CHAPTER 1

STRATEGIC AND PROGRAMMATIC CONTOURS 1934-37

Recent research by D.A. Low has shown how Gandhi had tried to keep satyagraha alive throughout 1933, and how he was constantly frustrated in his attempts by the uncompromisingly repressive policy the Government had inaugurated in 1932. It was on the cards then that civil disobedience would have to be called off. The question that arose in Congressmen's minds was about the nature of the alternatives available. The years 1934 to 1937 can be seen as a charting out of the possibilities that emerged in the wake of the calling off of the civil disobedience movement.

There were two main currents in this context. The first was expressed in the move by Congressmen such as Jamnadas Dwarkadas, S. Satyamurti, Jamnalal Bajaj, since October 1933, and by M.A. Ansari and B.C. Roy later to revive a programme of council entry to enable the Congress to fight the forthcoming Central Legislative Assembly elections.

The second trend was in the growing attempt to articulate left-wing politics through the Congress Party. This trend was marked by the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP), the continuing left-wing appeals of Nehru, the flourish-

2 Ibid., p. 187.
ing of kisan sabhas and their unification at the Lucknow Congress in 1936, the development of trade union unity, and the entry of Communists into the party through the CSP.

In this chapter we will try to situate the evolving status of these two currents in Congress strategy. If the sphere of constitutional tactics was to expand under the pressure of the constitutional arrangements inaugurated by the 1935 Act (and the signs of this were already present in the discussions of 1934), the issue of socialism and its concomitant in a nationalist context, a radical socio-economic programme, impinged on this too; for once it was decided to contest the elections under the 1935 Act, a decision taken at Lucknow, it became imperative for the Right wing, who had effectively decided by this time that the elections would have to be won and ministries formed, that a programme would have to be formed that would not impair the carrying out of this policy.

However, it would be distorting to reduce questions of ideological differences to such short-run tactical considerations. Those differences were very real, and the Right were fighting for their own social vision as much as they were bring-

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3 The reference here is not to a conscious, voluntaristic domain, but to the resultant of various compulsions.


5 See below, Chapter 2.2.2.
ing nationalist, multi-class priorities to bear on the Left. On the other hand, it would be inaccurate to suggest that the agrarian programme was in any sense designed to incorporate the left by offering them a sop, for this would imply that the Rightists were wary of putting forward even the minimum demands enshrined in the election programme, and that they were compelled to do so because of mass pressure.

As important as this relationship was the route traversed by the left during 1936, starting out from an extremely conflictual stance to one in which they accepted (even approved of, in some cases) the Election Manifesto of August. A complex and differential experience was registered here, with previously more cautious sections (the Kisan Sabha) becoming increasingly

6 In this context I would disagree with Bipan Chandra that the agrarian programme in the Congress Election Manifesto of 1936, which steered clear of expropriatory objectives, but nevertheless incorporated minimal peasant demands, is comparable to the tactics of Marxists leading national movements in China and Vietnam. "The Long-Term Dynamics of the Indian National Congress", Presidential Address, Indian History Congress, 46th Session, Amritsar, 1985, pp. 39-40. For while in these other movements the anti-feudal objective was clearly enshrined and only then were minimum programmes oriented to handle the united front complexities of an anti-imperialist movement formulated, no such prior conception existed in the case of the Congress. The programmes of Karachi, Lucknow, Faizpur and of the Election Manifesto were maximum programmes.

7 Which is basically the point being made by Sumit Sarkar when he notes that "The partial opening to the Left in the form of radical Presidential addresses, programmatic declarations, and election speeches was in fact indispensable in the context of the Civil Disobedience Mass awakening and the five-fold expansion of the electorate", Modern India, 1885-1947, New Delhi, 1983, p. 345. Firstly it should be noted that the Right-Wing were never at ease, either at Lucknow or Faizpur, with Nehru being President. See below, Section 1.2.1. Secondly, there is a problem with a method which insists on a one-way relationship between
radical in their programmatic ambitions, and others (the CSP) coming to accept more modest objectives in accordance with a revised sense of possibilities, in terms of the strength of the unions, and perhaps of the power-structure in the Congress.

The differences that emerged within the left-wing during this period were very important and may be described in terms of a growing CSP sense of tactical imperatives as opposed to a Kisan Sabhaite\(^8\) trajectory which largely subordinated, perhaps even ignored, such questions and tended to dissolve itself into the radicalism of the peasant movement. As a result of these changes, there developed a shifting grid of conflicts between right and left as certain issues became impracticable (collective affiliation of unions) and others acquired a new urgency (zamindari abolition, for the kisan sabha) and brought along with them the inauguration of different methods of resolution (kisan sabha direct action vs. Right Wing mediation).

It was this last conflict that was to prove most significant and persistent, and was to define left-right relations under the ministries.\(^9\)

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masses and leaders, of pressure and response. The capacity to respond to and accept demands thrown up by mass movements must also be explained in terms of the character of the leadership.

\(^8\) In our discussions of ideology and programme in the kisan sabha, we are referring to the perspectives of the dominant central leadership, Sahajamand, Ranga, and Yajnik.

\(^9\) See below Chapter 3.
It is, however, necessary to separate out certain issues which the left tended to see as inherently Right-Wing, for closer observation indicates that they had a more complex reality, central here being the issues of candidate selection for the 1937 elections, and the question of office acceptance.\(^\text{10}\) We end this chapter with an examination of the charges of Congress compromise with "reactionary elements" in the former process, and will show that the choice of fighting the elections imposed a certain logic which may not exactly have been in the control of the Rightists.

1.1 **1934: The Place of Constitutional Tactics**

Because there was such a close proximity between the calling of the Swarajist conference\(^\text{11}\) and Gandhi's official termination of the civil disobedience movement\(^\text{12}\) it was speculated that it was the opinion for constitutional activity which had caused the withdrawal of the movement.\(^\text{13}\)

Gandhi himself denied the connection, claiming that withdrawal had been on his mind since the Poona meeting of July 1933.\(^\text{14}\) And Low's analysis certainly suggests that at least by

\(^{10}\) See below Chapter 2.

\(^{11}\) *Hindustan Times*, 31 March 1934, pp. 1, 2.


\(^{13}\) Interview to *The Hindu*, 7 April 1934, *ibid.*, pp. 362-63.

\(^{14}\) *ibid.*
August 1933, when Gandhi was released from prison, he seems to have been aware of the lack of political space for any further mobilisation, and that all that such attempts would result in would be his pointless subjection to further imprisonment. 15

However, if mass civil disobedience was no longer feasible, this did not imply that Gandhi had simply accepted a shift to constitutional activity, nor that he took for granted the hold of non-constitutional methods in the Congress. This is indicated by his understanding that the decision to withdraw civil disobedience would protect it from danger, 16 presumably meaning here the weariness that political workers were expressing in the face of repression.

This emphasis is stressed by his symbolic retention of the primacy of non-constitutionalism. He insisted that he would maintain civil disobedience even when he had directed the rest of the Congress to abandon it. He wanted to maintain it not as 'individual, he said, but as the Congress expert on satyagraha. He felt that if Congress maintained the symbolism of civil disobedience in the face of the government ban it would reassure its supporters:

The Congress dare not suspend (civil disobedience). The Congress must not suspend

15 Low, op. cit., pp. 185-86.
16 "... I have no doubt that both (decisions) are correct. There will be no danger to satyagraha now, and the party favouring council entry will no longer be forced to remain inactive..." to Patel, 13 April 1934, CWGC, Vol. LVII, pp. 384-385. He noted to Nehru that the simultaneity of the decisions was merely coincidental. 14 April 1937. G.D. Birla, Bapu, Vol. 1, Bombay 1977, p. 367.
it, because thousands of persons have ruined themselves in this movement. What answer shall we give to them? And what reward? Are you afraid that Congress will still be treated as illegal? But there is something much more powerful...

Such a stand would demonstrate the political resilience of the Congress, and the inability of the Government to quell it:

If the Congress does not endorse my statement you will be rendered impotent, and you will be asked to give up position after position. If you say, with your back to the wall, "Thus far and no further," no Government can defy you... 17

In turn, he remained skeptical about the worth of council entry. He noted that legislative activity could not achieve the democratic system he was striving for, and that this could only be achieved outside the legislatures. In his view civil disobedience would create the conditions for creation of legislatures which followed the wishes of the people. 18

This attitude to council entry and civil disobedience led to two sets of imperatives for Gandhi: the subordination of constitutional activity in Congress life; and the stress placed on constructive work. The latter had to be given primacy for it was organically related to civil disobedience in Gandhi's mind, and on occasion he had even gone so far as to say that if constructive work was properly accepted and practised there would be no need for civil disobedience. 19

17 Conference with Swarajists, 1 May 1934, ibid., pp. 451-54.
18 To K.M. Munshi, 16 April 1934, ibid., p. 396.
19 Conference with Swarajists, 1 May 1934, ibid., p. 454.
spinning wheel which was at the symbolic centre of this pro-
gramme would not only provide employment, it would also create
a common identity between the intelligentsia and labourers.
Further, by creating the conditions for a self-sufficient uto-
pia in which man's needs would be fulfilled by his own produc-
tion, the basis of exploitation, not only of the poor by the
rich, but of one nation by another, would be abolished. This
imperative underlay the changes he made in the Congress consti-
tution at its Bombay session.

The first issue, of subordinating parliamentary activity,
aroused considerable controversy throughout 1934. Gandhi's
position was that such activity could be carried on by a Swara-
/jya party which, while being composed of Congressmen, would re-
main autonomous. The intention here was to prevent such acti-
vity from being dominant in the Congress, which should remain
primarily concerned with constructive work. However, there
was opposition to such autonomy, and an insistence that Congress
directly control constitutional activity. There seem to have
been two basic fears underlying this: perhaps most important
was the belief that the Swarajya Party was going to be domi-

ted by those Congressmen who were opposed to civil disobedience
or those non-Congressmen who would become Swarajists solely for

20 Discussion with Dodd, 2 September 1934, CWMG, Vol. LVIII,
p. 400.

21 See below, this section.

22 Speech at the AIICC, Patna, 19 May 1934, CWMG, Vol. LVIII,
pp. 10-11.
electioneering purposes. On the other hand was the reaction from Congressmen such as Malaviya who evidently hoped that the Swarajya Party's non-committal stance on the Communal Award would be reversed by Congress control. Finally, and perhaps most significantly for the future, was the relating of the council entry issue to the advent of the White Paper on constitutional reform. Whether this position was related to preventing Congress’ entanglement in the Act, or to arguing for such involvement, is unclear at this point. But the argument for Congress control indicates the seriousness with which the new constitutional arrangements were already being viewed.

The result of these disagreements was the formation of the Congress Parliamentary Board at the Patna AICC in May, headed by Ansari, and, in order to neutralize the Communal Award

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23 A view expressed by a U.P. Congress workers' conference, recounted in Ansari to Aney, 22 April 1934. M.S. Aney Ms. F. No. 3. Ansari referred to this in order to explain why Responsivists Congressmen, such as those of Maharashtra's Democratic Swarajya Party, could not be called to the Patna Swarajist Conference. Ibid. Asaf Ali echoed the fear that inviting the Responsivists to the Swarajist Conference might "prejudice us in the eyes of the reassembled Congress." To Munshi, 24 April 1934. Munshi Ms. F. No. 22/28, 1934. Interestingly Gandhi had no qualms, once the council entry programme had been decided on, of involving such elements. Gandhi to Aney, 20 April 1934. M.S. Aney Ms. F. No. 3.

24 Hindustan Times, 11 May 1934, p. 4.

25 Thus Malaviya noted that an open session of the Congress was required to discuss the strategy for fighting the White Paper. He noted that the Swarajists said that all necessary steps would be taken to secure the White Paper's rejection and to press for the calling of the Constituent Assembly, and remarked, "Is this work also to be carried on by the New Party as a party separate from the Congress, or is it to be carried on by the Congress as a whole?" Ibid.

