CHAPTER - II

THE CPI AND THE UNITED FRONT: 1937-1939

The period under study happens to be a turning point in the political history of India. It is important in many respects. In the 30s, the democratic countries of Europe, together with the USSR, were confronted with the threat of fascism. To resist this threat, the Seventeenth Congress of Comintern, held in 1935, propounded the strategy of United Front which has been dealt with in detail in the previous chapter.

Secondly, the INC for the first time formed ministries in seven provinces under the Government of India Act, 1935. This fact of office acceptance deserves special attention, because this decision signified (i) the dominance of the Indian capitalist class over the INC; (ii) the fear of the leaders of the INC, especially of the right wing, of the emerging mass movement and (iii) their desire to wrest concessions from the British Government through the use of pressure tactics. The Indian capitalists were more or less apathetic towards the national movement till the mid-twenties. But in the 30s they gradually established their hold over the INC and were in a position to use it both against British imperialism and the left elements inside the INC. Though
there were some minor tactical differences among the capitalists. The big bourgeoisie throughout the period tried its best, as the available archival materials reveal, to utilise the INC in its favour. It deserves special mention that leading capitalists like Purusottamdas Thakurdas, G.D. Birla, Walchand et al., especially Birla, had had immense influence over M.K. Gandhi, the undisputed leader of the Indian masses. Birla not only helped the INC financially, he also persuaded both the British Government and Gandhi to arrive at some kind of mutual compromise. In the early 30s Birla played an important role in persuading the conservative British leaders as well as the right wing of the INC to come to some sort of settlement about the new Constitution as proposed by the Government of India Act, 1935 and ultimately he was successful. And, at the same time, the Indian capitalists used the Congress ministries as safety valve against the growing mass movements in India. By persuading the INC to accept office they wanted to utilise the British bureaucracy in their own class interests. Again, when a section of the big bourgeoisie got panicky of the socialist utterances of Nehru, Birla tried to cool them down by persuading them to rally behind the right wing leaders of the INC. This had important consequences for the INC.

**In this chapter we shall use the terms 'rightist', 'right wing' etc. to refer to the majority of the Congress leaders who dominated the INC throughout the entire period of freedom struggle. The INC was more or less dominated by the 'rightist' elements who, again, were indirectly linked with the Indian capitalists. We shall use the term 'left', 'leftists' etc. to refer to such personalities like Jawaharlal Nehru, Achhut Patwardhan, J. Prakash Narayan, Narendra Deva, Subhas Chandra Bose et al., who espoused some sort of socialistic ideology prevalent at that time in the fight against British imperialism.**
For the communists the period differed from the earlier years in the sense that the CPI, for the first time since the late twenties, shed off its policy of sectarianism, co-operated with the Congress and the CSP and thus built up a United Front. Following the guidelines of the Dutt-Bradley Thesis, the CPI gave up its meanwhile hostile attitude toward the INC, acted in unison with it and thus tried to broaden its mass base.

Our task in this chapter will be to take cognizance of CPI's response to the politics of the Congress and CSP during 1937-1939.

II

There were at least two opposite trends or opinions regarding office acceptance during 1936-1937. One trend was represented by the political leadership of M.K.Gandhi. The other trend found its support among the communists and the socialists who disfavoured the idea. In that given historical context Nehru championed this trend. In course of time Nehru, however, succumbed to the Gandhian viewpoint and subsequently gave up his opposition to office-acceptance. Initially, both the CPI and the CSP opposed office acceptance but later accepted it as the political reality (as both the parties were a minority inside the INC) and tried to influence Congress decisions from within the INC.
The failure of the Civil Disobedience Movement, the British determination to hold no political discussions with Gandhi, and the declaration of the Communal Award in 1932 forced Gandhi to shift to constructive village work. Civil Disobedience was gradually discontinued and the movement was finally withdrawn in April 1934. In 1934 another significant development took place. Disillusioned with the compromise politics of the INC and its antipathy towards mass movements, the leftist elements inside the Congress formed a separate party of the toiling workers and peasants. Accordingly, the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was formed in 1934. Though it was a separate party in terms of ideology it opted for working from within the INC. During 1934-1937 the CSP organised the kisans, workers and the students. Consequently, the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and the All India Students Federation (AISF) were formed. They wished the incorporation of these organisations in the INC, the idea which the latter strongly detested. Anyway, the peasants and the workers were, for the first time in the history of India, being organised on class lines. This very development was obviously not to the liking of the rightists and the capitalists, the latter being much more eager to digest the fruits of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-1934. Their tactic was to pressure the colonial administration to extract more concessions and, simultaneously, they stood for co-operation with the government. However,
they were also afraid of the growing awakening of the workers and peasants as it was inimical to their class interests.

Unlike the European bourgeoisie, the Indian bourgeoisie had to face peculiar structural constraints. The Indian capitalist class emerged in a colony. Its link with world capitalism is to be viewed in terms of the subordinate status of India as a colonial economy. Hence the contradiction appeared to be two-fold. Firstly, it had to struggle against imperialism for independent capitalist development. Secondly, and herein lay the paradox, it had to compromise with imperialism because the structural links of India with world capitalism weakened the position of capitalism in a colony. This very paradoxical situation did not permit the Indian bourgeoisie to play a leading role like its European counterpart. Here the national struggle was not against the despotic monarchy and/or feudalism but against British imperialism. Though British capitalism was its main enemy, because of its colonial status, it had to depend on imperialism for more and more concessions. It looked forward to the national movement to foster this very class interest. But as the growing mass militancy was taking the Congress to an altogether radical path, the bourgeoisie saw in it a danger signal. Consequently, the colonial
status of the Indian bourgeoisie drove it to accomplish the following tasks viz., (i) to oppose British Imperialism; (ii) to compromise with British imperialism for more concessions; and (iii) to prevent the communists and the socialists from taking the Congress away from the path of constitutional politics to one of radical struggle. All these three objectives were achieved by the capitalists by way of establishing hegemony over the Congress leadership, and by tactfully isolating the communists and the socialists with the help of the right wing leadership of the INC.

1934 and 1935 were two bad years for the Congress. It had no plan of action in hand; nor the British Government showed any willingness to negotiate with the INC; the peasants and workers, too, were frustrated. At the Madras AICC meeting in October 1935 an attempt to get a decision regarding office acceptance was defeated on the ground that it was still 'premature'. Though the Swarajists, notably B.C. Roy, Ansari, Asaf Ali actively campaigned for office acceptance their suggestion was ignored by the Working Committee. But by 1936 almost all the Congress leaders were sure that office would be accepted after election. The majority of the provinces were in favour of office acceptance. It is interesting to note that it was in April 1934 (the month of withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement) Gandhi visualised the necessity of council entry. In a letter to Birla Gandhi wrote:
there will always be a party with the Congress wedded to the idea of Council entry. The reins of the Congress should be in the hands of that group. 5

The mid 30s were marked by a gradual coming together of orthodox Gandhians and the advocates of Council entry in a common front against the militant challenge from the left. In the making of this common front the capitalists seemed to play an important role. On April 12, 1934 Birla advised Thakurdas:

I should like you to keep yourself in touch with Bulabhai/Desai7... If the Swaraj Party is to be successful, they will have to collect some fund for fighting the new election and I would suggest that fund should not be supplied from Bombay without being satisfied that the right type of men are being sent. 6

(Emphasis added - U.G.)

And in his reply to Birla on April 16, 1934 Thakurdas wrote: "I fully agree with you what you say about money not being subscribed without making sure of the programme. I do not expect there is any money floating in Bombay, which will hastily be given." 7 Again, on August 3, 1934 Birla wrote: "Vallabhai, Rajaji and Rajendra Babu are all fighting Communism and Socialism. It is therefore necessary that some of us who represent the healthy Capitalism should help Gandhiji as far as possible and work with a common object." 8 (Emphasis added - U.G.) Even years before 1934 Birla emphasised the need for strengthening the hands of the Congress leadership. 9 These documents are important for many reasons. These evidently prove (a) the belief that the prosperity of
the capitalists (and also of the country) depends entirely on the amount of political freedom is achieved, and (b) the decision of the bourgeoisie to strengthen the hands of the Congress right winger.

At the instance of Gandhi Nehru again became the Congress President in 1936. In his address at Lucknow and Faizpur Nehru explicitly stated that he was against office-acceptance and saw in Marxism 'the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems', 10

Though no resolution approving office acceptance was passed in 1936 at Lucknow and/or Faizpur session of the Congress Nehru as President of the Lucknow session unequivocally stated:

To accept office and ministry, under the conditions of the Act, is to negate our rejection of it and to stand self-condemned .... for it would inevitably mean our co-operation in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism ...

*     *     *

If we expressed our hostility to the Act and reject the entire scheme, does it not follow logically that we should have nothing to do with the working of it and should prevent its functioning, in so far as we can? 11 he asked.

Not only that. He clearly maintained that the Government of India Act, 1935 was:

.... designed to facilitate and perpetuate the domination and exploitation of the people of India .... the Congress reiterates its rejection of the new constitution in its entirety ... 12

Nehru appreciated the growing mass consciousness and favoured close association between the Congress and the masses which was being hindered
by the narrow Congress constitution. He alleged that

the present constitution stresses still further the authoritative side of the organisation, and in spite of stressing rural representation does not provide effective links with the masses. 13

In this address Nehru, in fact, dittoed the communist and socialist demands for affiliation to the trade unions, the kisan sabhas and other mass organisations within the INC. 14 However, the outcome of the Lucknow Session showed that the right wingers undid Nehru's suggestion and did not allow affiliation of the mass organisations. The right wingers got panicky of the socialist orientation of Nehru and strongly detested his candidature for Presidentship. Especially Ansari, Satyamurthi and Desai unsuccessfully attempted to persuade Rajagopalachari to contest the Presidentship. 15 As the leftist Congressmen and Nehru were opposed to office acceptance, the Lucknow Session deferred the decision till March 1937. In fact, in deferring a decision on this crucial issue the Congress leadership avoided the possibility of any probable split among the Congressmen. Adoption of any resolution that rejected office acceptance would have left no room for changing the position at later time. Namboodiripad is right when he observes that "Deferring the decision meant that Congress might take a decision in favour of acceptance of office sometime in future (that is, when the situation became favourable)." 16 It was proved to be so when the Delhi session of the Working Committee in March 1937 passed a resolution on conditional acceptance by a majority vote. The Congress
conditions were that the Governors would not use their special powers of interference or set aside the advice of the ministers. For nearly three months a deadlock prevailed as no such assurance was forthcoming. And, on the basis of an oral assurance made by the Viceroy on June 21, 1937 the Congress accepted office in the first week of July 1937 without taking the formal approval of the AICC. Though a vague oral assurance was given by the Viceroy the real plan of the British was quite different. Viceroy Linlithgow wrote to Zetland on March 5, 1937:

I am, of course, constantly aware that it is and has for a long time been the settled aim of the Congress to make itself strong enough to lead a mass movement to overthrow the constitution. It would, indeed, be convenient if the various sections now preserving a somewhat artificial unity in the Congress ranks were to part company and sort themselves out before action became necessary against the real revolutionaries. But whether this happens or not I have no intention of allowing the Congress to work without interference up to the stage at which it is once more able to lead a mass movement for the overthrow of the constitution and its own establishment as a parallel Government. We are already engaged in examining the powers which might be necessary to deal with a recognisable movement of such a character. 17 (Emphasis added - U.G.)

