Chapter I

The Pre-Independence Phase

History tries to explain the present by tracing its roots in the past because the present is the child of the past. As Teggart has argued, 'History is the process of explaining how things have come to be the way they are.' Since Nehru's relations with the Indian communists span pre and post-independence periods, to lay the foundation for our study and for a proper understanding of their relations in the post-independence period, it is imperative to take a broad review of their relations during the pre-independence period.

Nehru and the communists represent two broad ideological streams of thought and action namely nationalism and communism. Both of them had definite views and ideas about the nature and content of these ideologies and proposed different methods of action to be pursued for the implementation of these ideologies. Hence their relations represent a process of action and interaction between these two ideologies. Their attitude towards each other reflects both convergence and divergence, conflict and co-operation on vital issues of the freedom struggle.

Nehru was a multifaceted personality reflecting a variety of influences, some of them having a lasting impact

1 Frederick Teggart, Theory and Processes of History (Berkeley: University of California, 1960), p. 49.
on him. Born in affluent circumstances and educated in an aristocratic background he carried the impressions of his early days in his temperament and intellectual make up. This included specifically his stay and education in England during 1905-12. English education, gradualism, liberalism, cosmopolitanism and his family background continued to influence him throughout his life. 2 His preference for gradual change through reforms instead of revolution, his opposition to dogmatism and his emphasis on eclecticism all reflect the British liberal influence. He was not always able to overcome the influence of English culture and propaganda. His conception of democracy had a clear imprint of the English understanding of this concept and his socialism to a considerable degree was the socialism of the English Fabians. 3 He favoured legislative social reforms for changing social institutions to achieve a more guaranteed equality. Liberalism with its emphasis on individual rights appealed to his keen and receptive mind.

Diffused feelings of nationalism can be observed in Nehru during his stay in England. These were more in the form of patriotism to which he was exposed like other educated youngmen of his age. He sympathised with the Boers. The Japanese victory of 1905 too had a deep impact on him. During his visit

2 As he wrote, 'I have been too much influenced by the humanist liberal tradition to get out of it completely. Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1962), pp. 345-46.

to Ireland in 1910, Sinn Fien held his special interest. He noted its resemblance to the Extremist movement in India. He seems to have been impressed by their policy not to beg for favours but to wrest them. Behind these nationalist feelings there was a sympathy for the underdog that became a vital factor in his later attraction to Socialism.

Of the multifaceted influences on the development of his psychological make up and thinking the impact of human personalities was most significant because emotionally Nehru always seemed to depend on elders. He admired his father tremendously as the embodiment of strength and courage and saw a great rebel in him. From his father he inherited his intense pride and perhaps also his temperament. He shared his father's resentment against British rule as also his nationalist and cosmopolitan outlook.

Besides his father, Gandhi was another personality who influenced Nehru during his early political career. He came to believe in him as a tremendous revolutionary force in the right direction. Motilal's death in 1931 left a void which Gandhi gradually filled in. Nehru found in him a father figure and after the death of his father he moved into the inner orbit of the Mahatma. He came to identify the leader image with the father image.

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5 Ibid., p. 27.
Gandhi made a deep psychological impact on Nehru. His courage, the rebel in him, his personality and strength in superlative degree influenced Nehru the most. Nehru's passion for peace, his belief in dialogue and persuasion, emphasis on consensus, his regard for human dignity and his fundamental belief in the non-violent approach to the resolution of conflicts, reflect the impact of Gandhi.

Under his influence Nehru stood for a non-violent non-co-operation movement to achieve independence. He pointed out that the civil disobedience and non-cooperation led to self-respect, self-reliance, cooperative action and resistance to oppression and widened the outlook and thought of India as a whole. 'It was a remarkable transformation and the Congress under Gandhi's leadership must have the credit for it.' Peace and non-violence later became the cardinal principles of Nehru's foreign policy. Under Gandhi's influence Nehru realised that an action could not be divorced from its consequences. Duality of ends and means became a part of Nehru's political ethics.

Gandhi left such a deep impact on Nehru that the latter always adjusted himself to Gandhi whenever they differed in their views. Nehru's unwilling consent to Delhi Agreement (1931) indicates the spell Gandhi cast on him. Nehru, the rationalist could not sometimes appreciate Gandhi's occasional obscurantism but this did not affect their relationship.

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Nehru's active participation in the non-co-operation movement in 1920-21 under Gandhi's leadership brought him face to face with the Indian masses and made him acutely conscious of their poverty. Nehru paid attention to the peasant problem during Gandhi's agrarian movements in Champaran and Kaira in 1917 and 1918. An accidental visit to Pratapgarh in 1920 further exposed him to the poverty of the masses and gave an indefinite economic dimension to his conception of freedom. It was under Gandhi's influence that he rejected the Marxist thesis that the future of revolution lay with the urban proletariat. Nehru thus rejected M. N. Roy's contention that acceptance of Marxist philosophy would never allow him to stand in the relation he has always stood to Gandhi. It is also observed that without Gandhi's impact Nehru would have been as unaware of the permanent elements of Indian civilization and as much of a stranger to India's peasant masses as were the rootless modernists and radicals from the urban intelligentsia.

In fact Gandhi's thoughts had tremendous influence on Nehru and partly due to that influence and partly due to communist

7 Nehru wrote, 'a man who could command such tremendous devotion and loyalty must have something in him that corresponded to the needs and aspirations of the masses.' Jawaharlal Nehru, An Autobiography, op. cit., p. 255.

8 Ibid., p. 51.


criticism of Gandhi and his strategy Nehru's relations with the communists deteriorated. They strongly condemned each other. Nehru's own conviction and Gandhi's way of handling him won him over to the overwhelming nationalist sentiments. In the final phase of his intellectual development nationalist ideas along with democratic ways and Gandhian methods dominated Nehru.

The vague socialist ideas of college days which were essentially Fabian, more utopian and humanitarian than scientific, acquired clarity during his participation in the Brussels Congress and a visit to the Soviet Union in 1927. Both left a great impact on his receptive mind and helped Nehru to understand the problems of the dependent and colonial countries. He described India as a victim of imperialist power. His contact with many European communists exposed him to Marxism. Meetings with Romain Rolland, Ernest Toller and Madame Sun-Yat-Sen aroused his curiosity about the first Marxist socialist experiment. Interestingly enough, he was usually on the side of Anglo-American members at Brussels because of the similarity of outlook in regard to methods even though he felt convinced that the emergence of the Soviet Union had brought a message of hope to the oppressed and the down trodden. He accepted the socialist theory of state in its fundamentals but objected to be led by the nose either by the Soviets or anybody else. 11

Economic development in the Soviet Union impressed Nehru during his visit there in 1927. This was, however, not the first time he had expressed his interest in the Soviet Union. He had earlier expressed his sympathies with Lenin and the socialist elements which Lenin represented. He appealed for a close study of the ideals and methods of the Russian Revolution to find out the extent to which they could be of help to India in solving the problems affecting the country. His reactions clearly indicate his reservations in the selection and rejection of the influences to which he was exposed. While the objectives of the Soviet revolutionaries appealed most to Nehru he disapproved of the violent excesses in the revolution. He repeatedly underlined the difference of circumstances in the Soviet Union and India. He pointed out that 'a perfectly extraordinary set of circumstances prevailed in Russia in 1917. No country can bank on a repetition of these circumstances.' He realised the unsuitability of the model of the Soviet Revolution in its application to Indian conditions. He did not approve of Soviet communism so completely as to wish to graft it in India without modifications. Nehru emphasised that India had to evolve her own methods and strategy suiting the conditions of Indian peasantry.

