Appendix III

On 26th July 1978 at 2.45 p.m., the Prime Minister, Shri Morarji Desai granted an interview and answered a few questions to Shri Prabhat Palit, an U.G.C. Teacher-Fellow carrying on research on "The Role of Congress (Organisation) in West Bengal Politics".

In answer to the question as to what was the basic reason of the split in the Indian National Congress in 1969, the Prime Minister refused to admit that there was a split in the Congress, since Mrs. Gandhi had been expelled from the party by the Congress Working Committee. Mrs. Gandhi actually formed a new party which came to be later publicised as "The Congress", and took along with her a large number of defectors from the original Congress Party.

In answer to the question as to whether the conflict between the Organisation Leaders and Mrs. Gandhi in 1969 had any ideological basis, the Prime Minister said that the conflict was a power-conflict created by Mrs. Gandhi.

On being asked as to what was the fundamental difference between Mrs. Gandhi's Congress and Congress (Organisation), Shri Desai remarked that the former deviated from the traditional Congress ideology and
programme. Many of its leaders and workers made mockery of ethics in their public and private life and even took to drinks openly contrary to Congress pledge. The name "Congress" given to Mrs. Gandhi's party was, according to Shri Desai, "a misnomer". The Congress (Organisation), on the other hand, followed the Congress ideology and programme and worked on Gandhian lines.

Shri Desai remarked that the undivided Congress in West Bengal was becoming weaker even prior to 1969 and that factional quarrel within the State Congress(O) was, among other factors, one of the important reasons for the declining strength of Congress (Organisation) in that State. Shri Desai admitted that the Congress (Organisation) declined in strength all over India because of the populist campaign of Mrs. Gandhi and the abuse of mass media by the Government. Shri Desai was also of the opinion that the factional quarrels within Congress(O) in West Bengal had no ideological basis but were simply power-conflict between personalities. Factional politics for the sake of power is one of the basic maladies of Indian democracy, Shri Desai remarked.

On being asked why a large number of Congressmen left Congress(O) and joined Mrs. Gandhi's party in the succeeding years, the Prime Minister replied that ambition and lust for the spoils of power took people away from Congress(O).
On the question of differences within the Janata Party, the Prime Minister said that he was an optimist. He believed that emotional integration of all the constituents within the Janata Party will take place and rifts will disappear. He was confident that Janata Party will emerge in future as a strong and viable political party.

About the Janata Party organisation in West Bengal, Shri Desai suggested that the organisation will become stronger if the Janata workers and leaders devoted more time and energy on contact with the people instead of just trying to find fault with the government. An opponent's weakness cannot be the strength of a political party, he remarked. In a democracy, no party can eternally remain in power. When in office, a political party gets degenerated through enjoyment of power, while, in opposition, a party gets rejuvenated if it maintains a lively contact with the people.

Shri Desai was emphatic to comment that Congress (Organisation) played a vital role in insisting on the maintenance of democratic rights and liberties of the people of India, since it opposed the Indira Government's dictatorship and ultimately succeeded in restoring democracy. On the talk of a future merger of the Congress(O) and C.F.D. elements within the Janata party and the Congress and Congress(I) into one single Congress Party, Shri Desai said that he saw no such possibility and remarked that such talks were resorted to by people interested in breaking the Janata Party.