Linlithgow correctly pointed out that the decision of office acceptance represented the victory of the compromising wing and at the same time he made it clear that the government was not in a mood to give further concessions to the Congress. He further observed,

.... I remain entirely unshaken in my view that we are on the high ground, and the position of the Congress is one of considerable difficulty; ... but the resolution (regarding office
acceptance - U.G. ) despite its brave words in the running para-
graphs, constitutes in my view, a definite victory for Gandhi
and the right wing; and while Nehru has accepted it he had not,
I understand, concealed his distance for the compromise which
it represents. 18 (Emphasis added - U.G.)

On April 1, 1937 a country wide hartal (strike) was organised; it
was this day on which the provision with regard to provincial autonomy
came into force. Millions of people irrespective of parties and poli-
tical groups participated in the strike called by the Congress against
the Constitution and for a Constituent Assembly to be formed by the ele-
cted representatives of the Indian people. "The demonstrations", argues
Namboodiripad, "naturally provided support to the Congress stipulation
for forming ministries." 19 He is also of the opinion that though both
the Congress and the government displayed rigidity in presenting their
arguments regarding the use of Governors' special powers "they had a de-
sire to reach a settlement. Both adopted a tone, language and arguments
which were helpful to avoid a clash and to facilitate a settlement." 20
It is very difficult not to accept the line of argument Namboodiripad
provides. Immediately after the resolution was passed in March 1937,
Birla in a letter to the Viceroy wrote:

I think this is a great triumph for the right-wing of the Con-
gress and a counter-response would very much strengthen their
hands. I hope his Excellency appreciates this position. 21
(Emphasis added U.G.)

However, long before 1937 Birla was aware of the anti-left atti-
tude of the right wing Congressmen and, accordingly, in 1935, he
briefed Lord Halifax on the Congress activities in the following manner:

The right-wing Congressmen are thus fighting against two forces - the Government and the Socialists. The latter are making a direct attack by discrediting the leaders for having 'achieved nothing'. The Government is helping the Socialists indirectly by ignoring the right-wing; between the two the right-wing is being crushed ... Sensible Indian men and women realise their need of British help; they want British friendship. 22

(Emphasis added - U.S.)

Evidently, a well-thought-out programme for office acceptance was on the Congress card. 23 And the link between the Congress and the Indian bourgeoisie is illuminating. In 1934 Nehru wrote: "... between British imperialism and Indian freedom there is no meeting ground and there can be no peace". 24 He also thought that acceptance of office by the Congress "will be a pit" from which it would be difficult to come out. 25 Such a step seemed to him to be fatal to the effort to cultivate a revolutionary mentality among the people. 26 As a counter measure to office acceptance, Nehru raised the slogan of a Constituent Assembly since he thought that the Constituent Assembly could meet only after the ouster of the Britishers it would be possible to counter the Congress move to accept office and at the same time to mobilise the people against imperialism. 27 In response to this posture twenty one leading businessmen of Bombay issued a Manifesto against Nehru. Gandhi assured Birla that he would prevent Nehru from committing the Congress to rejection of office at the Lucknow Congress 20 and to Nehru's dismay all the
resolutions proposed by him and the Socialists were lost. Added to this was Gandhi's open declaration that "... it is possible to construe it (the Government of India Act, 1935 - U.G.) as an attempt, however limited and feeble, to replace the rule of the sword by the rule of the majority ..." 29 Gandhi even thought that the imperialist ill-wills implied in the Constitution could be thwarted by lawfully using the Act in a manner not expected by them and by refraining from using it in the way intended by them." 30 If Nehru visualised a revolution Gandhi opted for a compromise. For him, office acceptance was "... a serious attempt on the one hand to avoid a bloody revolution and on the other to avoid a mass civil disobedience in the dental teeth of the attempt." 31 (Emphasis added - U.G.) It is evident that Gandhi refused to risk any new mass movement of the Civil Disobedience type, however done revolution. On the contrary, he thought that strict adherence to non-violence and support to Congress ministries would give the Congress governments "enough freedom of action for national growth." 32 The pragmatic Gandhi reminded the Congress that "...there is no other political party in the field to question the authority of the Congress..." 33 The bourgeoisie on the other hand intended to still the ministries against the British Government to wrest concessions. Nehru visualised that the Constitution would work for five or ten years "peacefully" and then the British should be told "that India could not be satisfied with her present position and
unless there were a general upsurge in the spirit of the moment. 34 Particularly, the Congress' call of 27 February 1940 (i.e., the locally-called '1st February' movement) in support of the declaration of India as a self-governing reality. The Congress under Gandhi's leadership put continual pressure on the British during 1940–1941 and threatened them that unless further political concessions were given, it could be forced to take resort to mass movement. The British Government was also one of the promoters of this programme. A.G. Ahluwalia in his secret report explained the situation in the following way:

... every offer of settlement made by the British Government is rejected in the hope of a better offer but it is carefully explained every time that Congress has left the door open and that future developments depend upon Britain's handling of the situation; ... 35

As we have noted, Nehru and the Congress Socialists continuously insisted on closer association between the masses and the Congress. An agrarian programme was drawn up to give the agricultural workers some relief from their sufferings. These included freedom of organisation of agricultural workers, safeguards to the interests of peasants, relief of agricultural indebtedness and the like. This programme was included in the election manifesto of 1936. An overview of the performance of the Congress ministries reveals that though some concessions were given to the liberal Congress agrarian legislation did not even execute the proposals of the Faizpur session; the resolution
of the U.P. and Bihar Pradesh Congress Committees in 1936 and 1937 were forgotten once the party split in 1939. From 1936 onwards the
kisans were being organized by the communists and the socialists and they were beyond the control of the PCC. Even before the office accep-
tance prominent Congress leaders were sure of the possible challenge from the kisan sabha. Profulla Chandra Ghosh opposed the formation
of separate kisan organisations and opposed association of Congressmen
with such organisations.37 Patel portrayed his resolve to face the kisan challenge 'fairly and squarely'.38 And by the end of 1937 the Gan-
dhi Seva Sangh, a purely non-political organisation, was used to convert
and stand for the Congress elections and to combat Leftist forces, the
phenomenon which Nehru strongly detested. The Lucknow Congress appointed a Constitution Committee to suggest ways and means including proposals
to amend the Congress constitution. Jiprakash Narayan put forward the
idea of 'Associate Members' with an intention to make the primary Congres-
s organisations more accessible to the rural masses. This idea was oppo-
ised by the PCCs and was finally dropped.40 The Bihar Government passed
a tenancy act in consultation with the landlords. The act had strong pro-
landlord bias which was detected by the peasant associations. C.P.N. Sin-
ha, the leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Legislative Assembly, said:
"the government in Bihar ... were very reasonable and some concessions we-
re secured by zamindars in Bihar which no other Government would have all-
owed."41 Prabodh Deval noted that kisan sabha activities were det-
trimental to Congress cause, advised the Congressmen to dis-
associate themselves from the kisan sabha and to keep an eye on their activities and to report to provincial Congress office. Sitaramayya alleged that the kisans were being organised by the communists and were for forming a party of their own arrayed against the Congress and that "the patience and forbearance of the Congress executive were well-nigh reaching the limits of tolerance." The Haripura session of the Congress cautioned

the Congress can not associate itself with any activities which are incompatible with the basic principles of the Congress and will not countenance any of the activities of those Congressmen who are members of the kisan sabhas help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles and policy....

In late 1937 Congress governments in Bihar, U.P., Orissa and Madras took resort to police and Section 144 of the Criminal Penal Code and other repressive laws against the kisans. All these were allowed at a time when men with overt leftist leanings - Nehru and Bose - held the post of Congress Presidentship.

Any militant activity of the workers and peasants thus used to become the subject of denunciation. A considerable number of trade unions were more or less under the control of the communists and socialists who tried their utmost to wage working class struggle against both the foreign government and the native capitalists. Thus when the workers of Sholapur, Cawnpore and Ahmedabad agitated against the Congress ministries
under the leadership of the present it are strongly condemned.46

According to Gandhi, the activities of the workers appeared to be a symptom of "the exaggerated expectations of radical betterment of the condition of labour..."47 and hinted that "the Congress should have no difficulty in checking disorders..."49 When the Congress government of Madras took resort to repressive measures and Criminal Law Amendment Acts against the striking workers, the Congress government was criticized for removing the sufferings of the workers and that such legislation should be bitterly opposed.48 It seems to write that the close alliance between the Congress and the capitalists was to a great extent responsible for such an attitude towards the workers. Bir-

eia, for example, alleged about rampant "indiscipline" in the Congress provinces.50 To pacify the capitalists and repress the labourers the Bombay Trade Dispute Act was passed in November 1938 and the entire trade union movement opposed the Act. On December 14, 1938 Nehru stated in a confidential note that "on the whole the Act seemed to be a good one "51 and Bose made only some private protests to Patel.52

Provincial governments were formed to undo the Government of India Act, 1935 from within; at least Nehru gave vent to such ideas. But Gandhi, the Indian capitalists and the majority of the Congress leaders were for working the constitution, not the other way round. And the behaviour of both the Congress ministers and of Gandhi himself (along with the repressive laws passed by the Congress ministers) made it
evident that the Congress was following the policy of pressuring the government for political concessions. Nehru once observed:

The machinery of government was working in much the same way as of old ... In Madras especially the Congress Government functioned perilously like the old Government ... They are trying to adapt themselves far too much to the old order and trying to justify it .... 53

Even an imperialist historian could not help commenting "...the Congress Governments can be said to have stood the test imposed on them in the field of law and order." 54

Besides the kisan problem, the communal question vitiated the political climate of the late 30s; especially the British Government played the Muslim League against the Congress. The League dubbed the Congress as purely a Hindu organisation and wanted recognition of the League as the sole champion of the Muslim cause which the Congress refused to accept. Jinnah at the Patna session of the League (December 1938) denounced Congress Panjabis as the root cause of Muslim alienation. Of course, the League Election Manifesto adopted a critical stance towards the 1935 Act and wanted co-operation on the basis of the principles of the Lucknow Pact (1916). From its Lucknow session onwards the League increasingly tried to build up a populist image, declared complete independence (with minority safeguards) its goal and denounced the Congress for giving birth to chain bitterness and communal war. During the ministry period the League brought charges of
repression of the Muslims in Faisal in a private letter. The Bijnor Report (1935–1936) and Jeevan Prakash's 'Muslim Jaffers under Congress Rule' (December 1936) are outstanding examples of Muslim grievances. Most of the charges were baseless and the League rejected a Congress offer of an enquiry. Many prolonged abortive discussions were held between Jinnah, Bhashar, Nehru and Jinnah. Taking this opportunity the Viceroy killed time and never gave any final answer to the Congress enquiry about India's future status, if she participated in the war. And Nehru in late 1939 wrote to Bhashar that "there is no doubt that we have been unable to check the growth of communal and anti-Congress feeling among the Muslim masses." 55 From 1930 onwards the communal question took an altogether different turn. 56