Nehru's participation in the Brussels Congress and his visit to the Soviet Union were significant in another way also. He was

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12 Tibor Mende, op. cit., p. 15.


14 Nehru to Dinkar Mehta, Dec. 9, 1933, J. N. Papers, vol. 47 (2926), NMM.
inspired to study Marx, which he did later during his prison trips and came closer to the socialist thought.  

Marxism appealed to Nehru as an attempt to interpret logically the development of human society. Its freedom from dogma and its scientific analysis, theory and philosophy enriched his mind. However, he did not become an avowed Marxist. While he appreciated its scientific interpretation of history, he doubted the suitability of Marxism to an overwhelmingly peasant society of India. In spite of his appreciation for Marx's writings he could not bring himself to accept them as revealed scriptures which could not be challenged. It was his deep conviction that a fresh mind had to be applied to study Marx. He was too much of an individualist to be told what to think and what to do. His interest in Marxism was practical in the sense that he wanted an ideology that could inspire him to do what was possible in India and make people understand the objective conditions.

Though he aspired for a socialist society, his conception of socialism included civil liberty and a belief in political and economic democracy. He was concerned with socialism adaptable to Indian conditions and expressed in the language that could be understood by the Indian people. He wrote, "Two


16 Nehru to John Gunther, April 8, 1938, *J. N. Papers*, vol. 30, p. 2. NMML.
aspects of this question (socialism) fill my mind. One is how to apply this approach to Indian conditions. The other is how to speak of socialism in the language of India." Nehru was convinced that basic social changes could be adopted only after independence and that independence could be achieved with the cooperation of the people from all social classes.

Nehru made a distinction not only between Marxism and socialism but also between Marxism and communism, the latter including not only Marx's thought but also its practical aspects as reflected in the Soviet experience and the politics of the communist parties. He was attracted towards the theoretical aspects of communism and defined it as a philosophy of life and of the methods to be adopted to attain a certain end. He believed in communism as an ideal of society and identified this ideal with socialism. It appealed to him as a general outlook on history, current events and the future. He felt that communism embodied the only reasonable and scientific explanation of history. He was impressed by its basic ideology and the benefits it imparted to the whole society without favouring any special class.


18 Nehru to the Editor, The Tribune, J.N. Papers, Vol. 19, p. 146. NMML.

However, this was not a personal profession of communism and he cannot be considered a communist. This merely implies his attraction for Marxist theory. Later years clearly proved that Nehru was not absorbed by communism. He had his reservations about it and did not look upon it as a dogma nor accepted it in its entirety. He felt that, 'there was too great a tendency among communists to consider that any means are good enough to secure the objectives aimed at. I think this is a dangerous policy because the means often change the objectives.'\textsuperscript{20} As recorded in his impressions of the Soviet Union, he rejected some of the fundamental characteristics of communism. Many things in their experiment did not appeal to Nehru.\textsuperscript{21} He resisted the communist tendency to treat communism as a holy doctrine,\textsuperscript{22} their habit of dictating terms, so also the violence associated with communist methods. The offensive and aggressive ways irritated him and in his opinion this had completely isolated the communists.\textsuperscript{23}

His ideas underline the simultaneous appreciation and rejection of communism. Appreciation and absorption of the fine points of the theory of communism along with his dislike

\textsuperscript{20} Nehru to Anne V. Paston, Allahabad, April 8, 1940, \textit{J.N. Papers}, Vol. 80 (4696), NMML.


\textsuperscript{23} Nehru to Mumtaz Shah Nawaz, Aug. 6, 1940, \textit{J.N. Papers}, Vol. 90, NMML.
of the methods of their approach and their tendency to treat it as a dogma were the two strands of his thinking on communism. He believed in pragmatic instead of doctrinal approach. He could not reconcile himself to giving up freedom of thought. Humanist liberal tradition had influenced him so much that he could not get out of it and though he was inclined towards communist philosophy he was far from being a communist. Individual freedom and human kindness being nearer qualities to Nehru he wanted to mould communism to keep up such qualities. Also since Nehru was always conscious of the particular conditions in India he observed communism from the Indian point of view. It was a particular instinct in his nature and temperament to observe various philosophies and experiments in the light of their utility in the set conditions in India. This accounts for his belief that the philosophy of communism helps us to understand and analyse existing conditions in any country. But it was violent and unjust to that philosophy to apply it blindfold and without due regard to facts and conditions. He was confident that changes will have to be made from time to time and from place to place.

Nationalism and Socialism vied for primacy in his thought and action. Nationalism was, no doubt, the determining and compelling motive of his decisions.

24 Nehru to J. T. Gwynee, Allahabad, Dec. 27, 1933, J.N. Papers, Vol. 30 (1921), NMML.

The synthesis of nationalism and socialism are well crystallised in his Presidential address at Lucknow in 1936. He said, "I work for Indian Independence because the nationalist in me cannot tolerate alien domination. I work for it even more because for me it is the inevitable step to social and economic change." He insisted that the first thing had to come first and placed independence as the first thing of all. His priorities were clear as he considered political freedom as the primary objective without which it was difficult to advance materially in any direction. Political independence and a rapid social change to establish a socialist state was to be achieved by the method and pressure of civil disobedience. He laid emphasis on political independence and social freedom, the former being a step to attain the latter. He believed that the British had to be fought in India not only on nationalist grounds but also on social and international grounds. However, he did not press for the acceptance of socialist resolutions whenever he feared that they would weaken the nationalist struggle. It was his strong conviction that nationalism was the strongest force in India and he emphasised that any programme for social and economic change had to be linked to nationalism. Continuity and consistency in his allegiance to these priorities runs through his ideas during the pre-independence

26 Jawaharlal Nehru, Presidential Address, Indian National Congress, April 12, 1936, J. N. Papers, Part III (G), Speeches and Articles, S. No. 207, NMML.

period. In his attempt to effect a synthesis of nationalism and socialism, Nehru, laid the foundation of 'nationalist road to socialism.'

An analytical study of Nehru's relations with the Indian communists is not possible unless we also examine the historical evolution of the Communist Party of India. We shall trace the development of the party paying due attention to the impact of international communist movement led by the Soviet Union and the Indian nationalist movement on the course of Indian communism.

II

For the study of the communist movement in India it is essential to understand that the statutes of the Communist International subordinated the communists throughout the world to the orders of the Executive Committee of the Comintern set up in March, 1919 in Moscow. As sections of the Comintern the Communist Parties became territorial branches of a single world party. No communist activity or espousal of the communist cause was admissible outside the Comintern. The Communist Party of

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India was no exception to these limitations from its very birth.  

