opposing the ratification of the resolution he strongly supported it.³

The Jugantar revolutionaries, who were opposing the Gandhian movement before the Nagpur Congress changed their decision after the Congress. Some of them joined the movement subsequently and others retired from politics⁴. But Gandhi and C.R. Das failed to convince the efficiency of his new technique of fight to the Anushilan revolutionaries.⁵ But later they also joined the movement and worked sincerely for the Gandhian movement.⁶ The revolutionaries who had been waging a relentless struggle against British imperialism stopped their movement to give a fair chance to the Gandhian experiment.⁷ The leaders and workers of both the revolutionary parties in India – Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar joined the movement and those who did not join the movement refrained from the revolutionary activities in order to give the Gandhian movement an opportunity to succeed.⁸

³ Ibid., pp.25-27
⁴ Ibid., P.29
⁵ Ibid., p.31
⁶ Ibid., p.34
⁸ Nimai Pramanik, op. cit., p.35
But the revolutionaries joined the movement taking 'Non violence' as a 'policy' not as a 'creed'. More than that they had their own specific interest in widening the mass base using the organizational network of the Congress.

While the non co-operation movement was in progress, no major terrorist activity was planned. However, the sudden withdrawal of the movement disillusioned many of them. They now began to look for alternatives. The Hindustan Republican Association formed under the leadership of Sachindra Nath Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, in 1924 as 'an offshoot' of the Anushilan Samiti of Bengal offered a rallying ground to these young persons. In this sense the national revolutionary movement was the product of the Gandhian movement of 1920-22.

Despite the co-operation extended by the revolutionaries the Mahatma remained hostile to their method. In his speech at Belgaum Congress he vehemently criticized the revolutionaries by saying that they are retarding country's progress. But in his criticism of the revolutionaries he was not always supported by some of his followers. The resolution

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9 Ibid., p.35
10 Ibid., p.35
11 S. K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, op. cit., p. 21
12 Nimai Pramanik, op. cit., p.127
13 S. K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, op. cit, p.22
criticizing Gopinath Saha’s action moved at the AICC at Gandhi’s instance in June 1924 was passed by a majority of only 8 votes.\textsuperscript{14}

During the period 1924-1925 both the revolutionaries and Gandhi engaged in polemical arguments. The Revolutionaries not only criticized Gandhi but also put forward their own ideas and programme. Gandhi vehemently criticized the ideas, programme and methods of the revolutionaries. The Revolutionaries now had to fight “a battle on two fronts all the time,”\textsuperscript{15} one with Gandhi and another with the British government. Gandhi always tried to keep a distance with the revolutionaries. Gandhi always tried to keep a distance with the revolutionaries. Manmath Nath Gupta wrote that “Gandhi, in order to show that he made no common cause with the revolutionaries, condemned them in season and out of season. Whenever there was an overt act, he took the opportunity to bitterly condemn them.”\textsuperscript{16} But many of his fellow Congressmen, especially Jawaharlal Nehru and Bose, did not share his feelings towards revolutionaries. Revolutionaries received financial assistance from leaders like Motilal Nehru.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p.22
\textsuperscript{15} Manmathnath Gupta, \textit{They Lived Dangerously-Reminiscences of a Revolutionary}, People’s Publishing House, Delhi, 1969, p.70
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p.70
\textsuperscript{17} S.K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, \textit{op. cit}, p.23
The Congress, which met after the Kakori prisoners were hanged, passed special resolution deploring the callousness of the Government and also offered the heartfelt sympathy to the families of the victims.\textsuperscript{18} Gupta wrote that “Gandhi of course continued to hold his tongue, but it was a sort of tacit defeat for that this resolution was passed in the Congress at all”.\textsuperscript{19} He went further saying that “Gandhi always went out of his way to congratulate the Viceroys whenever they escaped the bombs of the revolutionaries, but for revolutionaries, when they were victims of British atrocities he had nothing to say.”\textsuperscript{20}

The Kakori case was a major setback to the revolutionaries.\textsuperscript{21} They tried to reorganize and under the leadership of Chandrashekar Azad adopted socialism as their official goal and changed the name of the party to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army) in September,

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{18}] Manmathnath Gupta, \textit{op. cit.}, p.264
\item[\textsuperscript{19}] \textit{Ibid.},p.264
\item[\textsuperscript{20}] \textit{Ibid.}, p.264
\item[\textsuperscript{21}] Bipan Chandra, et. al., \textit{India's Struggle for Independence}, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 1989, p.248
\end{itemize}
1928. The twin goals of HSRA were the liberation from foreign rule and the restructuring of Indian society along Socialist principles.