The princely states were the bulwark of autocracy run by the feudal princes. The feudal scheme as proposed in the Government of India Act, 1935 gave too much importance to the princely states. In the proposed federation the states' representatives were to be nominated by the princes and it seemed impossible for the Congress to dominate the centre without princely support as the proposed feudal structure could come into being only after 50 per cent of the princes had conceded to it. The federation scheme clearly exposed the British divide and rule policy. Interestingly, the movements in the states came largely from below and not
from the top. The All India States People's Conference, mainly dominated by middle class politicians, fought for civil liberties and seldom raised specific central and tribal issues and integration of the states with the British India. The Congress leadership strictly followed the principle of non-intervention. However, the AICC passed a resolution in October 1937 giving encouragement to states peoples movement in Fysore. In 1938 a resolution was adopted in the Haripura session which lent moral support to the states peoples' movement but refused to give any direct help. The resolution considered the states as 'integral parts of India', and declared that complete independence included "the whole of India inclusive of the States", but it also begrudgingly stated that "... under existing circumstances, the Congress is not in a position to work effectively in this and within the States. ..." 57 It was stipulated that as the conditions differed in the states the general policy of the Congress did not suit them and hence the Congress advised the states peoples to develop their strength independently and not to "rely on external help and assistance in the prestige of the Congress alone." 58 In 1939 the AICC maintained that the Haripura policy was 'conceived in the best interests of the people in order to enable them to develop self-sufficiency and strength'. 59 In early 1939 pressed by rapid mass movements of the states people Gandhi decided to start a limited Satyagraha and on March 3 he started a fast at Bajpali and withdrew it later on Friday evening. The fast took place at a time when
at Tripuri a serious tussle between the leftists and rightists was going on on the question of leadership of the Congress during the critical days ahead. Subsequently the states peoples' issue receded into background.

Meanwhile, the Second World War broke out in September 1939. On September 3 the Viceroy declared India as a party to the war. The resolutions passed by the INC in 1936 betrayed strong anti-imperialist overtones. The war was dubbed as an imperialist war, due recognition was given to the danger of fascism and it was declared that the Congress was opposed to 'the participation of India in any imperialist war'. Nehru in his presidential speech went one step further and identified fascism and imperialism as 'the two faces of new decaying capitalism' and upheld that a free India would stand by the progressive forces of the world, viz., socialism. It was stated that cooperation with the British was 'impossible' unless and until imperialism and exploitation of one people by another ended. The Haripura session and the Tripuri session of the Congress adopted similar resolutions. The Working Committee of the Congress passed a resolution on war in Wardha which clearly stipulated:

.... the issue of war and peace for India must be decided by the Indian people, and no outside authority can impose this decision upon them ... India cannot associate herself in a war said to be for democratic freedom when that very freedom is denied to her ...
For the Congress the war crisis was "the inevitable consequence of the social and political conflicts and contradictions" between the capitalist countries and it was stipulated that the horror of war and aggression could not be ended 'till the root causes of fascism and imperialism are removed'. Despite these resolutions it can be said that Gandhi seemed to have no clear perspective on the nature of the war. For him it was a war for saving democracy against Hitlerite totalitarianism. He sympathised with the Allies and suggested that the association of the Congress with the British at war would increase Congress prestige. In the article 'The A.I.C.C. Resolution' Gandhi's compromising attitude became verily manifest once again wherein he drew attention of the British that the AICC at Wardha did not demand any time limit for declaring the war aims. The Working Committee in its Allahabad session (November 19-23, 1939) passed a resolution wherein it was unambiguously stated that despite government unwillingness to negotiate with the Congress the Working Committee would "... continue to explore the means of arriving at an honourable settlement, even though the British government has banged the door in the face of the Congress ...." (Emphasis added U.G.) Even Gandhi would suggest that "the Congress must not embarrass them (the British - U.G.) in its (of the war - U.G.) prosecution." Nor he would think in terms of a civil disobedience movement "so long as
... the Viceroy is exploring the possibilities of a settlement ...

Even he was also opposed to use the war crisis to further India's freedom. The Compromising and bargaining tone is easily identifiable in these statements.

The compromising politics of Gandhi reached its climax in Tripuri when Bose sought re-election (and ultimately won) for the post of Congress presidency and the right-wingers got determined to oust him from office. The main charge of Bose against the Congress leadership was that the latter was drifting towards compromise with the British. From the foregoing analysis it appears that his allegations were not totally unfounded though Tomlinson and Sarkar think that the Bose episode was to a considerable extent 'personal' than ideological. After Bose's re-election Gandhi adopted a shrewd tactic; declaring Sitaramayya's defeat as his own, he widened the already existing gulf between the right and the left. And on February 22, 1939 thirteen out of the fifteen members of the old Working Committee resigned and consequently a state of utter psychological conflict prevailed among the delegates present at Tripuri who though voted in favour of Bose were not prepared to have Bose at the cost of Gandhi's leadership, because it was clear that not Bose or Nehru or the left but only Gandhi could rally broad strata of the people against British imperialism. Anyway G. B. Pant moved a resolution expressing confidence in the old Working Committee and asked Bose to nominate his new Working Committee in accordance
with the wishes of Gandhi and was passed by voice vote. This clever
manoeuvre in fact 'represented a greater victory for the right-wing
than that of the left-wing in the presidential election.' 73 As Bose
did not maintain a personal relation with Gandhi like Nehru and cou-
lid not submit to him unconditionally, the right wing under Gandhi's
leadership was determined to finish Bose politically and organisation-
nally. As Nambodiripad observes,

... The political result of Gandhi - Bose confrontation was
that it belittled the narrow victory of the leftists and car-
rried the majority of the ordinary congressmen (sic) to sta-
nd behind Gandhi and other right-wing leaders. Organisatio-
nally, Pant's resolution placed the leftist president at the
mercy of the right-wing leaders...... 74

Despite the adoption of such a resolution Gandhi made Bose known
his inability to help him in this regard. Bose preferred a 'composite'
Working Committee while Gandhi and others wanted a 'homogeneous' one.
The term 'homogeneous' meant a Working Committee minus the leftist ele-
ments. Ultimately Bose was forced to resign. Not contented with oust-
ting Bose the new Working Committee took disciplinary action against
him when Bose gave a call for an all-India protest day on July 9 against
st an AICC resolution barring civil disobedience by Congressmen without
prior approval of the PCCs. Bose was removed from the post of the pre-
sident of the BPCC. Throughout Gandhi maintained a double face. He
pretended to be innocent of the Pant Resolution 75 and refuted Bose's
allegation that Gandhi and his associates were for a compromise with the British. But in January 1940 he publicly declared that he stood for such a compromise. 76

After Bose's resignation the resolution on political situation passed by the Working Committee in Allahabad in 1939 kept the Congress door open for an 'honourable settlement'. No definite assurance was given to start a civil disobedience movement but emphasis was given on pursuance of non-violence and the constructive work programme. In 1938 the CSP walked out from the AICC meeting on the issue of antikisan attitude of the Congress leaders which was strongly condemned by Gandhi. 77 To curb kisan militancy and to encourage non-violence among Congressmen a resolution on 'Independence Day' was passed in Wardha in 1939. Part of this resolution was entitled 'Pledge' wherein unswerving support for non-violence and khadi was demanded. An uncommon rigid attitude of the Working Committee was betrayed in this Congress document. 78 Jaiprakash's suggestion that should Gandhi started a mass civil disobedience movement the CSP would stand by him with the entire army of the militant working class was explained by Gandhi as a sign of gross indiscipline inside the Congress and feared that such an army would damage non-violent action. And out of his antipathy toward the Indian communists he wrote: "....I hope I am not expected to knowingly to undertake a fight that must end in anarchy and red ruin." 79 (Emphasis added-U.G.)
He thought that the atmosphere was not 'conducive to non-violent strikes and non-violent no-tax campaigns on an extensive scale' and that he was making 'a desperate effort to avoid the struggle'. (Emphasis added - U.E.) Even in September 1940 he informed the nation that mass civil disobedience was not required at that time. All this makes it very difficult for a researcher not to share Bose's allegation which he made at the fag end of 1939 that:

Behind the apparent party struggle within the Congress, there is in reality a class-struggle going on all the time. And wherever there is class-struggle there is ruthlessness, truth and non-violence notwithstanding.

III

The CSP, the socialist faction of the INC, did also understand the imperialist design that underlay the Government of India Act, 1935 and described it as 'thoroughly reactionary and retrograde' means for intensifying the exploitation of the masses and strengthening the fetters of imperialism, and noted that "the only course open for the Congress is to adopt such measures as will make the working of the constitution impossible." Initially, the CSP was opposed to the acceptance of office, but once the Congress entered office it tried to utilise the legislatures in the interest of the working class. Fed up with the constitutional politics of the INC it wanted the inclusion of the worker's and peasant's organisations within the Congress in order to resist the Con-
gress policy of 'compromise', 'drift' and 'timidity', occasionally it praised the Congress ministries though. It praised Nehru's socialist postures and denounced the general attitude of council entry. And in its Lucknow Congress it advised the Congress to prepare the masses for utilising the war crisis for securing swaraj. In early 1936 the CSP described the Congress as an instrument of the Indian bourgeoisie to drag the masses 'towards a compromise with imperialism'. Office acceptance was described as a 'bourgeois programme' that would "spread illusion among the masses that the Imperialist apparatus is capable of doing some good giving some relief to them ...." For the CSP the decision of the council entry seemed to be 'anesthetic' to mass upheaval which might lead the Congress towards 'political bankruptcy'. It vehemently criticised the Gandhian decision of conditional acceptance of office and saw in it the sign of capitulation of the Congress 'right-wing' before imperialism. It resolved that opposed as it was though of office acceptance it would try to put pressure from below through mass action and by mobilising the kisans and the trade unions. Din- kar Mehta, however, was for using the legislatures for revolutionary purposes. Despite such radical gestures, by 1938 the anti-ministry attitude of the CSP, however, got softened to a great extent, and it praised the provincial ministries for their achievements, it reminded the Congress to organise movements from outside the governments though. Compared to its initial approach to the ministries this stance appears to be contradictory.
The CSP dubbed the war as an outcome of the imperialist policies of the European nations, eulogised the USSR, denounced fascism and noted that "the united struggle of the national freedom movements and the world socialist and democratic forces alone can meet the fascist and imperialist attacks ...."93 It advised the INC to organise the masses in such a way that the opposition of war might end "in a revolutionary upsurge for freedom".94 The CSP opposed the popular front tactic as enunciated by the Comintern on the ground that a colony like India could not follow a policy of peace front. It thought that even if the USSR came closer to U.K. against Germany the situation would not differ.95

As regards the role of the Indian capitalist class it was stated that it would be a mistake to think that the entire bourgeoisie had gone to the side of imperialism. Z.A. Ahmed thus observed that while the landlords had "definitely gone over to the side of imperialism" the industrial bourgeoisie was "still capable of resisting the present system of government and can ... form a part of the national front against imperialism."96 Jaiprakash Narayan thought that the industrial bourgeoisie depended heavily on imperialism for its own development and feared militant mass action although he more or less shared Ahmed's view.97
As the CSP wanted mass political struggle and Gandhi preferred to control the masses for an 'honourable settlement' there arose a conflict between the CSP and the Congress. Narandra Deva, for example, scathingly criticised Gandhi. The CSP expressed its determination to fight Gandhism and viewed that the CSP knew that the peaceful transition to power "is an impossible dream" which could be achieved 'only through mass upheaval'. Their determination to fight Gandhism was expressed in the following manner: "... If 'charkha' must have a fresh innings let us make it as short as possible." (Emphasis original - U.G.) However, it should be noted in this connection that after 1939 the CSP discarded this criticality and supported the Congress.