In the early 1920s the strategy outlined by the Comintern for the promotion of revolution in India was to take over the nationalist movement. The national liberation movement in India led the Comintern to conclude that the colonial and semi-colonial countries were hotbeds of a growing revolutionary movement against the imperialist powers. To promote revolution in India and to take over the nationalist movement the Indian National Congress was to be captured by working within that body. Though considered a bourgeois organisation, the Congress was acknowledged as the leader of the movement for national liberation. The Comintern regarded the bourgeoisie as revolutionaries and supported nationalist revolutionary movements against imperialism.

There is a controversy regarding the date for the formation of the Communist Party of India. However, it is now generally accepted that the party was formed in two stages. The first was on October 17, 1920 at Tashkent and the other at the Kanpur Conference in 1925. See E. M. S. Namboodripad, *The Left in India's Freedom Movement and in Free India*, Seminar at NWML, New Delhi, Jan. 28, 1986, pp. 4-5; Also S. Chatterjee, *Freedom Struggle and Emergence of the Communists as a Political Force*, Seminar at NWML, New Delhi: Jan. 28, 1986, p. 12.


However, with the Sixth Comintern (1928) an ultra leftist course was prescribed that marked a shift in the communist attitude. Beginnings of a new strategy can be traced from this Congress. From its long held policy of supporting, the Comintern moved towards the policy of opposing bourgeois nationalism. Indians were warned that 'the national bourgeoisie will betray you even at the beginning of the revolutionary movement.' The Communist Party of India was to sever its connections with all elements of the bourgeoisie with a full scale attack on Gandhi, Nehru and the Indian National Congress.

The Communists were called upon to unmask the national reformism of the Indian National Congress. The Congress was condemned as a representative of the bourgeoisie and liberal landlords that retarded the revolutionary movement, uttering revolutionary phrases in order to deprive it of its revolutionary character. The draft programme of action for the C.P.I. published in December, 1930 stated that the greatest obstacle to the success of the overthrow of British rule was the illusion, among Indian masses about the nature of

33 In the discussions on the draft, Indians were urged by Neumann to learn the lessons of China. Kusinen also remarked 'participation of the national bourgeoisie in the revolutionary movement was unlikely but not impossible. It would occur when the class situation did not threaten them, or when they could use the masses to get concessions from imperialism.' Extracts from Sixth Comintern Congress, September 1, 1928, ibid., p. 529.

34 Workers and peasants were called upon to 'sever contact with the National Congress to drive the traitors and the phrasemongers out of their ranks.' "Open Letter to the All Indian Youth Congress and to All Young Workers and Peasants of India," International Press Correspondence, Jan. 9, 1930, vol. x(2).
the Indian National Congress. The Congress was a class organisation of the Indian bourgeoisie hostile to the interests of the masses.  

The basic task for the communists was to liberate working masses from Congress leadership to forward the development of the anti-imperialist struggle. The Congress was condemned as a Kuomintang having the objective of establishing an Indian Nanking with the blood of the workers and peasants. Nehru and Gandhi were persistently criticised. Nehru's position was considered insincere and false. Safarov referred to Nehru as the 'sly son of an even more sly father.'

In line with the international movement the Indian communists followed an ultra left strategy prescribed by the Comintern. They regarded Nehru as a timid reformist and his father a dangerous patriot. Nehru's addresses to the Indian workers and youth were compared with the big revolutionary words of the Russian Mensheviks. The activities of the left elements of the Congress led by Nehru and Bose were considered

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36 International Press Correspondence, April 24, 1931, op. cit., p. 946.

most harmful and dangerous obstacle to the victory of the Indian revolution. It was said, 'under the cloak of revolutionary phraseology they carry on the bourgeois policy of confusing and disorganising the revolutionary struggle of the masses and help the Congress to come to an understanding with British imperialism.'

The ultra leftist strategy did not work. It simply placed the communists in direct opposition to Nehru and the Congress and isolated them from the mainstream of the nationalist movement. As a result the communists failed to see the Indian problem from a nationalist perspective.

The Soviet leadership, not unmindful of the weak position of the Indian communists, abandoned the hard leftist line particularly with the rise of the Fascist Germany. The softening process culminated in 1935 at the Seventh Comintern Congress which advocated an anti-imperialist struggle in collaboration with bourgeois nationalist movements. As a result the Communist Party of India was asked to extend 'united front tactics' to the political sphere and shed the extremism which had characterised its orientation towards the Congress since 1928. In pursuance


39 In a report to the Moscow-Leningrad Party, Manielsky said, 'Change in the Comintern Line meant that the Communist parties had to abandon their old propagandist view that they represented the militant revolutionary opposition in the working class, while disclaiming responsibility for what had happened. 'The Seventh Comintern Congress,' in Jane Degras, op. cit., vol. iii, p. 347. See also Dimitrov's long speech on 'Fascist offensive and the Tasks of the Comintern, "In India communists should support all anti-imperialist activities including those led by the national reformists and should work in Congress organisations.' Extracts from the Resolution of the Seventh Comintern Congress of the Report of the ECCI, August 1, 1935, Ibid., p. 356.
of this policy the Communist Party of India extended united front tactics from trade unions to politics. The party formed an alliance with the Congress and preliminary contacts were established with the Congress Socialist Party.

The infiltration by communists into 'right wing' bodies and other progressive organisations within the Congress became a marked feature after 1935. The Communists improved their position among the masses and modified the intensity of attacks on the Congress which was now declared to have fulfilled a great task in uniting broad popular forces for the national struggle and was thus the most important mass organisation seeking national emancipation. It was hoped that the party would play a great part in the work of realising the Anti-Imperialist People's Front. The Indian communists endorsed Nehru's call for the collective affiliation of trade and peasant unions and other mass organisations to the Indian National Congress which together would constitute the Anti-Imperialist People's Front and lead the way to the national liberation and advance social liberation.

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The Indian communists appreciated Nehru's role at the Lucknow Congress, 1936, and believed that Nehru regarded the Indian struggle in unity with the world forces of communism and the popular front against Fascism and reaction. As a group within the Congress the communists defined their attitude towards the war and called it an Imperialist war. They lauded the declaration in the Congress statement of September 17, 1939 holding that since the war was imperialistic, India would have nothing to do with it and simultaneously attacked Fascism as well. They went so far as to identify the Congress with themselves in the yearning for India's freedom. They expressed their attachment and loyalty to Nehru.