HSRA is best known for three incidents: the murder of J.P. Saunders, Assistant Superintendent of Police in Lahore, on December 17, 1928 in retaliation of his attack on Lala Lajpat Rai; the Assembly Bomb incident on April 8, 1929, protesting the certification of the Viceroy of two bills which had been rejected by the Assembly; and the bombing of the Viceroy’s train on December 23, 1929. Reaction of Gandhi towards these acts would be helpful in understanding his attitude towards them.

Gandhi called the murder of Saunders a “dastardly act” which it was feared, “decidedly retard the progress of this quiet building”. Gandhi reacted to the Assembly Bomb explosion by bitterly denouncing the bomb throwers. The Assembly Bomb explosion led to the arrest of revolutionaries including Bhagat Singh. They started hunger strike in the jail for the better treatment of the political prisoners in the jail. Even

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23 Ibid., p.363
24 Ibid., p.364
25 Gandhi quoted in S.K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, op. cit., p.24
26 Ibid, p.24
though they won sympathy of the people outside Gandhi kept quiet on the matter.\textsuperscript{27}

After the attempt of the revolutionaries to blow up the Viceroy’s train Gandhi presented a resolution before the Congress denouncing the bombing and urged the Congress to pass it unanimously. The resolution also congratulated the Viceroy and party on their narrow escape.\textsuperscript{28} The resolution was passed by only a narrow majority of 81 votes.\textsuperscript{29}

Both Nehru and Bose supported the revolutionaries.\textsuperscript{30} Revolutionaries got general appreciation in the Congress circles. In spite of this Gandhi’s “great prestige and power persuaded even those Congress men who did not agree with his ideas to vote with him. The revolutionaries were concerned that because of Gandhiji’s denunciation they would become isolated and abandoned by those who had in the past helped them.”\textsuperscript{31}

To an extent these increased revolutionary activities and the deepening mood of violence in India made Gandhi to start the Civil

\textsuperscript{27} Manmathnath Gupta, \textit{op. cit.}, p.300
\textsuperscript{28} Corinne Friend, \textit{op. cit.}, p.376
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Ibid.}, p.376
\textsuperscript{30} S.K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, \textit{op. cit.}, p.25
\textsuperscript{31} Corinne Friend, \textit{op. cit.}, p.379
Disobedience Movement. He considered inaction on his part would be an invitation to terrorists to take over the movement. The enthusiasm of the revolutionaries to participate in the movement which witnessed before and during the Non-cooperation movement was conspicuous by its absence.

The Gandhi – Irwin Pact of 1931 annoyed the revolutionaries much. There was only provision for the release of prisoners undergoing imprisonment in connection with Civil Disobedience Movement. Lord Irwin in his letter dated 28th August, 1930 to Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru wrote that “...Local Governments would find it possible to release all persons convicted or under-trial for offences in connection with the movement not involving violence...”

The leaders who previously supported the revolutionaries also didn’t put any pressure on Gandhi. In a note written to Gandhi jointly by Pandit Motilal Nehru, Syed Mahmud and Jawaharlal Nehru, from Naini central prison dated August 31st, 1930 it was declared that “We have not

34 Rama Hari Shankar, *op. cit.*, p.113
35 Manmathnath Gupta, p.320
36 *AICC Files No. G-30-39/1930*, NMML
claimed the release of those political prisoners who have been guilty of
violence, not because we would not welcome their release, but because
we felt that as our movement was strictly non-violent we could not
confuse the issue. But the least we can do is to press for an ordinary trial
for this fellow country-man of ours, and not by an extraordinary court
constituted by and Ordinance which denied them the right of appeal and
the ordinary privileges of an accused.”