IV

For the CPI the period was a period of transition - transition from the policy of isolation to one of united front with the INC and other fraternal parties, especially with the INC which was so far described by the CPI as the party of the national bourgeoisie having a strong pro-compromising bias. For the CPI it was a period of confusion too. The shift of policy as has been described in the previous chapter was initially opposed by a good many leaders. There was an inherent contradiction in the new line in the sense that from now the CPI had to deal with the dual problem of (a) extension of co-operation with the INC which was now acknowledged as a platform of united
front, and (b) the organisation of the working class on class lines for achieving independence and emancipation of the toiling masses. That is, in short, it meant united front from above and united front from below at the same time. It was a complete repudiation of the earlier position. 103

The aftermath of the Salt Satyagraha of 1930 and the second Civil Disobedience Movement of 1932-1934 was marked by an era of compromising politics of the national leadership and an eagerness to council entry. As we know frustrated by the compromising politics of the INC some radical Congressmen formed the CSP in 1934 with a view to transforming the INC into a platform of struggle for socialism. The Faizpur conference of the CSP put emphasis on consolidating the socialist forces inside India:

The party from the beginning has stood for unity in the socialist ranks. Apart from unity or agreement among socialist ranks, it is necessary that the forces of the left are also consolidated and an understanding developed within its leadership.... 104

The CPI was banned in 1934 and had to act illegally. The Dutt-Bradley Thesis advised the CPI to act in unison with the CSP. At the time of the Seventh Congress of the CI M.R. Masani, one of the prominent leaders of the CSP, was in Moscow. There he had talks with Dutt and Bradley regarding the CSP - CPI unity. Masani preferred complete merger of the two parties and dissociation of the CPI from the CI and at that stage the talk broke down. Anyway after 1935
the CSP allowed the entry of the communists inside its organisation on individual basis. Nambudiripad writes "A formal agreement was arrived at between the two parties. P.C. Joshi and Jayaprakash Narayan, the General Secretaries of the two parties, signed a formal agreement on behalf of the two parties". This agreement greatly helped the unification of the workers, kisans and students. It also helped the emergence of a radical leftist section of the Congressmen inside the INC. This became manifest in the electoral defeat of Pattabhi Sitaramyya, Gandhi's candidate for Congress President in 1939.

Nambudiripad unhesitatingly admits that

"... The formation of the CSP helped in the crystallisation of this process providing a forum where disillusioned Congressmen could come together, organise united action with the communists and other leftist forces outside the Congress and help in the emergence of a powerful anti-imperialist united front ....."

He also admits that the process, of course, was not a very smooth one because:

"The struggle was hard, since the differences among the various parties and groups were wide and sharp. This was particularly true of the differences between the communists on the one hand, and other leftists, including the Congress Socialists and the mass of left Congressmen, on the other. 107 (Emphasis added-U.G.)"

The growing differences between the CSP and the CPI increased during the time of the Moscow trials against the Trotskyites in the USSR and reached its nadir in August 1939 when a non-aggression pact was
signed between the USSR and Germany. The total disruption of fraternal relationship between the two parties became vividly manifest at the Tripuri Congress of the INC on the question of giving support to Subhas Chandra Bose, the President-elect in 1939. And Namboudiripad is quite right to note that "If the Lucknow Congress of 1936 marked the beginning of the united anti-imperialist front in which the communists and the Congress Socialists co-operated with Leftist Congressmen the Tripuri Congress of 1939 was its end." 108 And in the Ramjas Congress of the CSP the CPI was expelled from the CSP on the charge that it was disrupting the CSP organisation. Namboudiripad, however, strongly refutes the allegation. 109

In 1937 when the INC was preparing for the provincial elections the CPI decided to utilise the forthcoming elections, declaring at the same time its opposition towards the 'Slave Constitution'. 110 We have already noted that the Lucknow and Faizpur sessions of the Congress rejected almost all the socialist proposals moved by Nehru and other socialist men inside the INC. The CPI vehemently criticised the INC for this. Initially the CPI was opposed to office acceptance and raised the slogan of a Constituent Assembly. 111 But subsequently it did not oppose office acceptance as it thought that the stage was one of accomplishing a bourgeois democratic revolution, not socialism, and as the people still had some illusion about the National Congress. 112 And
when the Congress decided to accept office Ben Bradley advised the CPI
to rally support to the united national front by organising supports
from outside. Mass support should be rallied, it was suggested, behi-
nd "those Congress Cabinets who take the immediate steps of fulfilling
the Congress election pledges." 113

Though the CPI was advised to support the Congress in the election
campaign, the CPI was reminded that

However this must not be taken to mean that the Congress Minis-
tries will continue to pursue the liberal policy indefinitely. One must not be too optimistic about the attitude of the Congre-
s Ministries, whose propensities are pro-Right, and it is not
likely that they will always respond to the appeals of the Peo-
ple... 114 (Emphasis added - U.G.)

Referring to Congress hesitancy to implement the election pledge
relating to agricultural relief the author observed that 'the Right -
tendency was strongly in evidence among the leaders'. He also resented
the Gandhian plea that all movements in the provinces where the Congress
had come to power should be stopped. 115

Greeting the Haripura session of the INC the CPI, however, made
strong protests against the parliamentary and constitutionalist lea-
nings of some leaders. It alleged that the Congress Ministries favour-
ed the landlords and capitalists at the cost of the common people. Es-
pecially reference was made to the decisions of some provincial Congress
Ministries banning participation of its members in the kisan sabha. The tendency of the Congress High Command to dub every mass movement as an act of embarrassment was explained as an example of refusal to develop mass struggle. It strongly opposed the federal scheme because it was based on narrow franchise, did not represent the voice of states people, the Viceroy had autocratic power and the federal cabinet had no real control over defence, finance and paramountcy. For the CPI the united front did not mean the abandonment of class struggle and revolutionary movement of the masses. It visualised three alternatives viz., (i) the right wing might 'precipitate a split' and make the 'Congress constitution still more rigid and shut arbitrarily (sic) the radical forces in the country out of the congress(sic)'; (ii) by executing 'left manoeuvres' right wing might retain its hold and 'lead the mass struggle with a reactionary programme' and call it off at opportune moments; and (iii) by strengthening of the left wing 'continuously and systematically' by adopting higher forms of struggle, e.g., 'Mass no-rent movement', 'General Strike' etc. the CPI could isolate the right wing; because 'the Right-wing in opposing such revolutionary forms of struggle will get completely exposed and isolated' and the Congress could be turned into an anti-imperialist peoples front. It was thought that the INC was as yet 'in ideology, organisational structure, programme and leadership' a 'bourgeois organisation and that the
bourgeoisie in India did not 'constitute an anti-imperialist class'. But it was also demanded that with the growth of the anti-imperialist consciousness of the masses the character of the INC was gradually changing. It was observed:

"... The National Congress, however, in spite of its reformist anti-revolutionary leadership, has become generally speaking, more and more powerful as the masses have grown more and more anti-imperialist. One of our chief mistakes has been not to pay sufficient attention to this seemingly paradoxical process and evolve correct tactics to free the masses from the reactionary leadership and programme imposed upon them by the bourgeoisie. 118 (Emphasis added - U.G.)"

Again,

"... individual fraction work alone cannot convert the Congress into a real Anti-Imperialist organisation, can not shatter the mass influence of the bourgeoisie represented by the dominant Right-wing. Agitation within the Congress for the adoption of a real anti-imperialist programme must be combined with mass action outside. And for initiating and developing such action outside and for strengthening the agitation inside, united front between all radical forces in the form of collective affiliation is the most effective way. 119"

Referring to the facts that the Bolsheviks in 1917 entered into an agreement with the Left wing of the Socialist Revolutionary Party and supported the Kerensky Government it was maintained that the united front tactic was not an opportunistic one because "opportunism means sacrificing the real and abiding interests of the entire working class for the sake of petty concessions ..." which was not the
aim of the CPI. It was said that

.... the development of a mass anti-imperialist movement in India, uniting all possible elements who are willing to oppose imperialism ... will be a great factor not only for the growth of the revolutionary working class, not only for the struggle for India's independence, but also on the international scale. For every weakening and preoccupation of British imperialism in India will be a great step towards the postponing of the war danger and emancipation of the entire humanity from the grip of capitalism. 120 (Emphasis added - U.C.)

The CPI, then, had no illusion about the class character of the Congress. The CPI's reading of the Dutt-Bradley Thesis makes it amply clear:

.... The authors (Dutt and Bradley - U.C.) recognize that the congress (sic) inspite of its tremendous mass influence is still far from (emphasis original - U.C.) becoming the organizational realization of the Anti-imperialist People's Front. Its leadership is still definitely not anti-imperialist. This contradiction between the leadership and masses is the most striking feature of the present day National Congress ... with the participation of larger and larger section of the masses in the struggles against Imperialism, the congress (sic) ... became the most powerful and influential mass organization within the country. But this progressive radicalisation of the masses was not at all adequately reflected in the leadership which remained reformist and anti-revolutionary. The masses rallied round the congress (sic) but could not, generally speaking, shape its programme and policy. 121 (Emphasis added - U.C.)

An Editorial of the National Front provided further clarification:

... The dynamics of the formation of the National Front posed once again in a new form the old question of reformism versus
revolutionary struggle, of conciliation versus uncompromising fight against imperialism. It is a unity of different classes including a considerable section of the landlords ... on the basis of a specific minimum programme. It does not abolish the class conflict, but shifts it to a new dividing line - the one between the anti-imperialist people on the one hand and imperialism and the anti-national vested interests on the other, so that it assumes the form of a great National Conflict. 122 (Emphasis added - U.G.)