The German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the alliance between Britain and the USSR in July 1941 put a great strain on the united front tactics and the Congress-Communist co-operation. This turn of events in the war put the communists in a dilemma which did not continue for long and the political line on which they had worked for two years was changed in view of the changed circumstances. Ultimately the interests of

43 Ibid., p. 295.
45 From Z.A. Ahmad to Nehru, July 18, 1939, J.N. Papers, Vol. i (43), NMML.
International Communism had precedence over the nationalist feelings. Obviously the communists could not reconcile their adherence to both international and national struggles and broke away from the national struggle against the British. They supported the international struggle against Fascism. In fact their attitude towards the war (in its imperialist phase) was determined by Marxist-Leninist principles and internationalism, their duty to further the cause of world revolution and of the defence of the USSR and not by any local or national considerations. Immediately after German attack on the Soviet Union the communist parties were asked to recognise the fact that the war waged by the British against Germany was a part of the defence of the USSR.47

In line with the changed Comintern policy, the Indian Communists defined the struggle for freedom as a part of the gigantic struggle for liberation which the people were carrying on against the aims of Hitler, Fascism and its allies.48 The united front tactics gave way to 'peoples' war tactics. The Indian communists attached greater importance to the Soviet victory than to India's immediate freedom or self rule. This


48 'Appeal to Congressmen and Members of the A.I.C.C.' Communist Members of A.I.C.C. Wardha January 15, 1942, J.N. Papers F.No. 133-134, NMML. 
line of approach was diametrically opposed to the Congress approach and widened the gulf between the CPI and the Congress that culminated in their expulsion from the Congress in 1945.

The Communist honeymoon with the British imperialism in India did not survive the war. To the Western Allies the Soviet Union, the principal ally on the eastern front gradually began to appear as main danger to the free world as the Soviet forces brought eastern Europe within the communist fold. This led to the end of 'people's war' tactics and the communists returned to the 'united front' tactics in a modified form. The communists had, however, lost a good deal of credibility in the nationalist circles, and the Congress instead of welcoming co-operation, expelled the communists.

In the post war period, it was thus necessary for the CPI to assert a separate identity in Indian politics. It adopted an anti-imperialist strategy and this policy permitted an alliance with the bourgeoisie. Since the CPI had been thoroughly alienated from the Congress it had to appeal directly to the bourgeoisie. The elections to the provincial assemblies in 1946 provided them an opportunity to play an independent role. Its strategic orientation as revealed in its election manifesto (1946) called for a united struggle of all freedom loving Indians against the British and confined its criticism to the landlords and big bourgeoisie. The main emphasis was on the united front for a truly Indian plan (for independence) and on the final
battle of Indian liberation against British imperialism. The CPI's post war strategy of collaboration of all anti-imperialist and anti-feudal classes in a 'united national front' was approved by R. Palme Dutt who suggested a CPI-Congress reconciliation and a favourable attitude towards the Congress.

A keen observer could, however, not miss to see that the communist attitude no more presented a stable course and ambiguity prevailed in their post-war declarations. They failed to conceal their differences among themselves and two shades - radical and moderate - could be easily identified. The moderates favoured an alliance with the progressive sections of the Congress while the radicals were opposed to any such alliance. To the radicals the Congress as a whole was still reactionary. Minor differences in strategy had existed within the communists in the past but came to the surface around independence and were a factor in their post independence attitude towards Nehru.

In our study of the growth of the communist movement in India during the pre-independence period we can thus clearly identify four different stages. The first stage began with the objective to promote revolution in India that required the

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communists to take over the nationalist movement and capture the Indian National Congress. During this stage the national bourgeoisie were regarded as revolutionary and national revolutionary movements against imperialism were supported. This strategy, however, changed with the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928. During the second stage, the bourgeoisie were no more considered to be revolutionary and hence bourgeois nationalism and the Congress were opposed. This phase of confrontation continued until the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935, culminating in the softening process and collaboration with the bourgeois nationalist movement. During this stage the communists extended United Front tactics to the Congress and formed an alliance with the party and went to the extent of identifying themselves with the objectives of the Congress and upheld the Congress viewpoint during the early phase of the Second World War. However, the communists shifted their priorities with the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 and in the process alienated themselves from the Congress. With this final stage chances of cooperation with the Congress receded and when they offered their alliance in the post-war period it was no more a unanimous view. Ambiguity prevailed in their approach towards the nationalist movement, the Congress, its leaders, policies and objectives.

Having described the evolution of the communist movement and its strategy and line in India during the pre-independence period, let us revert to Nehru's relationship with the
communists. We begin our analysis with the Merrut Conspiracy Case, 1929. The case involved the arrest of communist and trade union leaders by the British Government on March 20, 1929 on the charge of having engaged in a conspiracy to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty over India.

Nehru was then an active member of the communist sponsored organisation - the League Against Imperialism. He was partially absorbed in the fine points of the theory of communism. Above all he actively participated in defence of the accused in the Merrut Conspiracy case and worked hard to raise additional funds for their defence. In fact Nehru did not isolate the trial from the general situation and took it as one phase of the offensive which the government had started against the labour movement. He did not accept the arrests as anti-communist measure of the government but as an attempt to cover a multitude of the sins of the government. He favoured an informal co-operation between the Congress and the Trade Union Congress without the former officially undertaking the defence of the communist prisoners.

In his direct and open involvement in helping the Indian communists Nehru tried to overlook their avowed enmity to the Congress to the point of supporting them against the British attack. Perhaps it was also his liberal sense of chivalry of coming to the help of the accused who were fighting an

anti-imperialist war. Perhaps he also intended to enlist the support of the communists for the nationalist front. It can also be argued that this was an attempt by Nehru to win over the labour which had been under the influence of the communists. To oust the British from India required united nationalist front. By helping the communists Nehru tried to reduce the gulf that existed between the communists and the nationalists so also to prevent the British from exploiting their differences.

However, these manoeuvres failed because the communists reacted contrary to Nehru's expectations. They had been aggrieved by Nehru's capture of the AITUC in Dec. 1928 election. They admitted temperamental differences with Nehru and rejected his charge that communists had made a cult of working class crudeness. Thus while Nehru was defending the accused in the Meerut conspiracy case and raising funds for their defence, the communists under the guidelines of the Comintern followed an ultra leftist course. They described Nehru as one of the petty bourgeois intellectuals, a timid reformist and his father a dangerous patriot. While Nehru as an active member of the League Against Imperialism, tried hard to disabuse Indians of the theory of the League being 'a communist manoeuvre' the communists branded Nehru's efforts as 'a bourgeois

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51 The argument is not out of place considering the position that Nehru had acquired in the AITUC and the INC in 1929. He presided over the annual sessions of both the organisations. No doubt the communists were aggrieved by his capture of the AITUC some of them later realised that he was elected because he was progressive and sympathetic to the weaker sections in the society and gave prestige to the movement. See Abid Ali, Transcript of Interview, Recorded on May 1, 1968, No. 82, NMML.

manoeuvre. Nehru according to the Comintern, had surrendered as a hero of the Indian League to the liberals who were in its opinion agents of British imperialism. Thus the communists failed to offer co-operation to Nehru. Their doctrinal rigidity and loyalty towards the Comintern did not allow them to take advantage of the situation because they did not and could not make adjustments according to their own wisdom and looked for guidance to Moscow.

The differences between Nehru and the communists thus provided an opportunity for the British to underline the differences between nationalism and communism. The latter was presented as an anti-national revolution.

Nehru was thus detracted away from the communists just when he was devoting himself to turn the Congress leftward. The communists offered him no quarters and interpreted political events differently to distinguish themselves from Nehru.