26 AICC resolutions, Patna, 19 May 1934. M.S. Aney Ms. F.No.3.
issue, Malaviya, though this last move was not successful. 27

While making this allowance to the Congress demand that
the council entry party not be autonomous, Gandhi continued to
note that parliamentary work might be necessary but was ultima-
tely of little worth. The AICC would remain a body representa-
tive of all tendencies, and should be especially concerned with
constructive work. He in fact hoped that the majority would
not be attracted by council work, for Saaraj would never come
that way. 28

In keeping with this non-constitutional emphasis, Gandhi
advocated significant changes in the Congress constitution at
Bombay. Apart from tightening up the organisation, he wanted
the following: to replace the words "legitimate and peaceful"
in the Congress creed by the words "truthful and non-violent";
to substitute the 4-anna membership with the production of self-
spun yarn; to make the habitual wearing of khaddar necessary for
voters to Delegate and Congress Executive Committee elections. 29

27 The attempt to incorporate those disgruntled with the
Award did not succeed as the Congress policy on this issue
remained non-committal. Malaviya and Aney resigned from
the board on 30 July (AICC G 34/1934) and formed the Cong-
ress Nationalist Party to fight the Award. However, des-
pite these differences, the Congress fought the Central
Legislative Assembly elections in alliance with Malaviya's
party. See Gandhi to Malaviya, 3 September 1934, Rajendra
Prasad Ms. VII/35 and the Gandhi-Aney statement of 20
September agreeing to withdraw Whomsoever amongst the
contesting candidates was less likely to win. CWMG, Vol.
LIV, pp. 38-59.


29 The final changes included: a six month period to elapse
between enrolment and eligibility in a Delegates' or
Executive Committee election; the number of delegates to
the annual session would be reduced to 1000, to be elected
It was at the Bombay Congress too that the All India Village Industries Association was started.  

This scheme may be interpreted as a serious attempt by the Mahatma to institutionalise his social and political ideas against the onslaught both of constitutionalism and of leftism. This is indicated by the reasons he offered for retiring from the party at its Bombay session: Congressmen's lack of faith in his programme; disagreements with his insistence on the necessity of the parliamentary programme and of a non-interventionist approach to the princely states; and finally his differences with the socialists. He situated these reasons in a general alienation from the intelligentsia, who he felt had accepted many of these strictures not out of belief but out of personal loyalty to himself. As a result he felt that he had been functioning like a dictator, a situation intolerable to him.

So it appears that Gandhi's retirement was fundamentally related to his desire to observe whether his ideals could be realized within the organisation he had built up. But the symbo-

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by 1000 member constituencies. These 1000 delegates were also to become the PCCs for their respective provinces. In terms of voting, Khaddar-wearing and spinning qualifications were specified in the election of Delegates and members of Congress Executive Committees. At the central party level the size of the general session was raised to 2000 while the AICC was to consist of 166. There was to be an urban-rural ratio of 25:75 in the delegates' elections. Finally, the proposal to change the Congress creed, from peaceful and legitimate to truthful and non-violent means was referred back to the PCCs for consideration. N.N. Mitra, Indian Annual Register, July-December 1934, pp. 208-13.

30 Statement of 17 August 1934, CWMG, Vol. LIX, pp. 3-12.
31 Ibid.
lic continuities here must be stressed. Gandhi was disengaging himself from the party at the very moment that its dominant political activity would be constitutional. Given the linkage that he himself made between civil resistance and constructive work, his shift to the latter activity in a context of continued insistence that civil disobedience not be relinquished had a significant resonance. Those close to him interpreted this to mean that the time for civil disobedience was not at hand but that Gandhi would emerge again to lead the movement at the appropriate moment. The Government too saw Gandhi's involvement in the Village Industries Association from the viewpoint of renewing civil disobedience. Officials believed that it was a ploy to organise the peasants for another round of direct action.

While setting up a distance from the formal seats of control Gandhi did not in practice relinquish his influence at the crucial moments of the party's deliberations. However, by otherwise dissociating himself from constitutional practice, Gandhi was able to exercise a wide influence over a range of ideologically disparate groups, including the socialists.

32 See Vallabhai Patel's speech at the AICC, Delhi, 17 and 18 March 1937. Hindustan Times, 18 March 1937, p. 2. Pattabhi Sitaramayya also noted in January of that year that "the time must again come (for Gandhi to resume the reins of leadership) when those who have yearned for the council front will cry out again not merely pathetically but angrily that the council front is not for the Congress..." Bombay Chronicle, 7 January 1937, p. 8.

33 Appreciation of the political situation as a result of the Congress session of Bombay, October 1934. Activities of Mr Gandhi in pursuance of the village industries campaign. Home Dept. (Poll.) 3/16/34.

What the analysis has emphasised so far is the continuities in Congress politics. However, it is important to register the change that had taken place. Above all this lay in the different weight given to constitutional activity. The Swarajists of the 1920s had remained a separate group, even after the Mahatma's ultimate toleration of their programme. 35 Now, even though Gandhi noted that he was bowing to opinion in the Congress for a parliamentary programme 36 and hoped that those drawn to this programme would come to understand its limits, 37 he understood that parliamentary activity would remain a permanent element of Congress work. 38 Further, he could now conceive of the positive functions of such work. When he spoke on the council entry programme in September he noted that it could be used in the "rejection of the White Paper, the convening of a Constituent Assembly, the repeal of repressive laws and the carrying on of a constructive programme and other national activities of the Congress to the extent opportunities were possible". He felt that with a Congress presence in the Assembly the Government could not openly enact repressive measures while

36 He noted that "it was love of friends and circumstances which had dragged one into the council entry programme." To Munshi, 16 April 1934, CWMC, Vol. LVII, p. 396.
37 To Patel, 18 April 1934, ibid., p. 404.
38 To Munshi, 16 April 1934, ibid., p. 396.
claiming that they had the support of the elected members of the Assembly.39 Gandhi seemed now to have felt his way around to working out the status of parliamentary activity in terms of its relationship to the Colonial Government's legitimacy. He had formulated the need to attack and expose the government in terms of the representative foundations it claimed for its rule. He even went as far as to say that in the absence of any general programme of civil resistance, the parliamentary programme was a necessary part of Congress activity.40

The full significance of this change was not yet clear. But the signs of a significant reformulation of the status of parliamentary activity are available in the attitudes of Gandhi's closest associates. In December 1934, Rajendra Prasad noted grudgingly that while he was opposed to a revolutionary party taking responsibility without full power, circumstances had made Congress enter the councils, and that such a programme might even have to be extended in scope and extent.41 Patel too seemed to understand that a significant change was now taking place when he agreed that the time had come for the Mahatma's retirement as his ideals were not accepted by the bulk of Congressmen.42 Perhaps most instructive of all was the view of Rajagopalachari, who was otherwise to play a marginal role in Congress politics over the next three years;


40 17 September 1934, ibid., Vol. LIX, p. 5.

41 Rajendra Prasad to M.A. Ansari, 26 December 1934, AICC G-34(K 43) (1)/1934.

42 Gandhi to Patel, 21 September 1934, CWMC, Vol. LIX, p. 52.
My dream is that if this parliamentary party is organised properly... we shall develop a certain amount of prestige and confidence among the masses even as we did during the short period when the Gandhi-Irwin Pact was in force. Government having set its face against a pact, we should secure its equivalent... whatever the constitution may be. I think, if it is used by the Congress under your guidance, it can give us the power that we develop(ed) under the Pact...43

We have the intimations here of significant changes in the way constitutional activity was conceived in the party. In the next section we will examine what impact another central issue of this period, the emergence of an organised left in the Congress, had on the party's functioning.

1.2 The Emergence of an Organised Left and the Dynamics of the United Front

1.2.1 Programmatic Contours

As with constitutional activity, leftism in the Congress was not a new phenomenon. It had had an existence in the 1920s, through communists and trade-unionists with Congress affiliations in formations such as the Workers' and Peasants' Party,44 and in the fact of major Congress leaders such as Nehru publicly affirming the attraction of the Soviet experiment and more broadly of socialism.45 The 1931 Karachi Congress programme,

43 Rajagopalachari to Gandhi, 17 April 1934, Intercepted correspondence in Home Department (Poll.) 4/4/34.


45 S. Gopal, **op.cit.**, Chapters 8 and 9.
with its civil libertarian and ameliorative economic emphases, may be seen as being a result of these tendencies in the nationalist party.46

However, the change that took place between 1934 and 1936 in this regard should be noted. The formation of a distinct body within the Congress, the CSP in 1934,47 however embryonic and weak, caused a definite disturbance in the Gandhian leadership. The expropriatory objectives embraced by the All-India Socialist Conference in May48 led very swiftly to a riposte from the Congress Working Committee. Its resolution of 18 June 1934 criticised what it described as "loose talk about confiscation of private property and the necessity of class war".49 Criticism of the resolution by CSP members50 led to a conciliatory qualification which noted that the CSP was not being singled out by the Working Committee.51 However,

46 For the Karachi programme see Encyclopaedia INC, Vol. X, pp. 149-51.
47 The first All-India Congress Socialist Conference was arranged to coincide with the Patna AICC of May 1934, Hindustan Times, 8 May 1934, p. 16.
48 The socialist programme for the Congress included nationalisation of key industries, the elimination of princes and landlords, and a redistribution of land to the peasants. All India Socialist Conference, Patna, 17 May 1934, Indian Annual Register, January-July 1934, p. 343.
49 AICC G.31/1934, pt. II.
50 Response of the Bombay CSP, Hindustan Times, 22 June 1934, p. 2; Kamalashankar Pantya and Ishvernal C. Desai to the Working Committee, 4 July 1934. AICC G.28/1934, pt. 1; Jayaprakash to General Secretary, AICC, 20 July 1934, AICC, G.23/1934.
51 31 July 1934, AICC G.31/1934, Pt. II. However, it should be noted that while this disclaimer was made, certain Work-
alienation was signalled again when Gandhi referred to the Socialist presence as being one of the reasons for his retirement from the Congress.\textsuperscript{52} And, in turn, throughout 1935, the Socialists were emphatic about the need for a change in the Congress leadership if anti-imperialism was to make progress.\textsuperscript{53}

The story of this conflict was

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... in view Working Committee Resolution referred one can't continue Congress Executive Member and simultaneously advocate confiscation private property and class war..." Uma Nehru to Bajaj, 20 June 1934, Bajaj to Uma Nehru, 21 June 1934. AICC G.29/1934. However, it seems unlikely that the resolution had given rise to a definite policy on such matters so swiftly.

\textsuperscript{52} He noted that while he welcomed the emergence of the Socialist Party, if they came to power, it would not be possible for him to stay on in the organisation because it would mean that he would have to be in opposition, an impossible situation for him. Statement of 17 August, 1934, CMG, Vol. LIX, pp. 3-12.

\textsuperscript{53} Perhaps best represented by Sampoornand's thesis of February 1935. This advocated that labour and the peasantry be organised, and that after 6 or 7 months they raise important issues connected with these classes and create an agitation. "We can offer the leadership, if that appears tactical at the time, to the Congress leaders. If they follow us, no matter what the immediate result may be, we win. If they do not, as probably they will not, if we manage things properly, we shall have to bear the brunt. We shall probably disappear as a Party for something like 2 years but when we return, we shall capture the machinery of the Congress, even if we do not happen to be in a numerical majority. It will be one of those cases when the part is greater than the whole... Thus only can we hope to mould the Congress into a Soviet of the representatives of the revolutionary classes and a true instrument for the attainment of independence and socialization..." "Our Role in the Congress," AICC, G. 29/1935. The Bolshevik imagery here was however to give way over the following years.
complex, and we shall recount it at some length later. Its interest at the moment is in the way in which it reshaped Congress politics during this period. By 1936, in addition to a self-avowed socialist President at the Lucknow Congress, there were two representatives of the Congress Socialist Party in the Working Committee.

What had swung the balance, after that history of antagonism in 1935? One reason obviously lay in the need to relate to the growing peasant organisation undertaken by Congressmen between 1934 and 1936. However, if the possibilities of the radical wing wielding mass influence was one reason for their accommodation by Gandhi and the Right Wing, another reason or point of amenability for such an accommodation was in the role of Nehru.

As an ideological force Nehru had played an increasingly significant role from 1929. It can be argued that between 1929 and 1934-35, through his Presidentship at Lahore, his role as agrarian radical in the civil disobedience movement and through his writings, culminating in the significant Autobiography of 1936, he had come to exercise a considerable influence over the domain of ideology, and therefore, of the intelligentsia. Nehru was by 1936 the arbiter of the socialist tendency amongst the nationalist intelligentsia and was seen as such.

54 See below, Chapter 5.
55 See below, 1.2.2.
56 Thus Sampurnanand noted that "Comrade Jawaharlal Nehru will soon be coming out of prison ... There is sure to be something like a small storm in Indian politics, and particularly in our Party, at the time..." Sampurnanand thesis, op.cit.
Gandhi had registered the tension of these changes, and it is possible to see his backing of Nehru's candidature at Lucknow as an "incorporative" act. But incorporation requires a certain amenability to being incorporated. What were the grounds for this in Nehru? That he was essentially a bourgeois ideologue? This explanation is facile, for it does not take into consideration the fact that in terms of actual ideological content - agrarian objective, advocacy of planning and state control of industry, etc., Nehru was not all that different from the Socialists, or even the post-1936 CPI. 57

What did differentiate him was his organisational placement. While most other left-wing Congressmen were placed in parties with definite socialist objectives, Nehru had kept away from these. This was presumably related to a certain skepticism about the ideological characteristics of these left formations: in the case of the CSP because it was in many ways a mixed bag; 58 and, in the instance of the CPI, its disbelief in Congress' anti-imperialist credentials would always prove a point of difference. 59 This commitment to the project of a Congress-led national movement was given priority over even the personal social and economic vision.