The editorial also stressed the need for countering the hostile attitude of the INC towards the AIFs and the IU. The CPI did also recognise that the INC was dominated by the industrial bourgeoisie and had a strong tendency for compromise with imperialism. The CPI rejected the Royist line of alternative leadership (meaning thereby the replacement of Gandhian leadership by the leftist one) on the ground that it would mean the expulsion of a whole class - the national bourgeoisie - from the national front. It was acknowledged that the Indian capitalists were capable of playing a progressive role against the British imperialism, its vacillations notwithstanding. Thus Adhikari observed: "... This class is today part of that front which stands face to face with imperialism demanding independence and democracy and committed to the policy of launching a mass movement for these demands..." 123 But simultaneously the vacillating character of the class was also stressed: "... while its interests are opposed to that of imperialism, they also conflict with those of the masses - peasants, workers and employees. This accounts for the vacillating and ambiguous position it occupies in
the National struggle ...". But despite this recognition the CPI refused to dub the bourgeoisie as comprador in nature:

... We do not expect it to play a revolutionary (emphasis original - U.G.) role, i.e., supply a consistently revolutionary leadership to the national struggle against imperialism and feudalism. But it has also not joined the camp of the counter-revolution, as yet has not become "a junior partner" in the imperialist firm." 125 (Emphasis added - U.G.)

Conscious as it was about the vacillating role of the capitalists the CPI vehemently criticised them. Adhikari thus feared that the Indian capitalists would go over to the camp of counter-revolution in case of a danger of mass revolution. Hence, to him the present task was to neutralise their vacillations and thus progressively isolate them from the masses. It was pointed out that

Gandhism is the native form in which the oppositional role of the Indian bourgeoisie, vacillating between imperialism and the revolution - manifests itself. It is a technique of compromise and conciliation, of canalising mass struggle in safe channels. 126 (Emphasis original - U.G.)

These excerpts make one thing clear that while the policy of united front did not certainly imply an unconditional surrender to the INC, it also meant a departure from the earlier position. Thus reassessing the role of the Congress it was stated that starting from the Swarajist days of 1926-1927 to 1938 the INC...
has grown into the central mass political organisation of the Indian people ranged against imperialism. It has achieved the growing unity of the Indian people on the basis of a programme which corresponds to the present stage of our anti-imperialist struggle.

Not only that, it completely repudiated its earlier position as to the nature of the INC. Earlier the Congress was described simply as a party of the national bourgeoisie but now it was stated that

...The formulation that Congress is a bourgeois organisation and as such unsuitable to be the basis for building the Anti-imperialist People's Front is wrong in the given situation, today.

Though due attention was given to the vacillating role of the national bourgeoisie it was now contended that by making a determined effort to broaden the mass base of the Congress it would be possible to "successfully neutralise the conciliatory drift of a part of the leadership." It was maintained that the possibility of our entering the National Congress in order to strengthen it, without allowing any section of its leadership to split off, is greater than ever. (Emphasis original - U.G.) Though in 1937 the CPI opposed the decision of office acceptance it was now stated that it would be "absolutely incorrect to say that the acceptance of office has transformed the Congress into an ally of imperialism or made the Congress part of the imperialist state." Shedding off its erstwhile sectarianism it was now acknowledged by the CPI that without a 'decisive turn' in its whole attitude towards the INC it "would not be possible for the Commu-
nists to become a political force in the country..." 132

This policy shift of the CPI meant: (i) shedding off the erstwhile hostile attitude towards the INC; (ii) constructive criticism of the activities of the Congress Ministries; and (iii) attempt to orient the INC towards leftism.

On the eve of the Haripura session of the INC Ben Bradley, Palme Dutt and Harry Politt in a message highlighted the importance of the Congress and suggested affiliation of the democratic organisations like the AIKS and the AITUC. The message read,

To the Indian people the National Congress represents the National Front uniting all forces in India who are struggling against foreign domination and for national liberation....... 133 (Emphasis original - U.G.)

If the Faizpur decision to establish mass contact Committees is carried forward at Haripura to a full recognition of the need for collective affiliation of the Trade Union and Peasant organisations, we feel sure that this would greatly strengthen the whole movement .... 133

The CPI favoured the idea of mass campaign against federation, for repeal of repressive laws and direct election to the Central Assembly. As a positive alternative to federation, it urged right of self-determination through the Constituent Assembly. The CPI apprehended that Bulabhai Desai and Satyamurti were for the acceptance of the federal scheme in a modified form. Similar was Bose's apprehension. The CPI noted that any talk of compromise at a stage ' when
every circumstances' was 'favourable for a final struggle' would mean repudiation of the goal of national independence. Its apprehension was so strong that Ranadeive demanded

The A.I.C.C., as the leading body must reiterate the nation's will to fight the Federation and call upon the nation to demonstrate its determination in mass rallies organised by the Congress Committees.

... let the A.I.C.C. solemnly proclaim that it is against all compromise ... 133

The National front demanded that the members of the Constituent Assembly elected under the 1935 Act could not be the true representatives of the people. Like hope it demanded that the AICC must declare in unequivocal terms that the Constituent Assembly could not be convened under the aegis of imperialism. In a Draft Resolution prepared by R.D. Bhatadwaj, Bankim Naikhorjua, Somnath Lahiri, N. Dutta - Mazumdar, S.G. Sardesai, V. D. Chitale et al. it was maintained that the time was ripe for passing on to the offensive:

... because of the rapidly developing crisis in the international arena and because of the growing power of the Congress, British imperialism feels to precipitate conflict with the united national forces ....

... the Congress feels that the time is ripe for passing on the offensive. The imperialist policy of preparing the ground for federation can be defeated only by uniting the entire national forces-workers, peasants, States People and all freedom loving Indians ....
The Congress, therefore, reiterates the national demands for complete independence, immediate withdrawal of the Army of Occupation, complete control over Defence, Foreign Affairs and Finance by the Indian people. The Congress calls upon the British Government to concede these demands immediately and in their entirety. 137

The draft resolution also proposed intensive campaign throughout the country against federal scheme, establishment of united front relations between the Congress, workers and peasant organisations.

But while the CSP, CPI and Bose were criticising the INC for its compromising attitudes the right wing leaders of the Congress were preparing to oust the leftist elements from the INC. The Congress Ministers did not hesitate to repress the workers and kisans and the Congress through various resolutions and instructions tried to suppress all legitimate movements of the workers and peasants. Especially Gandhi saw in these movements a sign of 'red ruin' and made it amply clear that he would not start any mass civil disobedience movement. Thus a ground for a conflict between the Congress and the leftists was more or less prepared and actually took place centering around the question of Bose's reelection as the Congress President. The CPI supported Bose's candidature and called for active resistance to imperialist war, implementation of kisan and labour demands declared in the Election Manifesto, unqualified support
to the states peoples' movement and democratisation of the Congress constitution. Bose's victory was explained as a mandate for action; the National Front appealed to Gandhi and the national leaders to save the Congress from disruption. For example S. Mahmudzaffar wrote:

It is true that the average Congressmen whether Leftist or Rightist, was opposed to the federation, but the leadership was divided, and its division was threatening to demoralise the rank and file....

The verdict (Bose's victory - U.G.).... is, therefore, nothing but an expression of the growing strength, unity, and anti-imperialist consciousness among the people .... 139

Bankim Mukherjee, N. Dutta Mazumdar, Sumnath Lahiri and Panchu Gopal Bhaduri in a joint appeal expressed their hope thus:

We are sure that Gandhiji and the members of the Working Committee who have led us through so many struggles and trials, will.... be in the forefront with us in our coming struggles against the common enemy, British Imperialism. 140 (Emphasis original - U.G.)

In Bose's victory was reflected the growing influence of leftists within the Congress. But as we have noted earlier, Gandhi took the leftist gain away from the grip of the left. Naturally he became the main target of criticism. In almost all the writings during the period the CPI vehemently attacked Gandhi and the Gandhian method. Commenting on Gandhi's anti-struggle attitude the National Front observed
that 'whatever Gandhiji's own intentions be, by asking the people not to agitate, he has emboldened reaction'. Adhikari described Gandhi as "an expression of the political policy of the nationalist vested interests in capital and land". (emphasis original - U.G.) Opposing Gandhian principles of class harmony and trusteeship Adhikari wrote:

In the present phase of Congress ministries, Gandhism has entered its last and decadent phase. It has become the instrument avoiding not merely revolution but also a reformist mass movement .... 143 (emphasis original - U.G.)

Given the pro-compromising and anti-struggle attitude of Gandhi perhaps Adhikari was not wrong to observe that

The abstract ethical principles of truth and non-violence are used to mystify and sidetrack the main question of democratising the Congress - of bringing in the mass forces of struggle which have developed in recent years .... 144

Thus the general communist attitude towards Gandhi was logically and, for historical reasons, turned to be hostile.

While for Gandhi acceptance of office was an antidote to 'anarchy' and 'red ruin' for the CPI it was an instrument to carry the national movement forward by parliamentary and extraparliamentary struggles. However, with the growth of working class militancy the Congress attitude stiffened. Especially Rajagopalachari, Patel, Bulpahai
Desai, Mahadeb Desai and Satyamurti along with Birla took a definite anti-working class stand. But the CSP and the CPI organised the peasants and the workers on class lines and tried to influence the ministries accordingly. Thus the formation of the ministries was followed by a spate of trade union activities. The number of registered trade unions, strikes and total mandays lost increased considerably. A profile of the working class movements during the period can be had from the following tables:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Regd. Trade Unions</th>
<th>Membership as shown in the returns of the unions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936-37</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>261,047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>390,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>399,159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of labour disputes increased accordingly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of disputes</th>
<th>Workers involved</th>
<th>Working days lost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>647,800</td>
<td>8,982,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>401,075</td>
<td>9,098,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>409,075</td>
<td>4,992,795</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During 1937-1939, the strike movements did not remain confined within the organised industrial centres like Bombay, Calcutta, Allahabad, Sholapur, Madras and Kanpur but engulfed all the industrial centres of the
country. Especially Bombay and Bengal topped the list. The general strike of the jute workers of Bengal in 1937 drew in 225,000 workers and lasted for 74 days. That is, 61.74 per cent of the total number of all-India strikes of 1937 occurred in Bengal alone. In 1937, Bombay Presidency came next to Bengal. During that year 88 strikes took place in Bombay involving 109,858 workers and this caused a loss of 877,211 working days. Bombay, was followed by Madras and the United Provinces where 61 and 15 strikes took place respectively. In 1937 14 strikes occurred in Bihar and 5 in the Central Provinces. In 1938 strikes in the textile and woolen industries claimed the largest number of loss of working days. The Bombay Government passed the Bombay Industrial Dispute Act (1938) and in protest 90,000 workers of Bombay participated in a strike. During this period Patel announced his intention to form a new trade union on the Gandhian principle of class-co-operation. Obviously, the compromising policy of the Congress and the militancy of the working class did not go hand in hand. As the communists provided the leadership in these movements Gandhi and his associates denounced them in almost every session of the INC. Special emphasis was given on the pursuance of non-violence by the working class and the peasantry. And critical as he was of this militancy neither Gandhi himself gave any call for civil disobedience movement nor others were allowed to do so without previous permission of the Congress High Command. When Bose refused to obey this line, he was expelled. The CPI vehemently opposed such moves of the Congress and strongly opposed Patel's attempt
to organise a rival trade union.147 Mishra appealed to Patel to join the existing trade union, and to work in co-operation with the AITUC.148 Similarly, taking exception to the Bombay Trade Disputes Act Pandey noted that such a act which had declared direct action illegal would help the capitalists and the workers would be victim of the factory owners and would destroy working class unity.149 The desire of the CPI to form united front between the AITUC and the Congress is verily manifest in an Editorial of the Communist:

... The task before the militant centre of the Indian Trade Union movement ... is to prepare the working class organisationally for the coming struggles. This task consists principally in coming forward as the consistent fighters for the unity of the working class, as the initiators of the United Front struggles of the workers against the attacks of the capitalists ... .