The communists and Nehru had divergent views on the Civil Disobedience Movement resulting from different assessment of the character of the Congress. While Nehru regarded the whole

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54 Bhabani Sen Gupta, Communism in Indian Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 9. It has been pointed out that the Meerut Conspiracy Case disintegrated the CPI. Difficulties arose in the party because of the serious differences among its members and ideological confusion could not be overcome till Congress of the Comintern in 1935 gave its line. See E. M. S. Namboodripad, The Left in India’s Freedom Movement - And in Free India, op. cit., p. 6.

conception of non-co-operation and civil disobedience as revolutionary and defined Congress objectives to bring about radical changes, the communists had serious suspicions about the National Congress. The Congress was condemned as a representative of bourgeoisie and its leaders as traitors and phrasemongers. Left leaders of the Congress were branded lackeys with specific reference to Nehru as the Indian Kerensky.

Instead of rendering their co-operation the communists went to the extent of disturbing the huge public meeting on Chowpatty sands in Bombay on January 26, 1930. The incident infuriated Nehru and he considered it their deliberate policy to be offensive. They stayed out of the Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-34) and denounced it as being waged in the interests of the bourgeoisie. They asserted that the movement was without an agrarian programme, had no economic demands of the peasantry and was without any peasant organisation as

56 Jawaharlal Nehru, Extracts from the Prison Diary with Letters, Oct. 19, 1933 - Jan. 26, 1934, NMML.


a class. Contrary to Nehru's understanding of the freedom movement the communists saw it as an expression of non-revolutionary bourgeois nationalism. Leaders in control of the movement, particularly its left wingers were accused of preventing the movement from assuming a revolutionary character by doing everything in their power to restrain the struggle of the masses within the framework of British imperialist constitution and legislation. 60

The communists also felt irritated by Nehru's consent to the Delhi Agreement (1931). Nehru was no doubt himself initially annoyed, by the decision to withdraw the Satyagrah but finally gave his consent. He admitted that he had decided, not without great mental conflict and physical distress, to accept the Agreement and work for it wholeheartedly. 61 The need for unity of the nationalist front which had induced Nehru to woo the communists also led him many times to compromise with the right wing of the Congress.

The communists initially thought that Nehru would offer some resistance (to the Agreement) but soon realised that there was no ground for the opinion widely held that young Nehru would prove an insurmountable obstacle to peace. His previous conduct in moments of crisis and his support to his father and Gandhi,

60 Open Letter to the All India Youth Congress and to All Young Workers and Peasants of India, International Press Correspondence, Jan. 9, 1930, vol. 10 (2), p. 25.

on the other hand, lent weight to the communist view that Nehru would bow before the riper judgement of two elder Congress leaders. 62

The communists condemned the Round Table Conference and accused the national Congress leaders of 'bargaining with English imperialism over the price of capitulation.' 63 Taking a cue from the communist criticism the League Against Imperialism decided to take action against Nehru in view of the 'treacherous bargain that Congress and Nehru entered into with imperialism.' 64

To Nehru the Lahore Resolution on Complete Independence and the Karachi Resolutions on Fundamental Rights and Economic Policy reflected a new outlook. 65 Although Nehru was aware of the fact that there was nothing socialistic about the Karachi Resolutions, he sponsored them because they formed one more step towards the left which would help in the fuller development of an advanced ideology for the Congress. 66 The communists had no such opinion of the Resolutions. They opposed the Karachi Resolutions because these did not include an agrarian programme.

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64 Appeal of the League Against Imperialism to the Indian People, International Press Correspondence, March 19, 1931, vol. 11 (15), pp. 294-95.


66 Nehru to Onkar Nath Verma, Dec. 2, 1933, J.N. Papers, vol. 102 (603), NMML.
They charged Nehru with enlisting the support of the big landowners to bring changes in landlaws and land tenure system. In their view Nehru was merely playing his traditional role of a pseudo leftist, shouting a few slogans but in practice following the reactionary leadership of the bourgeoisie.\(^{67}\)

In fact the communists failed to realise that Nehru was trying to act as a bridge between nationalism and communism. A fairly good example of it was that he presided over the annual sessions of the Trade Union Congress and the Indian National Congress in 1929.\(^{68}\) In fact he hoped to bring the two closer by making the Indian National Congress more socialistic and proletarian and by inducing organised labour to join the national struggle. But he also realised that he could carry the socialistic resolutions only so far as they did not impair the unity of the Congress, something which was essential to keep up the struggle. It could not be at the cost of his national priorities. The dilemma or the problem of combining nationalism and socialism is expressed by Nehru himself. The national struggle could go far in a Socialistic or proletarian direction by ceasing to be nationalistic.\(^{69}\)

The communist invectives against the Congress and Nehru

\(^{67}\) J. . . the younger Nehru, that Indian Kerensky throws out Socialist Phrases. . . . ' International Press Correspondence, Feb. 20, 1931, op. cit.; Also, 'under the cloak of revolutionary phraseology they carry on the bourgeois policy, International Press Correspondence, Dec. 18, 1930, op. cit.; Acoal Ali, Transcript of Interview, op. cit., p. 58, NAWL.

\(^{68}\) According to the later communists version 'though actively he was not, mentally and emotionally he was very much committed.'

were counter productive as they undermined the communist position in India. In 1935 the Comintern revised its earlier strategy and adopted the 'united front tactics.' This inaugurated a phase of conciliation and collaboration which began with communist entry into the Congress and the Congress Socialist Party. The communists identified themselves with the ideals and objectives of the Congress as the CPI was then an illegal party and its members were working within the Congress peasant, labour and student organisations. They also noticed that the British communists too regarded the Congress as the principal existing mass organisation of many diverse elements seeking national liberation.

The communists not only supported leaders like Nehru but even went to the extent of modifying the intensity of attacks on the Congress right wing. P.C. Joshi was of the opinion that Nehru had the ability to remove the differences within the Congress and hence relied on him. He did not hesitate to admit that Nehru's integrated view of the national independence struggle and the fight for social emancipation was his greatest contribution. His unity of principles and value gave unity of purpose and direction to divergent social forces.

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71 P. C. Joshi to Nehru, April 16, 1938, J.N. Papers, vol. 37, NMML.

72 P.C. Joshi, 'Nehru Legacy for Indian Development,' Secular Democracy, Nov. 15, 1976, p. 163.
In fact Nehru's Presidential Address at Lucknow and Faizpur respectively in 1936 and 1937, inspired the communists to hold an optimistic view of Nehru and the Congress. Lucknow Congress in their view marked a historic turning point in proclaiming a new outlook and programme on the basis of a wide survey of the situation and the development of the movement. The communists felt that Nehru had turned increasingly to the workers and peasant masses and desired to combine national liberation and social liberation, sufficiently emphasising the importance and urgency of a definite agrarian programme of the Congress. Positive assessment of the Congress by communists may be credited to the fact later revealed by R. Palme Dutt that Nehru had discussed with him the plans of the Congress at Lausanne. It was recognised that Nehru himself stood for socialism and for broadening and democratisation of the Congress. However his inability to sever connections with the right were considered to be due to Gandhi's influence.