The crucial point of Nehru's "incorporability" then lay in his affinity to Gandhi and Right Wing nationalists on the ground of nationalist unity. The Mahatma was fully aware of

57 See below, Chapter 5.
58 Gopal, op.cit., p. 188.
59 Gopal, ibid., Chapters 8 and 9.
this, and on several occasions expressed this understanding by making a distinction between Nehru's social and political principles on the one hand, and his methods on the other. While Gandhi was often generously, and perhaps cursorily, amenable to Nehru's principles, he recurrently insisted that as far as method was concerned, he was either undecided or was close to Gandhi's own attitudes. For example, he noted to him in 1934 that:

I do feel that your concrete programme is still in the melting pot. You are too honest to say - I know the whole of my programme today. You have no uncertainty about the science of socialism but you don't know in full how you will apply it when you have power...60

And again, just prior to his offering the Presidency to Nehru, Gandhi negotiated the realm of principle by emphasising instead the commonality of method:

I have no difficulty in agreeing with you in the enunciation of principle. But when we descend to the concrete, we generally use the language I have used...61

That language of course was the language of adjustment. And there is an inkling of this affinity in Nehru's own positive evaluation of the Mahatma's methods:

The Congress, under Mr Gandhi's leadership, has laid great stress on non-violence and the conversion of the adversary rather than his coercion. Quite apart from the metaphysical aspects of this doctrine and its feasibility or otherwise in the final sense, there can be no doubt that this has created a powerful feeling against civil conflict and in favour of attempting to win over

60 To Nehru, 21 January 1934, Nehru Ms. Correspondence, Vol. 24, emphasis added.

61 To Nehru, 23 September 1935, ibid.
various groups in India. This is a factor of great value to us in preserving the unity of India and in toning down opposition...62

And this should be analysed in tandem with his later pronouncements on how to effect social change without causing hatred or ill-will:

The only practical solution of the problem came from Gandhi. Whether this was a final solution or not remains to be seen, but it did combine the Sermon on the Mount with effective action. In considering his methods one should not be diverted by a discussion on his views on science or modern industry or birth control. The technique or method of approach stands quite apart... that approach is the psychological approach, the refusal to subordinate means to an end, the continuous willingness to make friends of his opponents, and yet at the same time adoption of effective and dynamic action...63

This affinity was eminently simple when it was just a question of making adjustments in terms of the priorities of nationalist issues. But it was more strenuously tested when it came to a question of handling social change. And this was to be the source of the major conflicts within the party in 1936.

At the Lucknow Session, Nehru's determination to develop a radical programme for the Congress appeared to have been checked at every point. In the Subjects Committee at the Lucknow session, Nehru and Tandon advocated the programme of zamindari abolition, 64 and in the main session the CSP proposed a

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64 Home(Poll.) 4/18/1936; Bombay Chronicle, 14 April, p. 12.
collective affiliation of trade unions and kisan sabhas to the Congress. Both these proposals were rejected; in the first instance the final Working Committee proposal merely asked that provincial Congress units communicate their findings on questions of rent, revenue, debt and peasant organisation; in the second a Mass Contacts Committee weighted in favour of the Right (Rajendra Prasad and Jairamdas Daulatram vs. Jayaprakash) was formed to enquire into the appropriate forms of Congress relationship with the peasant movement. And of course, Nehru's and the Socialists' opposition to office acceptance was also diffused. Shortly after, he tried to circumvent the structures of power he had come up against at Lucknow by advocating, at a Working Committee meeting of 27 and 28 April, that committees to investigate agrarian and labour issues be set up and that these be composed largely of members of the AICC, with only a nominal Working Committee presence. When this move was defeated, he threatened to resign, but was dissuaded from doing so by Gandhi.

1936 was the testing time of Nehru's socio-political strategy, the point at which his broad socialist ideas were to be taxed with the realities of power and strategy in the Cong-

65 Bombay Chronicle, 10 April 1936, p. 1.
66 Ibid., 15 April 1936, p. 10.
67 Ibid., p. 1.
68 Ibid., p. 9.
69 AICC, G-31/1936.
ress. His previous major point of difference — over the Complete Independence/Dominion Status controversy of 1928-29 — was related to questions of unity in the party over political demands, and of how groups riven with political differences of this order could be carried together. In 1936 he was confronted with a problem of a different nature: how to commit the party to what he saw as certain essential socio-economic changes, in particular an anti-feudal programme. The confrontation resulted in the development of an agrarian programme for the Congress, pointing to the necessity for change, though not of a maximum, expropriatory nature.

The indications are that this was not exactly a defeat. Conscious adjustments had been made by the Gandhian Right during this period. There had been uncertainty about Nehru as President for the Lucknow session, with Rajagopalachari describing him as a romantic and idealist.70 And, just prior to the Lucknow session, evidence from Bhulabhai Desai's diary indicates that there were attempts by the Rightists to put up a more emphatic challenge to Nehru than actually took place. This related to the issue of office-acceptance, for which it seems Nehru had proposed an antagonistic position on behalf of the Working Committee. Patel and Rajendra Prasad challenged this strongly, and it was only Gandhi's mediation which led to the final decision which evaded confrontation by postponing the decision.71

70 To Rajendra Prasad, 7 February 1936, Rajendra Prasad Ms. VIII/37/coll.1.

71 Bhulabhai Desai Ms. Diary Entry at 28 January 1936.
Following this, an attitude of conciliation by the Right was apparent. It is worth noting that while Patel prevented Bhulabhai Desai, an acknowledged constitutionalist, from speaking on the resolution relating to the 1935 Act, he had him propose the agrarian resolution. It was as if in the first instance the terms of potential constitutional activity were being reassuringly presented - it was after all not a constitutionalist who was sponsoring the resolution; and on the other hand, the presentation of the agrarian programme by Desai could suggest commitment to agrarian change by even the most moderate of Congressmen.

However, whatever the symbolic meaning we may derive from the functioning of the Right Wing at Lucknow, these adjustments did not lead to an immediate reassurance of either wing. In a sense, the adjustments were compelled responses. On the part of the Right Wing, this was effected by Gandhi, their own sense of unity and perhaps by the perception of growing leftist influence. This did not however mean a termination of discord. Conflict emerged again at the time of the Faizpur Presidential election, when Patel considered standing against Nehru because he feared Nehru would insist on Congress pursuing an anti-office-acceptance policy. As for Nehru, the Lucknow session was seen as a blow to his hopes. He saw the Right Wing as being stiflingly dominant in the Working Committee and made allusions

72 Ibid.
73 See below, Chapter 2.
to his having been helpless in its formation.74

The scene was set in May for perhaps the most serious moment in this conflict, after which a fundamental adjustment was to take place. During this month, Nehru entered into debate with Bombay capitalists about their standing in the anti-imperialist movement, and the way he posed the issue, this debate became fused with the reversals he had registered at Lucknow.

The debate centred on capitalist charges that Nehru was trying to force socialism on India. To counter this charge Nehru claimed that by setting up the false bogeys of socialism and religion in danger, these businessmen were seeking to draw attention away from their unpatriotic attitudes in the past. He noted that this lack of patriotism ignored even common business sense, that they should have realised that the Congress commitment to economic development would have redounded to their benefit, for inevitably this would lead to an increase in mass purchasing power and therefore would stimulate industry.75 But he noted that they would not be able to understand this and that as the struggle got more advanced they would join other reactionary groups - the princes, landlords and communal interests.76

This debate merged with the Lucknow conflict in the analogy he made between the moderate phase of nationalism and

74 Statement of 25 May 1936, Rajendra Prasad Ms. III/36/ Coll.1.


76 Nationalism and the Class Struggle, 19 May 1936, ibid., p. 248.
current developments. He related the changes that had taken place in nationalist politics to phases of domination, decline in influence, and now a resurgence of the class he was attacking. He associated the politics of the bourgeoisie with the constitutionalism of the moderates, the latter's demise with the arrival on the political scene of the direct-action oriented petit bourgeoisie, and the present renewal of constitutionalism in policy as a resurgence of the big bourgeoisie's influence.77

Implicit here was the charge that the Gandhian Right Wing, which had frustrated his attempts to advance nationalist politics at the recent Congress session, were political representatives of the big bourgeoisie. This is made clear by his simultaneous criticism of the conservative section of the Congress for trying to impede progress and in fact threatening a split:

Attempts are being made and were made at Lucknow to create a split in the ranks of the Congress.... There are a few who do not welcome socialism as a solution. But I am firm in my resolve towards attaining it. It is a law of nature that whenever change occurs, it is inherent that a small section is always dissatisfied and consequently suffers.78

This debate should provide the background to the crisis of June 1936, when the Gandhian Rightists in the Working Committee offered their resignation from the Committee. They resented the charges that they had curbed Nehru's selection of the Working Committee79 and were indignant about the spate of insults level-

77 The Role of Big Business, 20 May 1936, ibid., p. 254.
78 The Need for Congress Unity, 18 May 1936, ibid., pp. 232-3
79 Patel to Rajendra Prasad, 29 May 1936, Rajendra Prasad Ms. I/36/coll.1.
led against them by the Socialists. They also noted that these kinds of appeals were disruptive and would affect Congress's chances in the elections. However, as we have seen, the kind of attacks that Nehru made did not threaten any concrete changes and so we must assume that while the question of the elections would have played a role in the Right Wing response (the party was to a certain extent dependent on capitalist contributions) the main reason was ideological. The

80 Kripalani to Rajendra Prasad, 5 June 1936. Rajendra Prasad Ms. III/36/coll.1; Rajagopalachari to Rajendra Prasad, 7 June 1936, Rajendra Prasad Ms. VIII/36/coll.1.
81 Rajendra Prasad et al to Nehru, 29 June 1936, Nehru Ms. Correspondence, Vol. 85.
82 See below, 1.2.5.
83 However, the ideological nature of the difference would have to be examined more through concrete practice and its effects than through statements. An invocation of the Right-Wing commitment to trusteeship is inadequate, for it could be argued that this was related to the united front priorities of the national movement, and to questions of the method by which democratic objectives could be achieved. For example, Rajendra Prasad was said to have noted that abolition of landlordism might save the tenant, but that in the present situation it would complicate matters and retard the objective of independence. Speech at Chhara, 5 June 1936, Bombay Chronicle, 6 June 1936, p. 28. And again, Kripalani: "... I don't think any of us would shrink from the disappearance of property in instruments of production if that was the only method of bringing relief to the masses. But whatever is necessary to do shall be after the [unclear: ways] of our people... we do not believe our civilisation and culture is decadent and [must] be abolished lock stock and barrel." To Rajendra Prasad, Rajendra Prasad Ms. III/36/coll.1. In this sense, what is more important is to identify the methods they espoused to bring about change, and what effects these methods would have in structuring inequality in the agrarian structure. We have attempted this in Chapter 3.
crisis was defused by Gandhi's intervention. He urged the withdrawal of the resignation\textsuperscript{84} and dissuaded a confused and embittered Nehru from bringing the issue before the AICC.\textsuperscript{85}

Everyone now started speaking "the same language". Surprisingly, the point of unity was the election manifesto, whose agrarian programme could hardly be called more radical than anything proposed in the past.\textsuperscript{86} Yet Nehru later noted that he had been surprised that there had been no opposition to it in the Working Committee.\textsuperscript{87} Perhaps the fact that these demands were now being articulated in the context of an election campaign, and were thus brought into the orbit of concrete promises to the electorate gave the programme a tangibility it had never possessed before.

Of course it is possible to argue, as Bipan Chandra has, that in the context of an anti-imperialist campaign, such minimum programmes were inevitable given the priority of nationalist unity.\textsuperscript{88} However, in this case, such an adjustment was not a conscious one oriented to those needs. From the viewpoint of

\textsuperscript{84} Rejendra Prasad to Nehru, 1 July 1936, Nehru Ms. Correspondence, Vol. 85.

\textsuperscript{85} Gandhi to Nehru, 8 July 1936, Nehru Ms. Correspondence Vol. 24.

\textsuperscript{86} There was no significant difference between the Karachi and Lucknow programmes and the Election Manifesto, nor was any change made at the Faizpur session. Encyclopaedia INC. Vol. I, pp. 149-51, Vol. XI, pp. 119-20, 154-40, 212-13.