The unity which the workers want, and the unity for which ... the Communists are fighting is the Unity in class struggle.150

It is stipulated that the militants and the Communists are fighting not for unity in the abstract but for 'a fighting Unity of a consistent struggle against capitalism' which the 'reformists opposed'. 'A bitter and unrelenting struggle against the reformist leadership' and a united front from below were proposed: "The slogan of Unity all through - Unity from top to bottom becomes the lever for unfolding ever broader United Front struggles and thus breaking the remnants of the reformist resistance to struggle."151 (Emphasis original - U.S.) Pointing to the need for creating a mass-based union it was stipulated that this was an
imperative for (a) the defence of the economic interest of the workers and (b) also for national liberation. Noting that the 'overwhelming majority' of the people were united under the INC it was proposed that "It is necessary to deepen and broaden this unity, to transform it into a fighting Unity of the National Front of the people against Imperialism. That is why the Trade Union Congress seeks to achieve United Front with the INC .... It seeks Collective Affiliation to the INC in order to be able to give a revolutionary turn to the National movement by enriching with the specific form of struggle and organization characteristic of the working class".152 However, it was also noted that 'the chief hindrance to the development of the united front came from the Congress Parliamentary Board' dominated by 'the right-wing Congress leaders'.153 Despite the opposition of the right wing, the editorial observed, the task of the Trade Union Congress would be 'to develop United Front from below and in action—and to bring mass pressure to bear upon the saboteurs of Unity and anti-Imperialist struggle ...."154 It was also maintained that 'United Front with the INC can and must be achieved in Action and from below and the resistance of the right-wing leaders to it broken ...."155 For this purpose it suggested that the trade unionists and politically conscious workers would join the Congress individually 'in order to fight for United Front and for collec-
tive Affiliation from within' ; it emphasized on the 'fraternisation' of the workers' struggles by the INC rank and file and thus 'to exert pressure on the higher Committees to support the struggle', it advised the trade unions to participate in 'every' National Day celebrations and to demonstrate against every act of imperialist repression, 'against the National movement or its leaders'. It visualised that 'this participation must take the form of political protest strikes which become more and more widespread as the tempo of the struggle rises.'

Elsewhere we have seen that the Congress ministries took strong anti-kisan stand against the growing militancy of the kisans; the Congressmen were advised to dissociate themselves from the AIKS and keep an eye on them. A resolution on the kisans adopted in the Haripura session advised the kisans to refrain from militant movements and reference can also be made to the fate of the proposals suggesting collective affiliation of the kisan organisations to the INC. Compared to the half-hearted Congress policy towards the workers and the kisans the CPI policy was much more pro-worker and pro-kisan. The Congress Election Manifesto championed the rights of the workers and peasants only to win their support in the election; it became evident from the attitude of the Congress ministries towards the kisan and working class movements during the 30s. And when the government of Bihar, Central Provinces and Bombay took resort to draconian measures against the kisans and the workers the difference between British
Government and the Congress ministries almost got blurred. The CPI, throughout the period, fought for the entry of the TUs and Kisan Sabhas inside the INC and attacked the latter for its reluctance to do so. Thus Bukhari alleged that the Congress leaders had failed to appreciate the importance of the kisan movement as one of its allies against imperialism and denounced Patel's anti-kisan sabha attitude. 157

N. Dutta Mazumdar opposed the class-collaborationist line of Patel and observed:

Trade Unions and Kisan Sabhas are in no sense parallel to the Congress. On the contrary they are the sources of strength to the Congress. 158

We have mentioned earlier that Gandhi in the Harijan (September 10, 1938) supported adoption of coercive measures, if necessary, against the workers and peasants. As to this the National Front commented:

.... It is a repudiation of the Congress Manifesto in the name of non-violence. It is doing violence to the spirit and letter of the Manifesto (Election Manifesto - U.G.) which unhesitatingly recognised the right to picket. 159

As the communists and socialists were ardently working for trade union unity and as the country was going to be embroiled in the Second World War, Patel's dream of forming a rival trade union did not materialise immediately.

The Haripura Congress unequivocally stated that the Congress was
not in a position to give the states peoples any direct help; it, however, lent moral support to them. Compared to the hesitant and half-hearted attitude of the Congress the attitude of the CPI towards the states peoples' movement was qualitatively different, while championing the causes of the states peoples, Gandhi adhered to the principle of non-violence and was opposed to any direct action by the people, however democratic it might be, under the banner of the INC. In fact, Gandhi had no clear vision of the possible nature of the states peoples' movements. However, Nehru supported the mass movements of the states peoples against the feudal Maharajas. The CPI attacked the Haripura resolution as a 'self-contradictory' document and observed that the Congress organisation in the states had become 'real "toy-committees", divorced from struggle, divorced from the heroic tradition of the Congress.' It was observed that

"... The basic contradiction between imperialism and its allies, the States Rulers, on the one hand and the Indian people on the other, cannot be liquidated except through revolution. The Congress ... can not dissociate itself from the movement directed against the State despots, staunch allies of the foreign rulers, for long."

He pointed out that the problem of the states peoples should be linked with the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist movements of the people of British India and opposed dissolution of the Congress Committees.
not claim itself as the sole champion of the Muslim masses, rather it should declare itself an organisation of the Hindus. As it was impossible for the Congress to concede this demand it took initiative to achieve a pact between the League and the Congress. Subsequently, a meeting was held between Nehru and Jinnah to find out a reasonable solution to the knotty problem. The Congress agreed to concede all the nationalist demands of the League provided the latter lent its support to the Congress against fighting the Federal provisions of the Government of India Act, 1935; the Congress also sought League’s direct help in the struggle for freedom. In return of such support the Congress promised ministership to the League members in the Congress Cabinet provided the League obeyed Congress discipline and worked out the Congress programme.

The CPI broadly supported the Congress initiative but did not regard it as a final solution, because it might "degenerate into a mere pact for the division of the spoils and the joint sabotaging of the struggle." "And such a tendency could be avoided only by incorporating the Muslim masses into the organisations of the workers and peasants." Adhikari sought the root of communalism in the capitalist-imperialist exploitation and "mainly in the competition for jobs and favours in the struggle for distribution of the little political power which is to be obtained through compromise with imperialism." (Emphasis original—U.G.)
He thought that the menace of communalism could be rooted out by way of launching mass struggle against the imperialists. Adhikari glorified the progressive role of the League during the twenties and denounced its present pro-imperialist stand. For him the Congress proposals ensured "a united front on the basis of struggle, while at the same time conceding the demands and guarantees which the League requires in the name of the Muslim minority." 167

In this connection it should be mentioned that the CSP did not support the idea of Congress-League agreement on the ground that it might strengthen reaction. Endorsing Nehru's attempt to forge unity Ajoy Ghosh criticised the CSP in that the latter did not take into cognizance the need of the new situation when such a unity might strengthen anti-imperialist struggle. Not only that, such a unity, he argued, would give "the better opportunity to intensify struggle, through struggle liquidate communalism and transform the League-Congress agreement into the fighting unity" 168 of the Hindu-Muslim masses. Giving full support to Congress initiatives Ghosh observed: "... If the Lucknow resolutions mean anything, if the League is not to betray its thousands of followers it cannot reject the Congress terms." 169

In January, 1939 Ghosh alleged that the League had submitted to the imperialist design of divide and rule, and supported the British War Bill. With the help of the British the League was trying to widen
its mass basis and thus weakening the anti-imperialist struggle, he main-
tained. He also criticised the Congress for its insistence on Bande Ma-
taram, for the Hindu religious atmosphere prevalent in Congress meetings
and prayers. Analogies from Hindu religious texts were also highly de-
tested. And when the Jinnah-Nehru talk broke down attacking the League,
Ghosh wrote:

.... They preferred to play the role of agents of imperialism,
of splitters and disruptors of the national movement ... They
put forth conditions for 'unity' which no national organisation
could accept. 170

B. T. Ranadive, too, blamed the Congress for not giving due atten-
tion to the economic grievances of the Muslims. Like the CSP Ranadive
sought the roots of communalism in the economic reasons and observed th-
at mere cultural guarantees, negotiations and special representations
would not solve the problem. He suggested that the Congress should ad-
opt a direct approach and try to redress their economic grievances and
thus end their years of isolation. 171

Evidently the CPI treated the communal problem as closely linked
with the economic grievances of the Muslim masses which were used by
the opportunist League leaders and the imperialists for their sinister
interests. It appears that the CPI's stand was on the whole pro-Con-
gress and anti-League, its championing of the minority causes notwith-
standing.
The Dutt-Bradley Thesis advised the CPI to act in unison with the leftists inside the INC and also to co-operate with the CSP. From 1936 onwards the CSP and the CPI came closer to each other and jointly organised the kisans, the workers and the students. The united strength of the left inside the Congress became amply evident in Bose's victory. But just after this incident the left became the victim of the Rightist wrath. We have already analysed how the right-wingers were closely connected with the Indian big bourgeoisie. The strategy of Gandhi and his rightist associates forced Bose to resign from the Congress Presidentship and subsequently led to his expulsion from the INC. The activities of the left made the rightist nationalist leaders panicky and they decided to expunge the leftist elements from the Congress. As the leftists constituted the minority such strategy of the rightists seemed to be fatal for the CSP, the CPI and the followers of Bose. Clearly, the need of the hour was strong leftist consolidation. As the ouster of Bose was a danger signal for the left, the CPI throughout the period tried to unite the leftists. But the CSP-CPI relation got soured during 1938-1939 and sometime in May 1939 five CSP leaders resigned from the CSP executive as a mark of protest against the so-called communist disruption. Though the CPI reiterated its stand for co-operation Jayaprakash Narayan described it as one of CPI's tactics to avoid ouster from the CSP. From the very outset the CSP was suspicious of the CPI's allegiance to the CI. Thus top CSP leaders like Masani took the CPI's united front
policy as a device for furthering Russian national interests. In
1936 a debate on this issue was initiated in the pages of the Congress
Socialist by Masani, Sardesai and Naba Kumar Choudhuri. Masani's con-
tention was that the Comintern policy had deviated from the Leninist
line of world revolution and was now promoting the national interests
of the USSR. Naba Kumar Choudhuri thought that Sardesai had confused
the policy of the CI with that of the Soviet Union. He observed,

... if a war breaks out in which the British empire is invol­
ved it will be the striking of the hour for India, even though
we may find the Soviet Union siding with Britain for strategic
reasons. 174 (Emphasis original — U.S.)