Communists gave due attention to Nehru's call for a common

73 The communists appreciated Nehru's address because Nehru seemed to have accepted in general the Marxist outlook and regarded the Indian struggle in unity with the world forces of communism and the popular front against Fascism and reaction. Left Nationalism in India, New Age (Monthly), Dec. 1936 & Jan. 1937, vol. vii, viii, p. 294.

74 Rajani Palme Dutt, Oral Transcript of Interview, recorded on Oct. 12, 1971, No. 141, p. 2, NMML.

front of anti-imperialist forces to rally against British imperialism. The official organ of the CPI exhorted the communists to come out as the organizers of the broadest possible anti-imperialist united front. 76

The communist belief in Nehru's left credentials was further strengthened by his repeated opposition to Fascism 77 and Imperialism. He was a step ahead of his Congress colleagues who were ready to co-operate with the British during the war provided freedom was assured. He referred to the British as imperialist reactionaries, while the Soviet Union appeared to him to be an anti-imperialist power designed to upset the British plan by its non-aggression pact with Germany. 78 Nehru felt threatened from British and though he condemned many Soviet policies in the war he feared that the British might exploit the situation in the Soviet Union. He was firm not to follow any policy that would strengthen British imperialism. 79

76 Harry Pollit, R.P. Dutt, Ben Bradely, 'United National Front,' op. cit., p. 3.


78 Nehru to Abul Kalam Azad, Feb. 22, 1940, J.N. Papers, vol. v (373), NMML.

79 In fact Nehru had declared as early as 1927 that India had nothing to fear from the Soviet Union and made it clear, 'We shall not permit ourselves to be used as pawns in England's imperial game, to be moved hither and thither for her benefit.' Jawaharlal Nehru, Soviet Russia: Some Random Sketches and Impressions (Bombay: Chetana, 1929, Reprint 1949), p. 131.
He stood for fighting against all type of domination and refused to change masters.

Communists upheld these views because at that time they were close to their own assessment of the situation and their interests. They were deeply concerned with the alignment of world forces in the war. The pact between Germany and Soviet Union in 1939 was interpreted by the Communists as a measure to prevent the threat of British, U.S. and French attack against the USSR. As a result they did not assist the British in their war effort. The Communist stand was thus in line with Nehru's attitude though there were differences in their underlying emphasis. The communists followed this attitude so far as it supported their international interest. They did not support the British because it would have been against the defence of the USSR. Nehru, on the other hand, stressed over the need for Indian independence to be assured by the British in case they wanted India's participation in the war. While he was also interested in the defence of the USSR, his attitude towards the British was determined by the consideration of the Indian national struggle. Opposition to Imperialism was a corollary of nationalism.

British refusal to state their war aims intensified the anti-British feelings, and weakened any further possibility of Congress offer to co-operate. The demand for national freedom took its definite and firm roots. Uncompromising attitude of the British overtaxed Nehru's patience and he was firmly convinced that British Government had always carried on war
against the nationalist and labour movements.  

The German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 radically changed the international alignments. The differences between Nehru and the communists came to the surface and pushed back chances of co-operation. Nehru and the communists had divergent assessments of the situation when it came to political action to fight imperialism.

Formally the communists continued to reiterate their previous stand for nearly six months after the invasion and maintained that while Hitler was the main enemy of the proletariat, nationally British imperialism was the main enemy of freedom. They took time to decide their attitude because underground communists could not contact other communists and the Comintern. The decision when finalised proclaimed their support to the Allies. They argued that by the entry of the Soviet Union on the one hand and of Japan on the other a historic turning point had been brought, with an entirely new situation, demanding a new policy, new strategy and new tactics to achieve national freedom.


81 David N. Druhe, Soviet Russia and Indian Communism, op. cit., p. 209.


The communists contended that the 'Imperialist War' had now become 'People's War.' According to them, with Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union the world situation had been transformed and it was no longer a battle of rival imperialist blocs but a battle of the United Front of the people led by the heroic people of the Soviet Union against Hitler's Fascism and its allies. Their understanding of the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism guided them towards such an interpretation of events.

It was apparent that communists viewed the war from an international Communist standpoint. They insisted that Fascism with its goal of world domination had to be eliminated. British officials were convinced of communist commitment to support the war wholeheartedly. Having offered their unconditional and full support to the war the communists demanded release of their colleagues. But because the British were not very positive about their help, they decided to go slow about it.

The communists wanted the Congress to identify itself with the interests of the Soviet Union, Britain and America. They intended to fight the battle for India's freedom within a broader, world-wide framework, alongside the peoples of

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85 Communist members of the AICC, "Appeal to Congressmen and Members of the AICC," Wardha, January 15, 1942, J. N. Papers, File No. 134, p. 149. NMML. This argument has been reiterated by M. Basavapunnaiah, *Quit India Call and The Role of Communists: A Reply to Arun Shourie* (New Delhi: National Book Centre, 1984), p. 28.

86 *People's War*, Editorial, July 5, 1942, no. 1, p. 2.
the world. 87

Nehru also observed the changes in the international scene with a wide perspective but did not side against nationalist sentiments. He expressed his ardent support to the Soviet cause and stressed the need for moral sympathy with the Soviet Union and China. 88 With the increasing threat of Japan to India Nehru felt nearer to China and realised that this danger helped to bring nationalism and internationalism closer. However, support to the Soviet Union did not dominate Nehru's urge for the cause of Indian nationalism. Nehru continued to favour the overwhelming nationalist objective of freedom even when he was convinced of the changes in the international situation. For him everything else was secondary to Indian freedom.

In line with the Congress' efforts to move itself to support the British and participate in the war Nehru reiterated his eagerness to work for the defence of India and the larger causes of freedom and democracy. 89

However, the British attitude did not change and made it extremely difficult for the Congress to create an atmosphere at home that would have enabled it to participate in the war.

87 Appeal to Congressmen and Members of the AICC, op. cit., p. 151.


89 Jawaharlal Nehru, The Discovery of India, op. cit., p. 450.
British policy stood in the way of bringing nationalism and internationalism close together. While Nehru reiterated his opposition to Fascism and Nazism he remained firm to India's struggle for independence.  

Nehru thus refused to accept the war as 'Peoples War.' He publicly condemned the communists for supporting the war effort.  

He pointed out, that 'communists had a knack of being carried away, pursuing a wrong policy and making their friends their opponents.' He complained that the differences which had so far been largely theoretical had become a part of the day to day relations. However, despite these differences he welcomed the removal of the ban on the Communist Party in July 1942. In fact even in 1939 he considered the ban absurd. He was also concerned about the position of the Communists in the Congress because they disagreed with the basic Congress policy and yet continued to remain in elected Congress Committees. He felt that as individuals and as a group they were free to adopt any policy but not as members of the Congress and particularly


93 Nehru to B.G. Kher, March 17, 1939, J.N. Papers, vol. 49, p. 13, NMML.
Congress Executive Committees. The attention of the Congress Working Committee was drawn towards the anti-Congress propaganda and activities of the Communist Party. The Committee decided that Pradesh Congress Committee could take disciplinary action against members of any group if its activities were against Congress policies. Congress Committees were instructed not to permit communists or any one who disagreed with Congress policy and programme to act as a 'Sanchalak' in his or her district.