\textsuperscript{87} "Where are We"? 28 February and 1-6 March 1939, SWJN, Vol. IX, p. 498.

\textsuperscript{88} "Long Term Dynamics of the Indian National Congress", op. cit., pp. 39-40.
the Right, they were not in any case prepared to conceive of anything more radical, even in terms of ultimate objectives. And from the leftist standpoint while they had indeed conceived of a minimum programme for the Congress,\(^8^9\) they could hardly have been happy that something similar to that was now being presented as the Congress' maximum programme.

Nevertheless, the Left (though not the Kisan Sabhaites) too reacted positively to the election manifesto. We shall now examine why this took place. In our estimation, the conditions for this shift lay in the left coming to realise that the weight of organised workers and peasants on the one hand and the power wielded by Rightists on the other made the changes they had envisaged for the Congress impractical in the immediate future.

1.2.2 The Weight of the Peasant Movement 1934-36:

The problem faced by the Left is indicated by an overview of Kisan organisation in this period, which does not suggest substantial influence in most areas. Rather is there a picture of the preliminary building up of organisations, through the examination of peasant needs, extensive tours by peasant leaders and the calling of meetings to build consciousness.\(^9^0\) This was

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\(^8^9\) The Kisan Sabha minimum programme included 50 per cent reduction in rent, revenue and water-rates, abolition of feudal levies, forced labour, illegal exactions and land revenue assessment on uneconomic holdings, amongst other demands. For the full programme, see proceedings of the All India Kisan Sabha, 11 and 13 April 1936 available in the *Congress Socialist*, Kisan Supplement, April 1936.

\(^9^0\) e.g. at Dohad-Jhalad in Gujarat where these was the first steps in the organisation of Bhil peasants on the standard kisan sabha issues in January. *Congress Socialist*, I, 2,
so in both Andhra and Bihar which were the strongholds of peasant mobilisation in the 1930s.

In his account of the movement in Andhra, N.G. Ranga notes that the Andhra Provincial Ryots Association was founded in Guntur in 1928 and that the peasantry were engaged in a number of agrarian movements during the civil disobedience campaign.91 Even after the calling-off of the movement, unrest continued with the formation of Ryots' Associations in Krishna92 with tenant-landlord clashes there93 and the occurrence of rent agita-

Cont'd. f.n. 90

1 February 1936, p. 17; in March there was an all Malabar Peasants Conference, at which it was resolved to set up a permanent Malabar Peasants' Association with E.M.S. Namboodiripad as convener and in that month the Utkal Krishak Sangh organised a large conference as well. Ibid., I, 16, 11 April 1936, p. 21. In June peasant conferences were held at Sambal (Punjab), and in U.P. at Una (where abolition of zamindari without compensation was proposed) Kore, Lakhnipur, Agra and Jhansi. In that month there were also two conferences in Oissa, one of which also demanded zamindari abolition; other conferences also took place in Maharashtra, and in Delhi the formation of a Kisan Sabha was announced. Ibid., I, 25 and 27, 13 and 27 June 1936.

91 N.G. Ranga, Revolutionary Peasants, New Delhi, 1949, pp. 60-61. In 1931 there was a forest satyagraha launched against the Venkatigiri Zamindar's enhancing of grazing fees and his attempt to deprive the peasants of their customary forest rights. There was also a no-debt movement to protest the refusal of government and creditors to grant moratorium. Ibid., pp. 95-96. Ranga does not make much mention of the no-tax movement in the Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts, though he does mention his arrest at Bezwada in this connection. Ibid. See Brian Stoddart, "The Structure of Congress Politics in Coastal Andhra, 1925-37", in D.A. Low (ed.), Congress and the Raj, op.cit., pp. 109-132, for further details of the no-tax campaign in these areas.

92 Home Dept. (Poll) Fortnightly Report (hereafter FR) for Madras for the second half of May 1934.

93 Madras FR(2), June 1934.
tations and agrarian labour strikes in Nellore. Organisational work was dominant however with the formation of "peasant schools", conferences and associations and the urging of peasants to undertake marches to bring their grievances to the attention of the administration and the assembly, mobilisation which seemed to have more success in Andhra than in Tamil Nadu.

Ranga draws attention to the opinion of both the Congress Socialists and of Sahajanand that the situation was not ripe in October 1935 for the formation of the All-India Kisan Organization, because it was felt that such a formation should not go ahead of provincial organisational efforts. And this seems to indicate the nature of the kisan movement in Bihar, and the careful tactics of the Bihar Kisan Sabha (BKS) during these years.

94 Madras FR(1), February 1934.
95 Madras FR(1), July 1935 and FR(1) April 1936.
97 A regional formation, the South Indian Federation of Workers and Peasants was formed on 28 April 1935 (AICC G.43 KW(1)/1935) and later that year in October an All-India Peasant Workers Conference was held at Madras. Ranga, op.cit., p. 68. Otherwise there was also an attempt to form district level associations. Madras FR (1), July 1935.
100 Also referred to in the text as BPKS, or Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, as it was known after the formation of the All-India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) in April 1936.
While there had been instances of peasant-landlord conflict during the civil disobedience movement, and there had been Kisan Sabha formation in Patna, Gaya, Monghyr, Champaran and Palamau at that time, this had not been sustained.\(^{101}\) The formation of the period 1934-39 really started off with the resurgence of the organisation to counter the Bihar Tenancy Amendment Bill and to challenge landlord attempts to mobilise for the Bill by forming a Kisan Sabha under their own leadership.\(^{102}\)

Rakesh Gupta\(^{103}\) has accurately characterised the subsequent period (1935-36) as one given over to organisational rather than agitational work. From 1934 Sahajanand conducted extensive tours through the province\(^{104}\) and Gupta has estimated that over 500 meetings were held in the period between April 1933 and October 1935\(^{105}\) and that from 33,000 in 1935, the BPKS membership shot up to 70,000 in 1936 and that in some districts organisation had reached down to the thana level.\(^{106}\)

This period can be seen as one of preparation for the struggles of 1936-39. Rarely was non-payment of rent or

\(^{101}\) A.N. Das, *ibid.*, p. 121.

\(^{102}\) *ibid.*, p. 110.


\(^{104}\) Between 1934 and 1935 Sahajanand toured through Tirhut, Muzaffarpur, Gaya, Purnea, Patna, Monghyr, Bhagalpur and Muzaffarnagar. See Bihar FRs for this period.

\(^{105}\) Gupta, *Bihar Peasantry*, op. cit., p. 96.

\(^{106}\) *ibid.*, pp. 99-100.
direct action advocated and while officials claimed that Sahajanand's tours resulted in non-payment of rent and fomented class hatred, Sahajanand's activity in fact seemed to urge peaceful methods. More characteristic was an urging that grievances be aired, through legal channels, such as mass demonstrations, petitions, deputations and postcards.

The Government claimed Sahajanand encouraged the withholding of rent in Tirhut. Bihar and Orissa FR(1) January 1934. There was also an agitation on the Tikari estate in Sadr subdivision of Gaya by tenants whose lands had been appropriated and sold up. The sub-divisional officer arrived at a settlement which according to Sahajanand was inadequate but which the amils did not abide by, causing further unrest. It is not clear whether the Kisan Sabha was involved, as the Government referred to "local agitators" as preventing the settlement. The dispute was settled by July. See Bihar FR(2), June, FR(1), July and FR (2) July 1936; Sahajanand to Yajnik, 12 July 1936. Yajnik Ms. F. no. 4(1). The All India Kisan Bulletin also noted that direct action was undertaken by tenants against eviction in Barathu, Gaya, leading to the imposition of section 144. But it also significantly noted that in many places tenants had succeeded through legal means in securing rent reduction and in recovering their lands. Congress Socialist, I, 29, 11 July 1936, pp. 17-18.

With reference to Sahajanand's tour of N. Muzaffarpur, though the Swami did not make any appeals to this effect. Bihar FR(1), June 1934.

"He has now become adept at infusing into his speeches the maximum amount of class hatred without actually saying anything actionable."Bihar FR(2) January 1935, (emphasis added).

Bihar FR(2), August 1935.

Bihar FR(2), April 1936.

As part of the BPKS organised "Reduce Malguzari Rent Day" on 26 March 1936, tenants were asked to present their demands before District Officers throughout the province. Congress Socialist, I, 14, 21 March 1936, pp. 20-21.

Bihar FR(1), July 1934.
directed at the administration. Large campaigns through such methods and meetings were also developed to demand the reduction of rent and canal rates. 114

And quite significantly, throughout most of this period Sahajanand worked closely with the Bihar Congress leadership, 115 and there was a tendency for Congress to make its political conferences coincide with Kisan Sabha meetings. 116 In fact by January it would seem that this harmonious relationship had been given institutional shape in the suggestion at the Chapra Political Conference of 15 January 1936 that Congress make an enquiry into agrarian problems. 117 The President, Ramdayalu Sinha, stressed the necessity of Congress taking more active interest in the agrarian programme and Sahajanand moved the resolution asking the PCC to investigate the condition of the peasants and to get the zamindars to reduce rent. A Congress Kisan Enquiry Committee (KEC) was then set up at a meeting of the Working Committee of the BPCC on 25 January. 118

However, it became clear that the Committee was actually oriented to countering the Kisan Sabha by counterposing negotia-

114 Note by Sahajanand on Kisan Sabha activities, 26 March 1936; Bombay Presidency Peasants Bureau Bulletin No. 3, Yajnik Ms. F. No. 4(11).

115 Sahajanand and Shri Krishna Singh used to appear together on the Kisan Sabha platform to demand rent and debt reduction. Bihar FR(2) July 1934, FR(1), January 1935.

116 Bihar FR(1), February 1935.

117 Excerpt from Kisan Enquiry Committee Report, Rajendra Prasad Ms. VII/1937/col.1.

118 K.B. Sahay, Secretary, Congress Kisan Enquiry Committee to all members of the Committee, 15 March 1936, ibid.
ted settlements to peasant action. This is indicated by two questions posed by the committee in its questionnaire:

(i) Are zamindars having difficulty in realising rent? Is it due to depression or inability or unwillingness of people to pay or the Kisan Sabha Movement? 119

(ii) Do you think the Kisan Sabha Movement has embittered the relations between the landlords and the tenants? 120

This emphasis is further borne out by the speeches made by leading Congressmen during the tours of the Committee (undertaken from June 1936). Rajendra Prasad noted that it would be possible to ameliorate kisan conditions without creating divisions amongst the people 121 and S.K. Sinha asked kisans to destroy evil thoughts:

They wanted zamindari abolition but... this desire (was) selfish due to wrong notions and unhealthy influences rather than to any feeling of patriotism... 122

The stress on diminishing the fear felt by the zamindars against the Congress was in fact so blatantly the object here that public pronouncement completely distorted actual experience. Thus the pro-Congress newspaper, The Searchlight:

It is gratifying to note that the Committee have been receiving in their work the cooperation of the zamindars who have, either personally or through their agents, generally

119 Section on Rent, q. 13, ibid.
120 Section on illegal exactions, q. 22, ibid.
121 From speeches at Jehanabad, 1-4 June 1936, Bombay Chronicle, 11 June 1936, p. 12.
122 Ibid.
assisted the Committee in assessing and appraising the situation. The zamindars must be satisfied by now that the Committee is by no means the sinister body that some of them may have thought it to be and has no designs up its sleeves to be unfolded at the proper moment. It is composed of men whose sense of justice and equity cannot be questioned... they have proclaimed in no uncertain terms that the abolition of the zamindari system is no part of their programme that (sic) while raiyats are entitled to all reasonable relief they are bound to pay their just dues....

It was a complete fiction that landlords aided the Committee. In an unpublished note the latter itself later acknowledged that at no stage did the landlords seriously help whether in framing the questionnaire or in eliciting replies. According to the Committee, the landlords in fact generally believed that the Committee was nothing but a department of the Kisan Sabha and that the Committee was meant to create troubles for landlords and that it did not represent the general public....

The differences between the Congress and Kisan Sabha derived from two sources. The emphasis on the Congress not embracing the objective of zamindari abolition, so stridently asserted in the Committee's declarations, can be put side by side with the internalisation of this demand by the Kisan Sabha from the end of 1935, at the 3rd session of the BKS at Hajipur.


124 Congress Kisan Enquiry Committee Report, Chapter I, Rajendra Prasad Ms. VII/37/coll.1.

125 A.N. Das, op. cit., p. 141. The demand was for abolition without compensation. Das has shown that there was a significant time gap between the proposal of this demand by Socialists, in 1934, and its acceptance. Sahajanand
While this was an important difference and one which would reflect a growing split between the Kisan Sabha and the Congress over the next four years, it must be underlined that the minimum programme advocated by the BEI's was not very different from that which was adopted by the Congress in its election manifesto. Perhaps the second difference was more significant, the way of handling agrarian unrest.