The CSP's anti-Soviet bias was counter balanced by the CPI's pro-
Soviet leanings. Thus Sajjad Zaheer and P. Sundarayya thought that the
rise of fascism had necessitated the Party to support the USSR unhesi-
tatingly. Sundarayya wrote:

... one cannot claim to be the real friend of U.S.S.R., as
long as he maintains that U.S.S.R. is under the dictatorship
of Stalin and that Stalin is as ruthless as Hitler or Musso­
lini ... 175

In April 1938 Mahumuddzzafar noted that though the CSP refused to
abide by the decisions of the CI "it is obviously the duty of those who
claim to be Marxist-Leninists to subscribe to international as much as
to national discipline ..." Contrary to Masani's anti-Comintern line he
noted that "the impacts of the October Revolution abroad and the communist
movement in India were largely responsible for the emergence of the socialist tendency in the National Movements." Moreover, as the CSP claimed to be a Marxist-Leninist party, there was no insuperable difficulty, he wrote, in developing a single Marxist-Leninist Party and noted that the CSP-CPI unity would enormously help rapid building up of the national front and thus combat imperialism. An Editorial of the National Front pointed out that the basic task of the Left was two-fold, viz., (a) national unity and (b) winning over the Congress for immediate struggle along Bose's plan. It was emphatically noted that,

Left unity is the basis of National unity. National unity without Left unity will only end in capitulation and sacrifice of the struggle. 177 (Emphasis original - H.G.)

VII

Sometimes it is alleged that the motive behind the united front tactics of the CPI was to establish communist hegemony over the INC; especially such observations were made, for instance, by Overstreet and Windmiller and M. R. Masani. But a close scrutiny of the relevant documents gives a different impression. Referring to the phenomenon of purging the militant elements from the INC the CPI appealed for "the closest possible collaboration." The National Front commented,
Without co-ordination, without unity in theory and practice, the Left forces in the country will, therefore, be isolated, disintegrated and unable to lead and develop the intrushing tides of mass struggle. 178

Reiterating the need for a united front to fight imperialism and Federation and to combat the danger of further national defeats and capitulation to imperialism it demanded that "the movement for unity of the Left must be pushed forward with the utmost determination and speed." 179 The question of left unity gained added momentum after the reelection of Bose in 1939 and reached its climax after Bose’s expulsion from the INC when the CPI opposed the idea of forming another party arrayed against the INC. And the CPI’s support to the latter aroused much furore. But one point should be made very clear that neither Bose nor the CPI had any illusion that either of them could unilaterally achieve hegemony over the INC. Thus by way of greeting the National Front Bose wrote:

The unity of the national fight for independence must be maintained. Let this be clearly understood that we the Left do notanker after for positions, we do not want to capture the Congress and to oust the Right. We want to retain them, even at the very front of our movement, we insist only on the heritage of struggle of the Congress being carried forward. 180
(Emphasis original - U.G.)

A careful scrutiny of the Congress, the Communist and the Socialist party documents reveals that there was a strong pro-compromise bias amongst many top Congress leaders, while the CPI and the CSP
fought against such tendencies. Interestingly, in his private letters Nehru also expressed his concern about the manner of functioning of Congress ministries. Sometimes he even dubbed them as 'counterrevolutionary'. Naturally when Bose made an allegation that the Congress leadership stood for compromise on the federation issue, the CPI supported him and also his candidature for Congress Presidentship for the second time. It saw inside the INC a tendency "to arrive at understanding with property and commercial vested interests" who had always been inimical to the Congress. True to this spirit the National Front before the Tripuri Congress emphasised unconditional resistance to war, uncompromising opposition to federation, active support to the states peoples' movement, implementation of the election pledges, enlargement of civil liberties etc. And Bose's victory was explained as mandate for action and the Gandhian opposition was viewed as a 'stunning blow at the rank and file'. For the communists the Gandhian non-co-operation against Bose meant not to reap the 'harvest of the mass struggle'. It declared that the supreme need of the time was unity and, therefore, "every endeavour must be made to prevent a split in the Congress." Gandhi's emphasis on a 'homogeneous' Working Committee and his rejection of the idea of a 'composite' one indicated the Congress determination to oust the leftists from the INC. And at that time such an ouster virtually meant political wilderness. Naturally the CPI appealed to Gandhi and all nationalist leaders to save the Congress from disruption.
It was unambiguously stated that:

... Neither we nor the Left as a whole is against the Right as such. Between the two wings of our movement we have and would have differences ... The main enemy of us both and of our whole country is British Imperialism. Against the main enemy we must march together, as one army, under the banner of the Congress. 183 (Emphasis original – U.R.)

After Gandhi's refusal to co-operate with Bose and the consequent adoption of the Pant Resolution the gulf widened between the left and the right. As to this resolution the CSP finally took resort to abstention. For the CPI it seemed to be a paradoxical situation. For dissociation from the Congress at such a critical period would inevitably lead to alienation from the national political mainstream without any positive gain achieved. Thus, to avoid political isolation the CPI advised Bose to co-operate with the INC. Nevertheless it did not hesitate to attack the policy of the Working Committee. It noted:

... The issue is whether the Congress is to continue the present policy of inaction, a policy that is bound to lead to ignoble surrender, or, whether the Congress is to seize the initiative and launch struggle ... 184

Taking exception to the Socialist stand the CPI noted that those who showed inability to lead the Left forces must give up all talk of struggle and fight. It was categorically mentioned that Bose's idea of a Left Bloc was not a conspiracy to oust the Right or to capture
the Working Committee but an antidote to national disruption and policy of capitulation. The CPI maintained that Bose's reelection did not mean sanction for alternative leadership but for concrete action. For the CPI it was a high time to strike against imperialism. It observed that "To fail to strike when the enemy is the weakest, to leave the initiative in its hands means throwing away this opportunity." 186

A careful scanning of the communist party documents of the period shows that the CPI broadly extended support to Bose. When Gandhi's refusal to co-operate with Bose led to a political deadlock the CPI advised Bose to submit to Gandhi for maintaining national unity. This very stand of the CPI and its subsequent decision not to join the Forward Bloc embittered the CPI-AIFB relationship. Anyway, the National Front commented that Bose's "resignation was forced because the Right was not prepared to make the slightest concession to the newer nationalist forces growing within the Congress." 187 (Emphasis added - U.G.) Gandhi's decision to purge the Congress of undesirable elements was opposed by the CPI on the ground that "purification can only mean a purge of the Congress of all radical elements, a transformation of the Congress into a branch of the Gandhian Seva Sangh ...." 188 (Emphasis added - U.G.) The right wing triumph was purchased, so it was argued, at the cost of the left, and this intensified the danger of compromise on the question of war and federation. Repudiating the CSP viewpoint that the Forward
Bloc was the product of power politics the National Front observed:

.... The Bloc stands for struggle, for uncompromising hostility towards Federation, for seizing the initiative at the critical juncture, for a determined struggle against war ... It is left-nationalistic in outlook and seeks to move the Congress towards uncompromising struggle. 189

Not only that. The CPI further maintained that ".... Left unity is the basis of national unity and constitutes the one condition of overcoming the capitulatory tendency and preventing a suicidal compromise...." 190 Though the CPI opposed the idea of merger with the FB nevertheless it wanted to establish with the latter 'the closest united front relation.' 191 But it reminded Bose that the left within the INC constituted the minority and the left unity was an imperative for maintaining and also strengthening the unity of the Congress. 192 Joshi felt that "To initiate an anti-Right struggle, therefore, does not check the Right but strengthens it." 193 (Emphasis original - U.G.) The need of the hour, according to him, was a 'united leadership' not a 'homogeneous leadership' (as proposed by the rightists) or an 'alternative leadership' (as proposed by M. N. Roy). As to the expulsion of Bose from the Congress and the ban on organisation of mass movement without prior permission of the Congress Executive bodies the National Front commented:
... with the world hanging over the brink of a crisis it is not only amazing short-sightedness to pass anti satyagraha resolutions, but a positive and heinous crime against the national struggle and that no serious person can be proud of this kind of nationalism nor can it be allowed to go unchallenged.... 194 (Emphasis added - U.G.)

But despite such critical attitude towards the INC the CPI stressed the need for unity between the left and the Congress. 195 Subsequently, the CPI criticised Bose for his left-nationalist bias and his concentration more on national conflicts than on fight against imperialism. 196 But such criticality did not prevent the CPI from denouncing the Congress for Bose's expulsion from the INC. It unhesitatingly maintained:

"It is part of the political vendetta waged by the Right to retain its mastery over the Congress in the interests of its compromising policy ... The Left is being victimised in order to appease imperialism, in order to make possible a deal over the head of the masses and against their will.... 197"

In an article signed by P.C. Joshi, A.K. Ghosh, G. Adhikari and R.D. Bharadwaj it was alleged that Bose's expulsion meant virtual suppression of "the considerable minority in the Congress which represents new forces of mass organisation and struggle." 198 (Emphasis original - U.G.)

In this connection a general misconception about the CPI's policy towards the AIFB and the INC should be clarified. It is often argued that with the mounting danger of war against the USSR the CPI felt it
necessary to concentrate attack against Britain, even at the cost of left unity. It is a truism that during this period the CPI supported Bose, but never at the cost of national unity. The record of the Congress ministries and Gandhi's anti-peasant, anti-working class attitude (along with close connections with the big bourgeoisie) made one thing evident that the INC wanted some sort of compromise. In fact, Nehru once and again raised such allegations and Gandhi openly declared that he was in favour of compromise ('honourable settlement') and against any civil disobedience movement. Given these facts it was natural for the CPI to oppose such compromising tendencies and support Bose's candidature. The CPI was, in other words, confronted with the difficult problem of maintaining national unity, its links with the INC as well as emphasising the necessity of giving a left turn to the Congress. The CPI thus never demanded a working committee wholly manned by the leftists; instead it wanted a composite working committee. In several editorials of the National Front the CPI denounced the Pant Resolution, its advice to Bose to form the working committee in accordance with Gandhi's advice notwithstanding. This duality of the CPI's approach not only embittered the CPI-AIFB relationship but also gave rise to consternation among the rank and file. Ajoy Ghosh rued over the fact that due to lack of rapport between the CSP and the CPI in Tripuri
"a great opportunity to come out before the masses of Congressmen as an effective political group fighting for the maintenance of unity and for the policy of advance" was lost.\textsuperscript{201} (Emphasis added - U.G.)