Communists remained uneasy with Nehru on the war issue and conceded that their attitude to war was determined not by any local or national considerations but by the consideration of international unity and action of the world proletariat to strike at Fascism and Nazism. They criticised Nehru for giving precedence to Indian freedom over soviet defence and described it as subservience to Gandhian policy which to the communists was 'inactivity and sabotage of mass struggle.'

The failure of the negotiations between the Congress and the British Government on War issue led the Congress to adopt the Quit India Resolution in August, 1942. The communists opposed the Quit India Resolution and described it as a 'blind and desperate lead.' "After nine days of labour the Working Committee


has brought forth an abortion. . . . The resolution it has produced, has bankruptcy writ large upon it. From the rut of inactivity it now seeks to lead the nation into the politics of blind desperation and disaster." They strongly attacked the national leaders and described the path along which the national upsurge was being directed as one of national suicide, not of national salvation and freedom. It argued that the resolution made the nationalist movement the prey of bureaucratic provocation in the name of struggle and created a mass basis for fifth columnist activity in the name of patriotism.

The communists considered the stand of the Congress leaders counter to the interests of the Indian people on the ground that 'freedom from imperialism could never follow from compromise with the imperial rulers which the Congress was trying to do.' The communist arguments, however, do not make it clear how the Quit India Resolution could be considered a compromise with imperialism. In fact it can be argued with greater justification that the Communist policy of cooperation with the British was a compromise with imperialism. They regretted that even Nehru could not give a new policy in spite of his awareness of the new reality.


98 People's War, Sept. 27, 1942, no. 12, pp. 1, 3. Full text of the main political resolution passed by the Plenum of the CC, CPI August, 1942.

99 M. Basavapunniah, Quit India Call and the Role of Communists, op. cit., pp. 27-28.
Nehru considered the communist attitude towards the Quit India demand as suicidal. While he agreed that national aspirations had to be set in a pattern consistent with the international order, he emphasised the priority of the former in case of conflict between the two. He observed that the communist attitude towards the Quit India Resolution did not fall in line with Indian nationalism. The psychological barrier thus built up between the Communist Party and Indian nationalism was difficult to overcome. The communists reacted strongly against Nehru's attacks especially his charge against their dependence on Soviet foreign policy. Such charges merely helped the agencies seeking to create anti-Soviet feelings.

An impassable barrier between the communists and the Congress had thus been created due to the fundamental differences in their approaches. They held divergent views on the assessment of the war situation. While Nehru supported the Congress policy of non-cooperation with the British until the establishment of a national government, the communists supported the British during 1942-45.

The communists assumed that their internationalism, meaning thereby support to the Soviet Union, subsumed nationalism on the


argument that the Soviet Union was the greatest anti-imperialist force and the success of the anti-imperialist nationalist struggle depended upon the well being and success of the Soviet Union. This opinion even if ideologically correct was politically wrong. In the later reassessment of their line the communists argued that while the CPI's policy was basically correct in both phases of the war, its edge against British rule became somewhat blunted, in the course of the struggle against the world fascist bloc. It was admitted that CPI's support to the anti-fascist war effort became indistinguishable from their support to the British war policies and efforts. 102

Nehru publicly aired his differences with the communists after his release in 1945. He criticised them for their opposition to the general trend of the nationalist movement that had created unbridgeable barriers between the two and indicted the communists for allying with the British Government at a time when the country had risen against the British. He felt that the communists organised nationalist forces for the war without the assurance of national independence. He charged them with taking shelter behind technicalities. To Nehru it was a 'betrayal.'

An underlying thread that runs throughout Nehru's attack on the communists and agitated his mind was his belief that the Indian communists had given up all their fundamental principles.

102 M. Bašavapunnaiah, Quit India Call and the Role of the Communists, op. cit., p. 39.
of communism. He pointed out that, 'the cause of communism and
the name of Russia . . . suffered most at the hands of the CPI.' He firmly believed that the communists were doing a positive
disservice to the cause of Communism and Socialism and were
bringing a bad name to the Soviet Union. He did not accept
the communist monopoly of socialist or communist principles and
insisted that the Congress also stood by the same creeds and
admired the heroic deeds of the Soviet people.

Communists realised the pressure of anti-communist sentiments
in the Congress Working Committee. Their apprehensions were
confirmed by the sub-committee's recommendations to take
disciplinary action against communist members of the AICC. Their
names were to be removed from all elective Congress committees
and provincial Congress committees. Personally Nehru wanted to
bridge the gulf between the Congress and communists but party
loyalty dominated him and the decision was left to the Congress
Working Committee. There was sufficient evidence to indicate
that communists had carried propaganda contrary to Congress
policies. The evidence swayed Nehru and he did not want the

103 Nehru's address at a public meeting, in Beawar, Oct. 24,

104 The Hindustan Times, Nov. 3, 1945, p. 15.

105 AmritaBazar Patrika, Nov. 5, 1945, p. 5 and Dec. 12,
1945, p. 10.

106 Report of Bhulabhai Desai, August 29, 1945, Indian
communists to hold office in the Congress. The Congress Working Committee recommended the removal of communists from membership of the AICC and all other elective Congress committees. Provincial Congress Committees were directed to take similar action for the removal from all Congress elective offices of members of the Communist Party of India.

Communists were unhappy with Nehru's criticisms and tried to defend their stand claiming to be apostles of Congress policies and programmes. But the Congress considered these tactics as attempts to wreck the Congress from within. Nehru justified the decision of the Congress Working Committee arguing that it could not have a house divided against itself. Nehru charged that the communists had abandoned the path of national and scientific approach and as a result they were out of touch with the country's living currents. He rejected their slogan 'workers of the world unite,' as meaningless because it did not suit Indian conditions. He insisted that the communists invited opposition and became isolated by opposing the entire trend of nationalist movement that represented the vital urge of the Indian people.


Expulsion from the Congress led the communists to adopt an independent course. Differences already heightened by expulsion were widened further because of the different attitudes towards the various British proposals to resolve the Indian problem.

Disagreements over British proposals in granting independence to India were seen right from the Wavell Plan of 1945. Nehru regarded the plan as an interim arrangement to organise change and was ready to accept it provided it would help attain the goal of independence. The communists especially, Joshi and Ranadive favoured the acceptance of the plan simply because it was a new offer. They advocated its acceptance with an understanding that it would become the starting point for effectively serving the people and for unifying the nationalist forces to advance faster towards the national independence. They demanded a united stand by the Congress and the League and deplored the action of the national leaders in approaching the Viceroy individually on various issues instead of reaching an understanding and forging a united front against the bureaucratic tactics.

The British proposals in the form of the Cabinet Mission in 1946 provided an opportunity to the communists to present their demand of Indian Independence in stronger terms and to retrieve their lost position. Their alternative plan asked for an unequivocal and unambiguous declaration regarding Indian

independence irrespective of whether the Indian political parties settled their differences or not.