Government evaluation of differences here was quite perceptive. It was believed that the KEI intended to reassure the landlords by showing them that the Congress did not endorse the "more extreme" propaganda of the Kisan Sabha and that it also drew their attention to the "new political power" of their tenants and of the need to conciliate them.

But at another level, what was being attempted here was a substitution of the functioning of independent peasant unions by the Congress. This was not so much an anti-peasant policy as one which emphasised, springing from the compulsions of a multi-class anti-imperialist front, the need to resolve conflict through mediation, a process in which no single class was initially disagreed with this, though whether on ideological or tactical grounds is unclear.

126 See All India Kisan Bulletin, 10 July 1936, and f.n. 89

127 Report from the Commissioner, Patna, on the effects of the Committee's tours. However, he also noted that the ventilation of grievances before the Committee had had a disturbing effect on "uneducated ryots" who were now much more ready to take the law into their own hands. Bihar FR(1) August 1936.
represented by the mediator. The contrast was with an agitational method grounded in the compulsions of the peasantry independently organised to further their interests. 128

Sahajanand emphasised this problem when, at a Kisan Sabha meeting held simultaneously with the Chapra Political Conference when the KEC was proposed, he noted that he intended to keep the movement separate from the Congress Movement. 129 And though the Committee itself remarked that the BFKS had extended full cooperation to it, 130 Sahajanand himself kept aloof from it. 131

128 For elaboration, see Chapter 3.
129 Bihar FR(2), January 1936.
130 From the Committee's Report, Chapter I, Rajendra Prasad Ms. VII/37/coll.1.
131 Bihar FR(1), June 1936. It is not clear if the Swami had a seat on the Committee. His name was not initially listed amongst its members (they were Rajendra Prasad, A.N. Sinha, S.K. Sinha, Bipin Bhari Varma, Ramdayalu Sinha, Baldeo Sahay, Binodanand Jha, Ganga Sharan Sinha, K.B. Sahay, K.B. Sahay, Secretary to the Committee, to all members of the Committee, 15 March 1936, Rajendra Prasad Ms. VII/37/coll.1). A Government report at the time of the Committee's inaugural tours said the Swami was on the Committee. Bihar FR(1), June 1936. A.N. Das quotes Sahajanand as saying that Rajendra Prasad manipulated the Bihar RCC Working Committee to keep him out of the Enquiry Committee, causing him to reach the conclusion that with himself outside the Committee "the others would either be stooges of zamindars or, at best, interpreters", op.cit., p. 151. As cordial relations were still maintained between the Congress and the Sabha throughout 1936, this sounds unlikely. Perhaps, as these reflections on this period took place later, the complexity of differences may have been lost. For Ganga Sharan Sinha, who was on the original list, was a Kisan Sabha Member.
The Bihar case throws into sharp relief the characteristics of the peasant movement in this period. It was not a representative case, for it was probably the most developed movement of its kind. Nevertheless, the leadership tended to be cautious, concentrating on organisation and propaganda, painting here a more powerful version of what was happening elsewhere. They also preserved, over all, good relations with the Congress leadership in the province though, by 1936, a significant divergence had started emerging over agrarian objectives (zamindari abolition) and the methods used (peasant mobilisation by the Kisan Sabha vs. Right Wing Congress mediation between landlords and peasants). The problem was posed here of the relationship between the national and the peasant movement. In the next section, we will examine how this relationship was conceived of by Congressmen and Kisan and Trade Union leaders, as reflected in the replies to the Mass contacts Committee set up at the Lucknow Congress.

1.2.3 Conceptions of the Relationship Between the Congress and Unions

The replies to the Mass Contacts Committee (MCC) provide insight into a variety of problems presented in conceptualising the relationship between the national movement and the unions. The questionnaire sent out sought to gather the following information: What the existing state of Congress Committees was, in terms of membership and number of primary committees; when was it considered important that primary committees discuss...
matters with their PCOs; what results practice of the constructive programme had had; what the nature of Congress involvement in local movements had been; what the proportion of peasants and workers in the Congress organisation was; what other organisations existed in the area, what their nature was, and what the Congress' relationship to them was; and finally, what method was suggested for representation of workers and peasants in their relationship with the nationalist organisation. Replies are available from eleven Provincial Committees, twelve district Committees, one Town, two Taluka and two other Committees. Replies were also sent in by the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha, the Andhra Zaminder Ryots' Association and the Punjab Peasants' Bureau.

For our purposes, the major issues here were the opinions on the mode of working-class and peasant representation in the Congress, the incidence of unions in the country, and the relationship that existed between Congress Committees and these organisations. Confirming our review of the state of peasant organisation in this period, the most striking feature of the responses is the admission of the effective absence of peasant unions in most areas. Where this is not so (the Dohad-Thalod Congress Committee) this was due to the Socialist nature of the Committee, manifested in their active organisation of a peasant

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133 See for example the responses of the Punjab PCC (no date), Kuppam Firka Congress Committee, Tamil Nadu (5 June 1936), Mahakoshal PCC (30 June 1936), Sylhet DCC (14 July 1936), Maharashtra PCC (no date), Basti DCC (11 July 1936), Walluvanad Taluka Congress Committee, Kerala (no date), Delhi PCC (29 June 1936).
function as an opposition, with the hopes that at subsequent elections a reversal of fortunes would be achieved. The impasse imperilled the whole notion of subsequent elections, of an orderly political functioning. As a result Congress's rivals were forced to actually persuade Congress to take office. Evidently the motive here was to contain the Congress, not to replace the British. But the logic of such containment could also result in a political self-negation for such groups; in admitting the centrality of the Congress to viable constitutional arrangements they undermined their own claims to political leadership.

There was a relation between the ideological discussion of the period and this socio-political process. The case of The Statesman, and its implications for European business attitudes is one example. For the landlords, The Indian Nation had been vocal in urging rapprochement. And the Pioneer's articulate intervention to achieve a solution must be put side by side with its self-image as the voice of the enlightened landlords. Representatives of the class such as the Nawab of Chhatari, leader of the National Agricultualist Party, threw the nature of this dilemma into sharp relief. To maintain a

153 See above, f.n. 140

154 They explained their rationale for wanting the Congress in office as a way of exposing their programme as "wild and extravagant", which would not occur if the Congress stayed out of office. Alongside this was an admission that landlords must accept a certain abrogation of their privileges. This would enable them to benefit in the long run and this would be best done by ensuring constitutional functioning. 10 April 1937, p. 8.
union affiliated to the All India Kisan Committee. The major exceptions were the Bihar Kisan Sabha and the Andhra Zamin-
dar Ryots' Association - cases we shall discuss later.

As a result of this dominant picture, even when collective affiliation of unions was considered progressive (and there were very few instances of this opinion, the only major organisation favouring it, and this too with certain qualifications, being the UPPCC) it was not deemed feasible. The Malabar DCC, and the Dohad-Jhalod CC, were the only units which were un-
ambiguously in favour of collective affiliation.

Direct enrolment was more generally projected as the best means of representing these interests, and this was urged

134 Ibid.
135 The UPPCC memorandum was formulated in meetings of May and June and the response sent on 28 August 1936, ibid. The Maharashtra PCC was divided over the issue of func-
tional representation. It was noted that peasant unions hardly existed but labour unions did and affiliation of these was advocated. Ibid. The Bengal PCC was also divided (7 June 1936), ibid.
136 The Punjab PCC deemed collective affiliation desirable, but noted that there were no significant unions. Reply undated, ibid. So too did the Kuppam Firka CC, ibid.
138 Reply dated 11 June 1936, ibid.
139 See replies of Kumbakonam Taluka CC (22 July 1936), Nagpur PCC (n.d.), Karaikudi DCC, Tamil Nadu (8 June 1936), Basti DCC (11 July 1936), Delhi PCC, Broach (26 June 1936), Panchmahals (n.d.) and Surat (n.d.) DCCS, Gujarat PCC (23 July 1936), Kerala PCC (15 August 1936), Bihar PCC (1 August 1936), Bombay PCC (27 June 1936), ibid.
because of the fear that collective affiliation would give rise to divisiveness, a fear that was expressed even when it was admitted that there was an absence of the development of peasant unions. This emphasis seemed to point to a fear of a conflictual organisational disjuncture. The specific fear of class-struggle arising out of collective affiliation was only expressed by the Bihar PCC, the Gujarat PCC and its district bodies, and the Delhi PCC.

This is an important distinction. For what was being broached here was not merely the fear of radicalism, but of political control fractured into agencies with different compulsions. This is indicated by the fact that in a number of instances where opinion about the mode of representation was uncertain (the Maharashtra and Bengal PCCs) or firmly against collective affiliation (Panch Mahals DCC, Bihar PCC) it was noted that cooperation (an issue separate from the mode of representation) with existing unions could be envisaged if they accepted the creed (non-violence) and "principles" of the Cong-

140 This was so of all of the above. The Bombay PCC Secretary, S.K. Patil, said that the reason for the rejection of the collective affiliation demand was because it went against the previous 15 years of Congress policy. It was also noted that it would weaken the Congress, presumably meaning that it would divide its supporters, Bombay Chronicle, 27 June 1936, p. 7.

141 As with the Basti DCC and the Delhi PCC, ibid.
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
In our interpretation this would not only encompass methods but leadership.

The significance of this issue is indicated by the pronouncements of N.G. Ranga, the Andhra peasant leader. In his formulation of collective affiliation of peasant organisations to the Congress, he noted that while peasants should be allowed to be independent members of the Congress apart from their holding union membership, indirect members would function in a system of dual responsibility. While direct members would naturally abide by Congress rulings, indirect members would owe primary responsibility to the functional organisations.

The implications of this notion of dual responsibility were expressed in the stipulation that:

Any decision taken by a special session of the AICC or PCC by 2/3 majority of all those present shall immediately become operative on all affiliated organisations including those of the peasants, provided it does not conflict with any decision taken and pursued by the All India or Provincial Peasants' Committee during the previous six months, regarding the class interests of the peasantry....

He went on to note that while politics was the preserve of the Congress, economic interests was that of the peasant organisations and that

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145 Ibid.

146 N.G. Ranga to J. Daulatram, 18 May 1936, ibid.

147 However, it was noted that if the peasants' committees concerned did not meet in a special session and veto the Congress decision by a 2/3 majority, the Congress decision would become binding. Ibid.
any decision either to strike or to start satyagraha to redress any economic grievances of peasants can be taken by the peasants organisation in accordance with its own rules and shall become operative, irrespective of the decisions of the Congress...148

Further, the Congress could keep aloof from any such decision, but must not interfere with it. And, conversely, it would be possible for peasant organisations not to agree to fall in line with the Congress whenever it decided in favour of a campaign of civil disobedience or any other method of direct action through a decision supported by 2/3 majority of all those present at a special session of the peasant organisation.149

Ranga's conceptions here are perplexing. These suggestions point to a completely unreal sense of the weight of kisan organisations, far beyond their actual level of development in the country. Such ideas fitted in with a notion of organisations so powerful that they could enter into an equal relationship with the Congress. So unreal was it in fact that it seems unlikely that the motive here was to develop a united front structure in which the seeds of conflict and social-ideological

148 "But it shall be the duty of the peasant organisations to give due notice of its intention to launch any such serious campaign to the Provincial and All India Congress Committees and defer the commencement of its campaign by one week or a fortnight at the request of the PCC and by one fortnight or a month at that of the AICC to bring about a settlement between the Government, zamindars or Mahajans on the one hand and the peasants on the other." Ibid.

149 But, as before, if no such majority decision were arrived at within 2 months then the peasant organisation would be tied to the Congress decision. Ibid.
polarization could be sown. Rather did it have the appearance of an ideal conception - separate from its real possibilities - in which the motor of development would lie in the decision-making of the peasantry.

Whatever the intentions here, such notions were to lead to trouble later, during the elections. And it was over the question of how relations between unions and the Congress would be conducted in this sphere that the type of problems suggested in Ranga's conception surfaced again. This is revealed in a discussion between the Congress Labour Sub-Committee (LSC) and the Trade Union Congress (TUC) in November 1936.150

It must be emphasised that adumbrated here, separate from all practical questions of cooperation, there were very real problems of political principle involved. The LSC representatives (all right-wingers, barring Wasani)151 expressed unease about the TUC's emphasis on class-struggle, and were pressing for the union representatives to accept the principle of arbitration. The other point of tension along the lines of principle was over the issue of non-violence, which again the LSC was eager to get a commitment on.152

Both of these points could of course have been tactically adjusted to by the unionists. But they were not very live issues

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150 The following account is in ibid.