Gandhi in his discussion with Viceroy Irwin put forward the issue
of Bhagat Singh’s execution as a “humanitarian issue” and considered it
as “in appropriate” on his part to mention an issue, which had “no
connection” with their discussion. And he desired suspension of sentence
in order to prevent any “unnecessary turmoil in the country”. In
conclusion he also told Viceroy that “I myself would release him, but I
cannot expect any Government to do so. I would not take it ill even if you
do not give any reply on this issue”. In the Viceroy’s version of the
discussion Irwin wrote that Gandhi did not ask for the commutation but

37 AICC Files No. G-38/1930, NAI
only for the postponement in the present circumstance as it would have an influence for peace.\textsuperscript{39}

The attitude of Jawaharlal Nehru and Bose on the issue really depressed the revolutionaries. “It was expected of Jawaharlal, who passed as a Youth leader, that he would put pressure on Gandhi in this matter. We inside the prison expected that Jawaharlal would advise Gandhi to break with the Viceroy, but he did nothing of the sort.....Not only, Jawaharlal but Subhas Bose at a later stage surrendered to Gandhi on this very matter.”\textsuperscript{40}

In spite of the Gandhi – Irwin Pact of 5 March 1931 Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged on 23\textsuperscript{rd} March, 1931.\textsuperscript{41} Soon after the execution of the revolutionaries when Gandhi reached the Karachi session of the Congress he was greeted with black flags and slogan like ‘Down with Gandhism’.\textsuperscript{42} But he won over the situation. In his speech at Karachi Congress he said, “By the execution the Government have given the nation grave cause for provocation. It has shocked me too in as much as

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{CWMG,} Vol.51, p.151  
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Manmathnath Gupta, op. cit.,} p.325  
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Nimai Pramanik, op. cit.,} p.161  
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid.,} p.162
my negotiations and talks had made me entertain a distant hope that Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev might be saved."

The decision to hang Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev kept them in the political limelight. After the execution of these revolutionaries a spate of violent speeches and writings occurred and also demonstrations showing sympathy towards them. "But "the excitement subsided more quickly than was expected.""

Discussions at the Congress Subjects Committee at Karachi clearly revealed that the method of procedure had been carefully planned to meet leftist opposition. As a sop to revolutionaries the Congress Executive brought forward a resolution "admiring the bravery and sacrifice" of Bhagat Singh and his associates, but disassociating the Congress from political violence. The resolution was drafted by Gandhi and was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru on behalf of Gandhi. A great controversy arose on the wording of the resolution. Three amendments were proposed but when put to vote all of them were lost, while the original resolution was

43 CWMG, vol. 51, p.304. Young India, 2-4-1931.
44 Telegram sent by Viceroy to Sectary of State for India, London, dated 27th April, 1931, Home, Political, File No. 33/ I & K.W.
45 The Times of India, March 28, 1931
46 S. K. Mittal and Irfan Habib, op. cit., p.32
passed. 47 “There was not,” M.N. Roy said, “the ghost of a chance of overthrowing the god”. 48

With the death of Bhagat Singh, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Surya Sen etc, the revolutionary terrorist movement got a set back in Punjab, U.P., Bihar and Bengal. Some of them joined the left parties and many others joined the Gandhian wing of the Congress. 49

In 1937 Congress Ministries released the revolutionary prisoners. Nehru arranged a tea-party for them and gave them a lecture and concluded it by saying that should sparing in their public speeches. 50 The revolutionaries felt that the Congress had released them and they were demanding a price for this. 51

In a reception organized at Allahabad for the released revolutionaries they made it clear that that they “had not eschewed revolutionary methods and that they “would not hesitate to revive the revolutionary movement.” 52 Gandhi disapproved the reception given to them and declared that “these reception were unseemly and Congress

47 Nimai Pramanik, op. cit., pp.164-165
49 Bipan Chandra, et. al., India’s..., p.258
50 Manmathnath Gupta, op. cit. p.379
51 Ibid., p.379
52 Ibid., p.380
Committees should not be associated with such functions. He banned such receptions as far as the Congress was concerned. Gandhi’s disapproval could not kill the future receptions, but the revolutionaries certainly received a setback.

Government’s repressive measures as well as the influence of Gandhi, whose opposition to the revolutionaries were consistent and unremitting, kept them under check. Gandhi’s influence and prestige turned away much potential support, which they would have got from some of the members of the Congress, and served to isolate them. It can be concluded that the revolutionaries failed to get any sympathies from Gandhi. Gandhi, on his part, was not worried about the revolutionaries taking away his mass support. As we have seen, this was not the case in Gandhi’s relation with the Socialists.

53 Ibid., p.381
54 Ibid., pp.387-388
55 Ibid., p.381
56 Corinne Friend, op. cit., pp.385-386