The communists rejected the Cabinet Mission proposals as they did not seem to guarantee Indian freedom. They argued that the British wanted to preserve India as their colonial base and perpetuate imperialist rule in a new form. However, the communists did not carry their rejection to the point of boycotting elections to provincial assemblies and decided the support the Congress and the Muslim League candidates in general constituencies where it was not setting up its own candidates. The communists were determined to put up their candidates in labour areas to show that the party was the accepted leader of the working class. However, the Party did not put up candidates for Central Legislative Assembly because in their opinion the electorate formed less than one per cent of the population of the country. However by deciding to contest provincial legislative assemblies the communists had taken a step towards participation in the Constituent Assembly, because the legislatures so chosen, as it later developed, formed the electoral bodies for the selection of the members of the Constituent Assembly.

Towards the Interim Government established in Sept. 1946,

112 See P.C. Joshi's strong criticism, Amrita Bazar Patrika, May 20, 1946, p. 8; R. Palme Dutt considered the Plan a very slight step forward. For him it was nothing more than an attempt to establish an alliance between the British imperialists and the upper class leadership in India and as such was analogous to deals made between British and Indian capitalists. R. Palme Dutt: "Independence for India," Labour Monthly, August, 1946, vol. 28(8), pp. 246-47.
communists adopted a negative attitude. Nehru as the head of the government drew no applause from the communists who regarded the government as a tool in the hands of the British imperialists. Such a government, in their view, could do no good because it was dominated by imperialists. Their criticism however, reveals internal differences. G. Adhikari condemned the Congress leadership as appeasers of vested interests and declared that the party must pave the way for a countrywide general strike to build the revolutionary wing of the people for the final fight for independence and democracy. On the other hand, Somnath Lahiri tabled a draft resolution calling upon the Indian people to stand behind the Indian Government.

As is evident, communists no more presented a consistent view regarding Indian independence. They described the British Government's formal notification of February, 1947 expressing British decision to leave India, as an imperialist manoeuvre intended to serve the interests of England. "There is no reason to hail but every reason to be suspicious of Atlee's statement in the House of Commons. It is not a British pledge to Quit India but an imperialist manoeuvre to gain time."

113 People's Age, Sept. 1, 1946, p. 5.

114 CPI, Declaration of Independence (Bombay: 1946), pp. 5-10.

The communists also denounced the Mountbatten Plan as a 'diabolical plan' to Balkanise India because it implied the division of the country into many parts by excluding the numerous princely states from the settlement.\footnote{116} The plan was intended to disrupt the people, strengthen reaction and thus make Indian independence formal. The communists suspected the intentions of the Congress too. Negotiations with the British were considered as 'manoeuvres to forge a new alliance with the princes, big landlords and big business in order to control the Indian state and Indian economy through it.'\footnote{117} The Plan was seen as a culmination of the double faced imperialist policy.

The Indian communists were not alone in holding these views. Palme Dutt was of the opinion that although the direct rule of imperialists had ended, partition and independence of princes were its counter strokes to make freedom formal.\footnote{118} In the Soviet view, as we will study later, the British were offering fictitious independence to India. The plan was a British attempt to retain actual power through the Balkanization of India and through reliance on the support of the princes and definite sections of India's propertied classes who feared

\footnote{116} CPI, CC: Resolution, Delhi, June 10-20, 1947, Ibid., pp. 200-01.


social change.119

The above analysis indicates that Nehru was keen to follow an independent approach in his early political career. Keeping in view the suitability of Indian conditions he tried to evolve distinct methods and strategies to achieve the goal of independence. He observed various philosophies and experiments with their practical utility to Indian conditions.

In his early nationalist sentiments which were more in the form of patriotism Nehru expressed his sympathy for the underdog that accounts for his later attraction towards socialism. Encounters with the poverty of Indian masses and the peasantry gave a vague leftist and economic dimension to his thinking that became specific with his later experiences in participating in the Brussels Congress and a visit to the Soviet Union. No doubt these aroused his curiosity about Marxism and Socialism, he refused to be led by nose by anybody. Inspiration to study Marx brought him further close to the Socialist thought.

Marxism appealed to Nehru for its scientific interpretation of history but he did not become an avowed Marxist and emphasised the need to apply fresh mind for its study. Moreover, tremendous influence of Gandhi overcame the short spell of Marxism on his mind.

Nehru's own conviction and Gandhi's handling of him, confirmed Nehru's belief that nationalism was the compelling motive.

119 Eugen Zhukov, Member Academy of Sciences, Moscow, June 5, 1947 in The Bombay Chronicle, June 7, 1947, p. 4.
Nationalism and Socialism vied for primacy in his thinking. Since he was not a blind follower of any philosophy or ism he formulated his own conception of Socialism. It included civil liberty as well as political and economic democracy. He was keen to bring basic social changes with the co-operation of people from all social classes. In his view political independence was the road to Socialism. He was deeply convinced that efforts for economic and social change could be meaningful if they were linked up with the compelling motive of nationalism. In the process he laid the foundations of nationalist road to Socialism that evidently reflected his priorities.

Nehru was too much of an individualist to be told what to think and what to do. In his understanding of communism, he was reserved, selective and appreciated whatever appealed to his mind. He was partially attracted by communism especially its theoretical aspects and as an ideal of society. He was not fully absorbed by it because of its methods and approach. Individual freedom, his dislike to treat any philosophy as a dogma, were his own reservations, that prevented him from fully accepting communism.

Nehru's efforts to work as a bridge between nationalism and communism yielded no significant results because the two could not work in co-operation. Just when Nehru was keen to turn the Indian National Congress more socialistic and proletarian by inducing labour and peasants to join the national struggle, the communists held divergent views. The norms of international communism conditioned the Indian communists in their thinking and
understanding of the freedom struggle as well as its leaders. They wavered between the world forces and the forces at home. Their regard for the former could not bring them closer to national considerations.

Confrontation with communists during the different stages of India's struggle for freedom crystallised Nehru's understanding of them. Differences became common and Nehru's anti-communist views were intensified in 1940. The expulsion of the communists from the congress in 1945 ruled out even the remote chances of co-operation.

A communist had not only to absorb himself in the theoretical aspects of communism but had also to associate with the methods prescribed for their implementation. He was not only to align himself with his party but also remain loyal to the International Congress. His primary consideration was the preservance of global proletarian interests. The implication was clear. A communist was required to subscribe to the idea of organisational affiliation to the International Congress and to accept its conceptions of strategy and policies.

Judged by these values, Nehru could in no way be described as a communist. He strongly disagreed on the idea of the Third International and said, 'It is largely a gesture because under the present circumstances it is not easy for us, with various government restrictions to develop contacts with the Communist International.'

to either International, Second or Third.\textsuperscript{121}

The overall survey of the evolution of Nehru's thoughts suggest that he was certainly drawn closer towards socialism than communism.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{121} He found objections against Third International and asked to keep off rocks. \textit{International Press Correspondence,} Jan. 16, 1930, vol. x (3), p. 47.

\textsuperscript{122} General distinction is made between socialism and communism. For precise definition see \textit{Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences,} vol. iv, p. 81.