151 The other members of the Labour Sub-Committee were Shankarlal Banker, Jairamdas Daulatram, and Kripalani. Bombay Chronicle, 20 August 1936.

152 Rajendra Prasad Ms. IX/36 (emphasis added).
in our estimation, if there had been a better understanding of the practical working of joint action. One point of unease for the LSC was the TUC's insistence that the joint Congress-TUC Committees proposed by the TUC for action on specific issues would be responsible to both organisations. If this had to be specified, there were evidently differences anticipated which would make the whole notion of institutionalising such joint action doubtful. The notion - never specified in the manner Ranga had done however - of dual responsibility was present also in Maniben Kara's formulation that

Working-class representatives in the Congress will be naturally agitating for their immediate political demands and they want representation on the INC to be the political mouthpiece of the working class. The INC is the only anti-imperialist organisation in the country. At the same time we try our best to enrol members as much as we can for the Congress in the labour areas in our individual (capacity?)

There is evidently a tension in the phrase "immediate political demands" and "political mouthpiece" which suggests a distance from the political demands already enshrined in the Congress objective. This revealed a certain presumption about the Congress leadership, and of the existing Congress programme, which could hardly go down well in the light of communist attacks on the nationalists after 1929. Such suspicions were strengthened in the context of the discussions about the elections. The TUC argued that they be allowed to chose candidates in the labour constituencies, and that the Congress should also accept TUC

153 Ibid.
154 Ibid. (emphasis added).
suggestions in the case of general constituencies with a majority labour vote. (The second was termed a request, the first a condition for joint action in the elections, and in both cases the candidate would sign the Congress pledge). The LSC representatives seemed unhappy about this (predictably, as they were after all Right-Wingers) but what is relevant here is that the TUC did not give a commitment that they would accept the Congress verdict if their candidate was not chosen. ¹⁵⁵

Perhaps the UPPCC response to the MCC sets out these problems in their complexity. While this unit suggested that direct enrolment continue, collective affiliation was acceptable, but on one condition:

We are entirely opposed to the Trade Union Bureaucracy or the Executive of the Kisan Sabhas being given the power to choose representatives... we approve... (that) the workers' and peasants' in a Trade Union or a Kisan Sabha should themselves elect their representatives. ¹⁵⁶

Further, the UPPCC noted that the concerned trade union or Kisan Sabha should be affiliated in terms of Congress creed, objective and policy. ¹⁵⁷

This was a significant position, one which asserted the political primacy of the Congress party. At the same time, it was not an intransigent nationalist position, antagonistic to the existence of unions. This was indicated not only by its

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.
¹⁵⁶ UPPCC Secretary to Mass Contacts Committee, 28 August 1936, ibid.
¹⁵⁷ Ibid.
acceptance of collective affiliation as an ideal, but in its assertion of the necessity of Kisan Sabhas. This was because there was a definite urge for them among the peasantry and because

The Congress can go far in helping the peasantry but it cannot, constituted as it is, easily take part in their day to day demands. It is likely that such a situation will be exploited as it has sometimes been... by Government agency or unscrupulous persons... it is desirable that Kisan Sabhas should be started with the goodwill of the Congress and with its cooperation... 158

What was argued here was that the Congress did require to be receptive to class demands, that the best mode of impressing this on the party was through class organisations, a process which perhaps might be effected through collective affiliation. However, there was a clear distinction being made here between anti-imperialist and class drives. The latter should not challenge or disrupt the former, whose arbiter was the Congress. There was evidently here a suspicion of the politics of existing trade unions and Kisan Sabhas in this context. And there was an echo of this fear in the hesitation with which the idea of cooperation with working-class unions was approached in other responses. 159

However, it is necessary, within this argument, to note that where unions and, therefore, the possibility of joint work did exist, antipathy to the Congress on the grounds of union sectarianism could equally represent an unwillingness in the

158 Ibid.

159 Response of the Maharashtra and Bengal RCCs in ibid.
party to take up these demands. For a nationalist emphasis which at the same time understood the need to develop class organisations and to relate with them, as occurred in the case of the UPPCC, was not characteristic. This unit had in fact had a chequered history in this context, having led a no-rent movement during the civil disobedience movement. As the Committee itself noted, the absence of significant independent Kisan organisation was related to the tendency of local U.P. Congress Committees to function as Kisan organisations. And recent research has shown that, where Kisan Sabhas had been established in the previous years they were not always related to agrarian needs but were sometimes fronts for terrorist organisation, as in Azamgarh and Ghazipur. There were however also Kisan Sabhas set up in Benares, Ballia, Allahabad, Fyzabad and Sultanpur in this period.

A very different picture, and one which falls outside the range of problems we have discussed so far, is provided by the Bihar case. As we have shown, the BPKS had generally cordial relations with the BPCC, but a divergence had started taking place over objectives and methods. Nevertheless, these differences did not lead to the attitudes of dual responsibility as

160 Reply of the UPPCC, ibid.


162 The Ballia Kisan Sabha was formed in December 1934. UP FR(1) December 1934; and sabhas were also formed in Allahabad, Benares, Fyzabad and Sultanpur districts in the following month. UP FR(2), January 1935.
conceived of by Ranga and the TUC. In fact Sahajanand had been unhappy with Ranga's suggestions for collective affiliation, made without prior consultation with the All India Committee.163

The BPKS' own terms were moderate and did not posit different arenas of responsibility. The recommendations concentrated on seeking the inclusion of Kisan Sabha representatives at various levels of the Congress organisation. In addition, while it was insisted upon that only organisations recognised by the AIKC should get representation in the Congress, provided they adopted the Congress creed, it was also specified that the concerned FCC would have the right to examine and ascertain the membership of the Kisan organisations seeking representation in its committees, and that all Kisan representatives must enrol themselves as Congress members.164

163 Yajnik noted that "Professor Ranga has hurriedly sent his own scheme to the press. I wish that we on behalf of the All India Kisan Committee could present an agreed scheme on the subject after your sub-Committee has presented its report." To Assistant Secretary, BKS, 29 May 1936. Sahajanand agreed that a unanimous recommendation be formulated and "deplore(d) the hurry of Mr Ranga". To Yajnik, 8 January 1936, Yajnik Ms. F. no. 4(ii).

164 The recommendations for representation were as follows:

i) Thana Congress Committee: one Kisan representative for every 100 members of the Thana Kisan Sabha;

ii) DCC: no district Kisan Sabha having less than 5000 members would be entitled to representation. All such eligible units would send representatives to the DCC in the proportion of one-fifth in number of total number of members of DCC entitled to be elected by the four anna membership. For every 1000 additional members of the District Kisan Sabha there would be one additional representative in the FCC;

iii) FCC: Members of the DCC representing Kisans in a district bear the same proportion to other delegates from the same district as Kisan representatives bear to the total number of other members of the DCC.
Given this formulation, and the fact that Congress-Kisan Sabha relations in this province had been unstrained, Rajendra Prasad's response to the idea of collective affiliation was unreasonable. In contrast to the UPPCC response, which had made a distinction between Congress's multi-class compulsions and the unions' economic, class based rationale, both of which it saw to be necessary and related, the Congress Right Wing leader claimed that the Congress had peasant membership ranging from 50.95 per cent and so it was already representing this class and there should therefore be no need for any other organisation. To insist on one which would then be functionally represented would be to invite class conflict.165

While the overall possibilities or collective affiliation - in terms of significant union presence, and of a clear understanding amongst existing union leaders of the political primacy of the Congress - did not exist, the Bihar case represents an instance where in spite of the Kisan Sabha functioning in accord with the compulsions of nationalist unity, such a reorganisation could have been supported but was not. Inspite of all the positive features of the relationship, Jayaprakash's attempt to commit the Bihar PCC to collective affiliation was defeated on the grounds that such a reorganisation would engen-

Cont'd.. f.n. 164


165 Rajendra Prasad's draft proposal for the MCC. Rajendra Prasad Ms. IX/36/coll.4. Significantly, in claiming that collective affiliation would lead to conflict, he only cited Ranga's proposals.
der the possibilities of class conflict. While evidently developments in any one province could not determine all-India policy, especially when the picture elsewhere was so different, the arguments put forward in the Bihar case suggest that motives of an ideological and social nature rather than a political rationale were at work.

1.2.4 Differences on the Left

The Socialist experience of these months was given expression in Jayaprakash's draft for the MCC, and in a corresponding shift in the position of the CSP between its Meerut and Faizpur sessions, i.e. between January and December 1936.

In his draft for the MCC, while emphasising the indispensability of independent peasant organisations (because the Congress Committees, also representing other classes and interests, would not be able to undertake such work) the recommendation for joint action was substituted with an orientation to joint action. This would be arranged by the AICC appointing a committee to meet representatives of national or local labour and peasant organisations and the results of their deliberations being put before the concerned committee for sanction. A more concrete conception of middle class participation was also mooted: it was recommended that the demands of employees, shop

166 Bihar RCC response to the MCC, ibid.

keepers, municipal workers, rate payers etc. be embraced and
that they be organised on these grounds. 168

A shift in emphasis in the party programme is also in
evidence. Whereas in the Meerut draft programme collective
affiliation was specifically recommended in the list of sugges-
tions made for the Congress programme, 169 by Faizpur, while the
ultimate imperative of bringing the masses into the Congress
"by securing their representation in the Committees of the
latter" remained, that this was not likely to occur soon was
indicated in the note that "Till then close link should be
built up by class organisations and Congress Committees for the
purpose of joint work..." 170 At the Faizpur Congress too Nehru
was to note that the question of collective affiliation, though
ultimately desirable, no longer seemed so pressing. 171 The
facts of the unions' lack of development, their often uncertain
political attitudes, and the realities of right-wing power had
all contributed to a revision on the part of the left-wing of
their understanding of the ways in which the Congress could be
radicalized.

168 Jayaprakash's Draft Proposal for the MCC, Rajendra Prasad
Ms. IX/36/coll.4.

169 Section on "Programme for the Congress" in the CSP's
"Meerut Draft Programme" Nehru Ms. F. No. 33.

170 The Thesis of the Congress Socialist Party, adopted at
the 3rd Annual Conference of the Party, Faizpur, 23-25
December 1936. Archives of the Contemporary History of
India, Jawaharlal Nehru University F. No. 1936/57a.

171 This was because there were few organised workers and
peasant unions in the country "which are likely to profit
by Congress affiliation". Presumably he implied by this
that as the unions were not powerful, affiliation to the
Congress would not help them. Presidential Address, Faiz-
pur Congress, Encyclopaedia INC, pp. 196-97.
It is this background which suggests the reasons for the support given by the Socialists to the Election Manifesto of August. The original document was drafted by Rajagopalachari, Patel, Rajendra Prasad and Bhulabhai Desai, but Nehru's was the dominant influence in its shaping.172 The Socialists declared the manifesto satisfactory,173 and though it was regretted that the decision on offices had been deferred yet again,174 it was even suggested that in some ways it was an advance over the Lucknow Congress resolution on the 1935 Act in that it was specifically stated that the purpose of contesting the elections was to end the constitution.175 Whole-hearted cooperation in the election campaign was offered and it was decided that party members would stand for election wherever selected by the Congress Parliamentary Committee (CPC).176 As demonstration of CSP support, Narendra Deva seconded the moving of the manifesto in the AICC.177

174 E.C. Meeting, ibid.
175 The view of Masani, ibid.
176 E.C. Meeting, ibid.
177 Narendra Deva at the same time specified that he and his socialist colleagues disagreed with the shelving of the decision on office acceptance till after the elections. The CSP went on to support Caveshahr's amendment declaring for a decision by the next session, which was voted down. Ibid.
However, such enthusiasm was not expressed by all left groups. Both Sahajanand and Ranga were disappointed that the objective of zamindari abolition had not been accepted as Congress policy. Moreover, Sahajanand also felt that even the demands which had been accepted in the agrarian programme had been too vaguely framed. The CSP too had made a hazy allusion to this when they noted that there were short-comings in the manifesto, but this had not been emphatic.

What was developing here was a difference in the angle of vision. As we have shown, the CSP had by this time started reviewing the possibilities of action and of demands in terms of the overall situation in the Congress. On the other hand, it seemed that peasant leaders like Sahajanand and Ranga were now tending to see things increasingly from the viewpoint of the peasant movement. The tensions observed here continued into the sphere of selecting candidates for the elections.

As in the case of the issue of the mode of peasant representation in the Congress, it was Ranga who represented differences at their most marked. Well before the elections, he had noted that the Kisan group had resolved to seek the permission of the Congress to start a Kisan-cum-Congress Parlai-

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180 Ibid.

memtary group "to safeguard their special interests in the provincial Assembly while accepting a Congress Party whip on all questions or occasions of confidence." 182 He noted that wherever the peasants' organisation was strong enough they "must have the right to suggest their own candidates from Congressmen and the Congress must adopt them as their official candidates." 183 All the legislators thus selected and elected "must sign the pledge of Congress and Kisans and they have to be permitted to sit together as a separate group in Congress party, answering their own group's whips whenever their class interests are in question... Unless Congress accepts this degree of alliance and in addition agrees to consult Kisans in its selection of other candidates in the rural areas, it may not be... in the interests of Kisans to throw themselves fully into the election campaign of the Congress..." 184

As we had pointed out earlier, it was unreasonable to expect a multi-class organisation like the Congress to accept such restrictions. 185 However, Ranga's views were not repre-


183 To Rajendra Prasad, ibid.

184 Ibid.

185 As Nehru noted to Ranga, "Personally I do not quite see how separate groups, with freedom to vote on specific issues, can be formed amongst the Congress candidates or members. If this principle is accepted it will have to be extended to other subjects also and all unity of effort and direction will go. I would like very much to have Ryots' representatives chosen as Congress candidates and I would like further to see the Congress adopt a
sentative; they had been conceived without consulting his colleagues in the AIK186 and the all-India body put forward a different formulation.

The AIK requested the CPC and the AICC to incorporate the minimum demands as stated in the AIK programme and to pledge every Congress candidate to the struggle for the realisation of these demands inside and outside the legislature. It also urged Congress to adopt only such candidates for the forthcoming election to the provincial Assembly as had stood for the peasantry. To this end it authorised its provincial units, "wherever the strength of the Kisan Movement and the mass support of the peasantry warrant such a move, to submit a list of candidates to the Provincial Parliamentary Boards for adoption as Congress Kisan candidates..."187

There was no suggestion here of the dual responsibility that was characteristic of Ranga's attitude, and though it was seen as imperative that Congress adopt pro-peasant candidates, it was not posed as a condition, and it was understood that the

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186 See foot note 163.

187 AIKC G-13/1936-37. The CSP position was identical. EC, AICSP meeting, 21 August 1936, Bombay Chronicle, 22 August 1936, p. 8.
likelihood of this demand being met would be dependent on the strength of peasant mobilisation, a note typical of Sahajanand's approach.

In the context of the elections, Ranga's appeals continued to sour relations with the Congress Right-Wing. At an Andhra Ryots' Conference in November it was resolved to support Congress candidates *provided they agreed to individually and collectively support and implement the Peasants' charter of minimum demands....* 188 The Conference also called upon all peasant organisations and leaders "to refuse to cooperate with those candidates, to whichever party they belonged, who were zamindars and who were the avowed supporters of the zamindari system...." 189

This position developed into the demand for a definite pledge by Congress candidates of Andhra, Tamil Nadu and Malabar that they would work to implement the minimum peasant demands. Patel threatened disciplinary action, noting that only pledges approved by the AIICC were valid 190 and Ranga withdrew the pledge. 191

Though the AIKC position had been different, when the threat of disciplinary action did come up against Ranga, Sahajanand denounced the move as dictatorial. 192 Perhaps what

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188 All India Kisan Bulletin, 20 November 1936 in Yajnik Ms. F. no. 2.
189 Ibid.
192 Ibid., 18 February 1937.
weighed here was the general sense of injustice which had otherwise dominated left-wing attitudes to Congress candidate selection. The Faizpur AIKC session deplored the attitude of the Congress Parliamentary Committee in not selecting those "who stand for the interests of the masses" and for "making pacts and understandings with the reactionary anti-National and anti-Peasant parties and individuals... and otherwise in nominating the erstwhile communalists and other reactionaries, who have in the past opposed the National and Peasant interests, as the official Congress candidates for the elections." 193 And the Socialists, in their Executive Committee session in November, made similar charges. 194

In the next section we will examine to what extent left-wing charges were borne out. This will provide the opportunity to scrutinize two levels of the problem of united front as it was practised. Firstly, the attitudes of the Right Wing at the level of governable adjustment will be discussed; and, secondly, a tentative charting will be made of a level which was in a sense not really so governable, once the decision to fight, and win, the elections had been taken. In this latter

193 Second session of the AIKC, Faizpur, 26 and 27 December 1936. Yajnik Ms. F. No. 2.
194 The EC noted that the consideration in the selection of candidates was to ensure a majority for the Congress parties "possibly with an eye to formation of Ministries. This leads to compromises and pacts with the reactionary elements as well as to selection of highly undesirable candidates." Allahabad Meeting, EC, AICSP, 3 November 1936, Bombay Chronicle, 4 November 1936.
sense, it can be argued that, due to financial compulsions, and to the compulsions arising out of how power existed in the Congress at the lower levels, there was a deeper limit posed to the advances possible to the left within the organisation.

1.2.5 The Dynamics of United Front: The 1937 Elections

At the level of controllable adjustment with the left in the elections, perhaps the most striking example lay in the handling of the TUC. Here the misgivings of the LSC members about the TUC’s acceptance of Congress’s primacy in matters political were borne out. In the two major instances of TUC - Congress disagreement, candidature in the Bombay B and F wards General Constituency and the Nagpur Labour Constituency, it was noted that the TUC nominees for the seats whom the Congress Parliamentary Committee had rejected had not taken the Congress pledge.

Nimbkar, the rejected TUC candidate in the B and F wards case, noted, in response to charges by BPCC General Secretary S.K. Patil that he was not prepared to take the pledge unless he was guaranteed candidature, that "Mr Patil forgets that I was the TUC nominee and as such I had to be extremely cautious in giving any undertaking for the INC.... I have no hesitation in saying that the only loyalty I recognise is loyalty towards the working class..." In the Nagpur case too, Dr

196 Ibid., 18 January 1937, p. 3. For an elaboration of this position, see S.A. Dange to Nehru, 2 January 1937, AICC E-14/1937.
Khare, the relevant member of the CPC, noted that by the time the Congress announced its nominee none of the persons suggested by the Provincial TUC had given assurance of support to the Congress or signed a pledge.\footnote{Bombay Chronicle, 3 February 1937.}

The Bombay case was even more complicated. While the CPC had refused support to Nimbkar\footnote{Though a number of reasons were proffered by Patil, the most convincing one was that Nimbkar had always been hostile to the Congress and now refused to sign the pledge unconditionally. Bombay Chronicle, 13 January 1937, p. 8.} they did offer the seat to another TUC leader, the Royist Maniben Mulji,\footnote{Which S. R. Dange described as "an attempt to play one TUC worker against another....", to Nehru, 2 January 1937, op. cit.} or suggested that a panel of TUC nominees be put up to the Congress Parliamentary Committee from which a choice could be made. But Mulji refused candidacy and no panel was put forward for consideration.\footnote{Statement by Vallabhai Patel, Bombay Chronicle, 11 November 1936. The CSP group in AITUC had also argued for a panel of trade unionists, and had managed to carry this policy against that of those who wanted the TUC itself to nominate candidates on its own ticket and then ask the Congress to nominate them. But this policy was countered by the "concerned group" persisting in sending Nimbkar's name alone. (How they could do this in opposition to official policy is unclear). This group, in the CSP account, had spoken of "forcing Congress to accept Nimbkar or of exposing it in the eyes of the workers as a bourgeois organisation..." The CSP also noted that Mulji turned down the CPC's offer without consulting the EC of AITUC or the BCSP at whose instance she was nominated. In all this the Bombay TUC seemed to be functioning independently of its parent body, for apparently the CSP proposal to this unit of a joint leftist campaign in the elections, and their cautioning that Nimbkar was attacking the Congress while applying for candidacy and should be restrained, were not responded to. Bombay Chronicle, 12 November 1935, p. 8.} In the light of the CPC's position, Mulji's charge...
that the CP. did not consider the TUC "an organisation was unwarranted. As a result of these differences the breach became open and another TUC man, Joglekar, was put up in opposition to the official Congress candidate, Jinaben Joshi.

According to pro-Congress sources, the contest became acrimonious. Nimbkar criticised the Congress, aligned with Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party and fights took place between Congress and BPTUC supporters. It can be argued that by the way the TUC handled the problem of Congress candidature here, they had lost an opportunity of an assembly seat, and sown the seeds of continuing conflict on largely irrelevant grounds.

The problem of accommodating the Kisan organisations was much more complicated than this. In terms of the AIKC resolution itself the very possibility of making a demand for represen-

201 Presumably meaning here the organisation of the working class. Stated in her report to the Bombay Provincial TUC, as quoted in Nimbkar's response to S.K. Patil, Bombay Chronicle, 18 January 1937, p. 3.


203 S.K. Patil's statement, Bombay Chronicle, 21 January 1937, pp. 5, 10; 1 February 1937, p. 5. It was even claimed that a Hindu Mahasabha leader was pleased with the nature of the propaganda in favour of Joglekar and that his campaign brought in its wake appeals to communal, caste and religious sentiments. Bombay Chronicle, 3 February 1937, p. 3. But even Nehru, a less motivated source, charged the TUC with joining hands with anti-Congress elements. Bombay Chronicle, 10 February 1937, p. 7. He also noted that by adopting the position they were, they were keeping workers away from their legitimate share in the national movement. Ibid.

204 M.D. Gilder (Congress), B.R. Ambedkar (Independent Labour Party) and Jinabhai Joshi (Congress) were returned from this constituency. Joglekar secured 5th position. Bombay Chronicle, 25 February 1937, p. 8.
tation in the list of Congress candidates would be dependent on the strength of the Kisan Movement, which, as we have seen, was extremely unevenly developed in the country.

To compound this problem were the inevitable considerations that would go into the selection of candidates; those of their financial viability and their capacity, in terms of political and social weight in the constituency, to achieve victory.

These considerations could of course lead to the most cynical of adjustments, and ones which were sometimes beyond the control of the leadership, a feature indicated by the statement brought out by Vallabhbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Abdul Gaffar Khan, Jamnalal Bajaj and Nehru to the effect that there was a tendency on the part of some Congress Committees to recommend persons "whose past record and even present activities have been opposed to the Congress".

A dependence on people of local power and influence, whether genuine Congressmen or otherwise, was in fact inevitable given the financial compulsions at work. Central finance was weak, and even with contributions from capitalists, was

205 See foot note 187.

206 17 November 1936. Rajendra Prasad Ms. I/36/coll.4. The statement went on to stress quality of candidates rather than winning of seats and emphasised the importance of candidates being chosen from those who supported the Congress objective and its policy towards the legislatures. Finally, and quite unrealistically, it was noted that "we trust... that all candidates who have already been nominated will bear this in mind, and if any of them consider it necessary to reconsider their decision in view of this fact, they may do so...."

207 A Government analysis of central Congress finance reported that this had chiefly come from Birla, Dalmia and
just not adequate to meet the needs of the election campaign, and it was noted at the first Congress Parliamentary Committee meeting that every candidate should bear his own expenses.\footnote{208}

It is clear from the appeals to the CPC, and to other extra-provincial financial sources, that this could not always be the norm. Pant for example had noted early on that while he understood that provincial elections should be the preserve of the concerned province he doubted whether this would work in practice,\footnote{209} and later he was to note that as in U.P., with few exceptions, "genuine Congressmen" had been put up, financial requirement would be heavy.\footnote{210} The plea for extra-provincial 

Cont'd. f.n. 207  


\footnote{208} CPC meeting, 1 July 1936, Rajendra Prasad, Ms. 1/36.


\footnote{210} Pant to Rajendra Prasad, 3 November 1936. Rajendra Prasad Ms. I/36/coll.3. Tomlinson, on the basis of material available in the India Office Library, has noted of the U.P. elections that "in many cases expenses of Congress candidates were less, sometimes a great deal less" than their opponents, an observation he seeks to balance by noting on the other hand that in about one-third of the contested seats Congress MLAs spent more lavishly than their opponents. Indian National Congress and the Raj: The Penultimate Phase, 1929-42, New Delhi, 1976, p. 83. However, as no work has been done to establish whether such candidates banked upon their own resources to contest the elections, or whether they received funds from the CPC, no definite evaluation can be made about their social background.
finance was also voiced by Rajagopalachari for Tamil Nadu. 211

Nevertheless, even if there had been a reasonable amount in the hands of the provincial leadership to disburse, the business of candidate selection was still not so easily subject to control. Tomlinson has emphasised this aspect of the elections to buttress his theory that faction at a local and district level had become more and more decisive. He has shown how in certain cases of Bihar candidate selection it was such considerations that functioned, leaving provincial leaders helpless and the Kisan Sabha hopefuls excluded. 212 In some cases, however, the provincial leadership were also party to the decision. In one such instance the leading Kisan Sabha leader, Kishori Prasanna Sinha, was dropped for two reasons; in order to put up a strong enough candidate to contest the election with "a rich and resourceful zamindar" and to accommodate the wishes of Ramdayalu Sinha, DCC President. The other possible constituency for the Kisan Sabha leader was allotted to Rameshwar Prasad Sinha, "a lawyer, well-to-do, and President of the Muzaffarpur TCC." It was because of the Bihar Congress' failure to put up Kishori Prasanna that Sahajanand resigned. 213

211 This was addressed to Munshi, after Patel had told the Tamil leader that no more could be afforded for his province. Rajagopalachari noted that there were still a large number of candidates who did not have money. He was asking Munshi as he was sure Bhulabhai Desai had already been "fleeced by the Sirdar". To Munshi, 19 January 1937, Munshi Ms. F. No. 24/31.

212 Indian National Congress, p. 79.

213 Rajendra Prasad to Patel, 17 November 1936. Rajendra Prasad Ms. I/36/coll.3.
The selection of such candidates was then partially abetted, and partially beyond the control of the Gandhian Right. However, it should also be noted that there were instances when this group refused to accept such compulsions. The most striking illustration was in Rajendra Prasad’s refusing to succumb to the demands of the industrialist Dalmia, the Bihar Congress’s principle financier, that their candidate list be altered to exclude a mill-striker. This was an important decision, for it meant a serious blow not only to Bihar finances but also to central Congress funds. However, mediation by Khaitan and Bajaj led to rapprochement but, while Dalmia did finally supply funds, and even seems to have convinced Patel and Prasad about the turbulent nature of the candidate at issue, Budhan Ray, the candidate was not removed from the Congress.

214 Dalmia to Rajendra Prasad, 15 November 1936, noting that Jamnalal Bajaj had said Dalmia would see Dalmia before finalizing the list, which Prasad had not done: "If necessity arises, I will spend more money than what I promised, but I wish that it should be used for supporting persons who are deserving and whose services would be beneficial to the country..."; Rajendra Prasad rejected any attempt to alter the list already prepared by the Bihar Committee. Rajendra Prasad to Dalmia, 17 November 1936; "I am afraid our viewpoints are different and we shall agree to differ... I think the best course for you and for us is to drop the matter altogether..." Rajendra Prasad Ms. I/36/coll.4.

215 Rajendra Prasad told Patel that he would now have to entirely depend on him, and also that now Patel would have to look elsewhere than Bihar for funds. To Patel, 17 November 1936, Rajendra Prasad Ms. I/36/coll.3. Patel assured him that he would supply the amount required, some 30 to 35 thousand. To Prasad, 21 November 1936, ibid., coll.4.

216 Khaitan to Bajaj, 20 November 1936; Patel to Khaitan, 21 November 1936, ibid.

217 Dalmia to Rajendra Prasad, 21 November 1936, 1 December
A further instance of the Congress Right Wing's sense of political principle in these matters may be illustrated in the case of Dalmia wanting to stand for the Central Legislative Assembly elections for the seat vacated by the future Bihar Finance Minister, A.N. Sinha. Dalmia explained that "on account of his many business connections" he would "not like to take the Congress ticket". He was, however, expected to support the Congress "on most occasions", but Rajendra Prasad was aware that this arrangement would be criticised, especially by the Kisan Sabha, and so asked for Patel's advice. Patel and Bhulabhai Desai rejected the proposal outright, especially because, in the context of Government's refusing to give Congress the assurances required for the party to take office, it was necessary to demonstrate maximum electoral support to the party, and also crucial that the strength of the Congress party in the Central Legislative Assembly not be depleted. Desai noted that in this context "Dalmia's probably supporting Congress in most instances not good enough..."

Cont'd... f.n. 217

1936, Rajendra Prasad to Dalmia, 9 December 1936, Dalmia to Rajendra Prasad, 17 December 1937, ibid., coll. 5.


219 Rajendra Prasad to Patel, 5 May 1937, Rajendra Prasad Ms. II/37/coll.2.

220 See below, Chapter 2.

221 Patel to Rajendra Prasad, 11 May 1937, Rajendra Prasad Ms. II/37/coll.2.
However illuminating these instances are they could not represent the dominant picture, that of adjustment or acceptance of arrangements at a local level, a process that, in the case of Bihar, led to a result in which it was estimated that the socialist element only amounted to 7 in number and that most of the MLAs "can be described as right-wing".  

The notion however that changes had not taken place, which is surely one of the implications of Tomlinson's local faction argument, does not jell with the vivid description colonial officials made of the election's results:

The more conservative element in Patna society is said to have been somewhat surprised at the dress and manners of some of the new legislators. They represent a type hitherto unknown to the legislature...

In fact the Government analysis emphasized that the most significant feature of the Congress success "was the great size of the majorities, often against landlords of great influence in the locality who previously would have been certain of success.... In the more advanced districts voters, who would normally have done what their landlords told them to do are reported to have remarked that they voted for Congress because

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222 Bihar FR(1), February 1937.

223 His description of Congress adjustments in Darbhanga would suggest that, with Congress backing, power was shifting from one large landlord, Kumar Visheshwar Singh, to another, Maheshwar Prasad Singh, in exchange for the stifling of the Kisan Sabha men, Dhanraj Sharma and Yamuna Karjee. The Indian National Congress, pp. 78-79.

224 Bihar FR(1), March 1937.
they had noticed that the Kisan agitation had led to a marked diminution in the amount of begari that their landlords dared to demand..."225 In the light of these observations, it would seem that the cases Tomlinson has cited are not adequately representative, or have not been adequately analysed in terms of the changes and significance of developing power relationships.

The government analysis here emphasises another element which the factionalist argument is simply incapable of handling, that there was a strong agrarian democratic impulse in the motivation of voters. This was even more emphatically the case in U.P., where one of the factors cited for the Congress success was the "wild" promises made by Congress candidates and supporters that rents would be abolished or reduced, that debts would be cancelled and that a golden age was in sight.226 Further, this must not be seen just as a case of "wild promises", but as a context for mobilisation. By the end of the elections officials from all over U.P. were observing that "conditions have reverted to those in the years 1930 and 1931."227 This is a level which should be seen separately from the question of the nature of the MLAs returned. For this level would be the foundation of the powerful pressures for agrarian change that

225 Bihar FR(1), February 1937.
226 UP FR(1), February 1937.
227 UP FR(2), February 1937. In some areas the occasion of the poll was connected with agrarian unrest, as when in Pratapgarh "a very large number of voters had brought with them pieces of dried cow dung to the various polling stations where they were lighted and according to the tenants 'bedakhlas', i.e. ejectment orders, were burnt once for all." Ibid.
developed under the Congress Ministries. 228

If the election campaign as a point of agrarian mobilisation should be distinguished from the legislatures that resulted, so too must a distinction be made between the legislative and provincial units of the party. This is certainly true in the case of U.P., where there was constant tension between these two wings, culminating in the attempt of a substantial section of the PCC to prevent MLAs from holding party posts. 229

What has been attempted in this review is to place the Congress election campaign, with all its inevitably sordid gambits, in the context of the wider mobilisation that the campaign unleashed, and to undercut an undue focus on the question of the future Congress Legislature Parties by pointing out the continued importance of the extra-parliamentary wing. Further the issue of the candidates themselves deserves much more careful research than has as yet been done, for the picture provided in contemporary accounts suggest a definite change here, if not the representation of radical intelligentsia as desired by Kisan sabhaites and Socialists.

The two trends that emerged in Congress politics during this period, constitutional and organised left-wing activity, had a junction in terms of the Congress electoral programme.

228 However it should be noted that the Legislative Parties were more complex than has been represented here. In Bihar, 61 Congress MLAs, i.e. about 2/3 of the party, supported Kisan Sabha demands in anticipation of ministerial compromise with the zamindari in 1937. See below, Chapter 3.

229 See below, Chapter 3.
The issues broached by the left, of zamindari abolition, and of commitment by the Congress to certain broad socialist objectives, were reacted to so strongly by the Gandhian Right because they feared such programmatic alterations, and even appeals of that order, would alienate the capitalist and landed sections and so would jeopardise chances of victory.

However, our argument here has been that these differences could not be reduced to the short-run tactical imperatives of the movement or even to the longer-run compulsions of nationalist unity and class adjustment characteristic of an anti-imperialist movement. For there were issues at stake here not only of socio-economic vision (of what the structure of agrarian relations and industry would be) but also of agency. One fact brought out by our investigations into attitudes towards the ways in which the Congress could be democratised and be made more responsive to needs of people at the grass-roots level was the hostility of the Gandhian Right Wing to the idea of radical working-class and peasant unions. As we have pointed out, this was not due to an anti-peasant position, nor can it simply be interpreted as an expression of multi-class anti-imperialist tactical needs. For such a rationale did not require the negation of institutions essentially oriented to agitate for minimum economic demands. And while the history of left-wing trade unions had made the Right understandably wary about their united front credentials, the still nascent Kisan Sabha organisation had not, in any substantial sense, demonstrated similar characteristics. In fact in Bihar, the most power-
ful of these movements had displayed exemplary restraint and a willingness to work with the Congress inspite of growing differences on the lines of agrarian objectives.

This is not to brand the Right-Wing as feudal ideologues. They were as anxious to do away with illegal exactions, to bring rent, revenue, and interest levels down to manageable levels, but to the end of streamlining tenurial relations and agrarian conditions, not of revolutionising them. And inevitably, such a policy, founded as it was on a de-emphasis on class action, was bound to put the balance in favour of upper sections of the tenantry, the best fitted to realize the gains of a mediatory, and, under the ministries, legal and legislative policy. Direct action and more generalised agitations would on the other hand have led to a greater and deeper consciousness, organisation and therefore, of effectiveness in getting demands realised, and in being able to benefit from legislation. 230

Nevertheless, the Right, motivated by a sense of unity and by a practical sense of the growing weight of the left, accepted the right of peasants and workers to organise, and accepted that the left must have a space to function. The Left, on the other hand, and especially Nehru and the CSP section of it, came to an awareness of the limitations imposed on the Congress programme in terms of the weight of the Right but also because of the state of mass movements on the left, which was unevenly developed and in some sectors, such as the working-class movement, disunited as well. As far as Rightist power in

230 See below, Chapter 3.
the Congress was concerned, we have shown, in the context of
the elections, that while this was not necessarily so cons-
ciously organised at this stage, it had a deep and implacable
presence, though we have also suggested that the selection of
candidates itself is an insufficient index of the total nature
of the Congress as a party and a movement. In any case, the
result of these features of the situation was a toning down on
the part of this section of the left of its ambitions for the
Congress programme and organisation. On the other hand the
Kisan Sabha displayed a different trajectory, one which was
increasingly indifferent to tactical questions of adjustment
in the Congress because it tended to become more and more
embroiled in the discrete compulsions of the peasant movement.
This development was to be fully realised under the Congress
Ministries.

While there was a growing significance of these trends
in socio-economic mobilisation, the Gandhian emphasis on construc-
tive work was marginalised. This was not an active process
of substitution. There was really no contest. In the re-
sponses to the Mass Contacts Committee, only the Gandhian heart-
land approved of the programme because of its effectiveness. 231
The majority found it ineffectual. 232 And it is this combina-

231 See the responses of the Gujarat PCC, the Broach, Surat,
Panchmahals, Kaira and Ahmedabad DCCs. Rajendra Prasad
Ms. IX/36.

232 See the responses of the Karaikudi, Sylhet, Malabar, Nasik
and Nellore DCCs, the Wallawarad Taluka, Dohad Jhalod and
Lucknow CCs, and the Delhi, Kerala and UP PCCs. Ibid.
The Kuppam Pirka CC, Basti DCC and Punjab PCC believed
tion of factors - a fear of growing left-wing mass influence, and the failure of an alternative in the form of Gandhian constructive work, that Tomlinson regards, along with the opinion of "dominant provincial interests" to be the basis of the Gandhians' decision to form ministries under the 1935 Act.233

However, as we have shown, intimations of such a development were already present in some Gandhians, in 1934 itself,234 prior to the unravelling of any of the trends Tomlinson places so much emphasis on. This fact suggests that other reasons must be searched for to determine why a group, hitherto committed to non-constitutional activity, should accept such a radically different terrain of action. Our next chapter examines this problem.

Cont'd., f.n. 232

it to be useful but noted that little had been done on these lines. The Maharashtra PCC noted that it had proved fruitful, but had now "reached its limits and new items should be introduced". And the Bihar and Bengal PCCs, while approving of the programme in principle, did not seem to have achieved much out of it. Ibid.

233 The Indian National Congress, pp. 61-62.
234 See above, Section 1.1.