That the CPI stood for a genuine national front, including all anti-imperialist forces of India, became amply clear when Adhikari criticised M.N. Roy's suggestion of building up an alternative leftist leadership and thus capture the Congress to wage a struggle against imperialism. Roy alleged that the CPI had succumbed to Gandhism and betrayed the socialist cause. Refuting such charges the CPI maintained that it stood for a united leadership and not for capturing the Working Committee. For him "... It was the only possible line of advance and of the unity of the anti-imperialist forces under the circumstances."\textsuperscript{202} (Emphasis added - U.G.) He noted that the "acceptance of the slogan of alternative leadership would have meant the rejection of the basic policy of the United National front..."\textsuperscript{203} Describing Gandhi as the representative of the Indian big bourgeoisie Adhikari maintained that the demand of the elimination of the present Gandhian leadership would virtually mean the elimination of a whole class of the 'Nationalist bourgeoisie' which formed a part of the 'National Front' and which stood 'face-to-face with imperialism'. Adhikari vehemently criticised Roy's policy of alternative leadership as mechanical and equated it with his decolonisation theory of 1930s where he depicted the Indian bourgeoisie as a
junior partner of imperialism. Adhikari observed:

... Gandhian leadership is not merely the leadership of bunch of obscurantist feudal reactionaries. It is a leadership with a bourgeois class bias. (Emphasis original - U.G.) It has a hold on the broad masses because its role as the opponent of the Government, of imperialism, is not yet exhausted ..... The central task today is not to concentrate the mainfire on the leadership at all.... 204 (Emphasis added - U.G.)

As to Roy's allegation that the CSP had surrendered to the right wing leadership of the Congress it was maintained that this was not true at all and that Roy's allegation was nothing but 'unprincipled opportunism'. Roy's criticism of the CSP was described as an attempt to disrupt the Left with a view to getting a seat in the Congress Working Committee. It was stated:

It is really strange that this arch-opportunist, this chameleon who changes his political color (sic) every minute should dare to (sic) accuse the Communists of opportunism..... 205

Adhikari, on the contrary, argued that proper utilisation of the mass movements would give birth to a 'consistent revolutionary democratic leadership', the presence of the big bourgeois in the national front notwithstanding. He dubbed Royist line as disruptive and inverted 'Rightism'. 202

However, the strategy and tactics followed by the CPI during the 1930s has been strongly criticised by an eminent Indian historian ,


Bipan Chandra. Chandra's main points are as follows: Firstly, the INC was the product of the 'primary contradiction' between imperialism and the Indian people. Secondly, the class contradictions inside the nationalist movement, if any, were secondary (non-antagonistic) and therefore, subordinated to the primary contradiction. Thirdly, the INC followed a strategy of class adjustment and had 'no class essence', i.e., it represented the Indian people (a concept with no definite class bias) as a whole. Fourthly, it was open to all parties and ideologies to be transformed in a basic way. If the left had failed to transform the INC along the socialist track it was not due to the fault of the Congress ideology or due to the rightist consolidation inside the INC but because of the weaknesses of the policies and practices followed by the left. He also argues that the INC was pro-working class, pro-kisan and even sometimes pro-left (he refers to the accommodation of the leftists like Nehru and Bose in important positions inside the INC, adoption of Karachi resolution championing the causes of the kisans and workers etc.). Finally, the CPI failed to appreciate the Congress strategy of struggle-truce-struggle and the CPI and the left as a whole failed to appreciate the suppleness of the Congress strategy and tactics especially on the issues of office acceptance, collective affiliation, Constituent Assembly, non-violence, militant movements of the peasants and workers and class adjustment. According to him,
The left did not, however, at any stage believe that the Gandhian movement had a strategy. Consequently, it neither made an effort to understand this strategy, nor did it subject it to a serious critique from the perspective of an alternative strategy. 207

In short, Chandra thinks that the left had failed to transform the INC ideologically as its understanding of the primary and secondary contradictions of the then India was faulty and as it failed to fuse dialectically the two contradictions. The left, he observes, had "hardly any conception of the hegemonic struggle ... of a struggle which combined a war of movement (Satyagraha phase) with a war of position (non-Satyagraha phase) ...." 208

It is very difficult to share Chandra's contentions. The foregoing analysis makes it clear that the CPI and the left never failed to see that the primary contradiction at that time was between imperialism and the people. It will be a travesty of truth to say that the left failed to locate the primary contradiction. Secondly, the CPI's anti-landlord stance was not unjust. The landlords were the props of British raj, sided with colonialism and was in itself a constituent of the 'primary contradiction'; they never spontaneously supported the national movement; they severely repressed the kisans and in the 1930s the Congress ministers and the right wing Congressmen supported repression and did never go against the landlords. The fate of non-violent no-tax, no-rent movements of the kisans during 1920-1947 is known to
all students of Indian political history. We fully agree with Kapil Kumar that "the landlords were not a constituent in the multi-class alliance against the British, but at the same time were in alliance with the group within the Congress which stood for the suppression of the kisan movement." 209 If one takes into account the Gandhian attitude towards the peasant movements and working class struggles, the behaviour of the Congress ministries, zamindar-Congress posts in U.P. and Bihar, the Congress attitude towards the movements of the states peoples, its anti-kisan sabha stance etc. it will be very difficult to agree with Chandra's observation that the INC was a pro-peasant and pro-working class organisation. We have already analysed the relation between the Congress, the working class and the peasants. The facts do not corroborate Chandra's views. In fact, Hamza Alavi is quite correct to note that if Gandhi had made the peasant speak for the Congress, he did little to make the Congress speak for the peasant.' 210 The Karachi resolution and the pro-peasant demands made in the election manifesto of 1936-1937 do not imply that the INC was pro-kisan. The continuous struggle of the communists, socialists and kisan sabha leaders to transform the Congress ideology rather forced the INC to champion the kisan causes. And the pro-peasant slogans in the mid 1930s were, as we have noted, one of the vote-catching tactics. Chandra is also not justified to suggest that the INC shifted
from pressure - compromise - pressure to struggle - truce-struggle tactic. It is partly true that occasional strategic retreats of Gandhi, 'war of position' as Chandra notes, was helpful in enabling the struggle to move one step forward but it is also equally true that such occasional retreats in reality were aimed at extracting more concessions from the colonial government; the INC never abandoned the pressure - compromise - pressure tactic as Chandra demands. The major benefits of office acceptance went to the bourgeoisie and the landlord classes and the peasants and workers got peripheral advantages. Thirdly, there is no denying the fact that at least two leftist men - Nehru and Bose - were made Congress Presidents. But this does not imply that the INC was accommodative of the leftist elements. "As the majority of the Working Committee members came from the right wing leaders of the Congress the socialist Presidents, despite their all pious wishes and occasional socialist speeches, remained ornamental heads of the Working Committee from 1936-1938. In fact, it was a subtle tactical move by Gandhi which eluded the peasants and workers. By accommodating Nehru and Bose as Congress Presidents and adopting some pro-kisan and pro-worker resolutions and programmes Gandhi wanted to neutralise the growingly militant kisans and working class elements inside the national camp. The real attitude of Gandhi and his right wing associates towards the left became amply clear in Tripuri and after. Finally, we can not agree with Chandra that the left had no alternative ideology. The CPI never attacked Gandhi and the
right wing men on personal grounds. On the contrary, their attempts were to unveil the class essence of Ganchism (Satya graha, non-violence and constructive work etc.) and put forward an alternative programme of movement for the workers and peasants. It is a truism that sometimes their strategy and tactics appeared to be faulty but it does not mean that the CPI and the left had no alternative ideological programme.

For the CPI the three years between 1937-1939 were very very crucial and the proper implementation of the united front policy was a kind of acid test for it. These three years were more or less years of co-operation—co-operation with the INC, the CSP and the Forward Bloc. As the CPI then constituted a minority it seemed very difficult for it to maintain the united front and its political and ideological autonomy simultaneously. The prevailing amity between the CSP and the CPI broke down in 1940 largely due to the anti-Comintern attitude of the CSP and especially due to the anti-communist attitude of M. R. Masani. That the pursuance of the united front policy yielded fruit was proved at the Tripuri session of the INC. But the growing enmity between the CSP and the CPI and the shrewd tactics of Gandhi stood in the way of left consolidation. From organisational point of view the progress of the CPI was also satisfactory. The trade union and kisan movements between 1937-1939 made one thing clear that the communists had established their leadership in these fronts.
The Seventh Congress line of the CPI was apparently contradictory in nature in the sense that forging the united front simultaneously from above and below was operationally very difficult. Moreover, for the CPI, the transition from a period of isolation to one of co-operation seemed to be a volte face to many communist workers and gave rise to consterna-
tion. Again, more than once it was alleged that by following the new ta-
ctic of united front the CPI was, in reality, serving the national inte-
rests of the USSR and blindly following dictates of the CPGB. It was rea-
11ly difficult to overcome all such tremendous hurdles.

Anyway, the CPI faithfully followed the Seventh Congress line, veheme-
11ntly opposed the compromising politics of the INC and struggled to main-
tain national unity. Throughout the period the CPI opposed the anti-pea-
sant and anti-working class attitude of Gandhi, Patel, Prasad and other
rightist Congressmen. Though it did not raise serious objections against office acceptance it repeatedly drew attention to the fact that throu-
gh pursuance of constitutional politics real independence could never be achieved and tried to persuade the Congress to encourage extraparliamen-
tary struggles. It praised the progressive role of the Gandhian leader-
ship but in the same breath it pointed to the fact that Gandhian strategy and tactics in effect served the interests of the Indian bourgeoisie and, hence, it depicted Gandhi as the representative of the national bourgeoi-
sie. It should be clearly mentioned here that as to the class nature of
Gandhi the CPI, the CSP and the FB had had no two opinions. The logical extension of the Seventh Congress line demanded that the CPI should maintain close unity with the INC as the Congress happened to be the only effective mass organisation through which India could move forward towards freedom. Thus when in 1939 the left unity posed a serious challenge to the rightist leadership and the Congress was brought to the brink of a split the CPI advised Bose not to split the INC. For the FB and the CSP such a policy appeared to be a betrayal to the cause of left unity. But it should be emphatically mentioned here that the Seventh Congress line of the CPI did never preach left unity at the cost of national unity. Moreover, such a split at that time would have resulted in political isolation of the left. Given the strong anti-communist attitude of a section of the Congress leaders and the gravity of the national and international situation, it could have brought no positive gain. The subsequent political developments, especially the ouster of the leftists from the INC, proved the rightness of the communist stand.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For a well-documented and an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the Indian capitalists, British imperialism and the Indian National Congress see Bipan Chandra, 'The Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism before 1947' and 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the Capitalist Class, 1936' in Bipan Chandra, Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India (Delhi, 1981).

2. That the CSP men did succeed to occupy position in the AICC because of the system of proportional representation is evident from an unsigned AICC document entitled 'Note on Elections to the A.I.C.C.' Opposing the removal of the proportional representation the Note stipulated: "It is impossible to remove proportional representation and yet protect minorities... it is only proportional representation which has made it possible for Socialists to get on the A.I.C.C. Except perhaps in the U.P. and Bengal (owing to the protecting presence of certain personalities), the Socialists would be wiped out if you have the distributive vote..." AICC File No 6.40.1936. NMNL.

3. See Ansari to Prasad 8.8.35 and Prasad to Ansari 12.8.35 in AICC File No 6.43 KW(1) 1935. NMNL.

4. AICC File No 6.39 (i) 1937. NMNL.


7. ibid.

8. ibid.
9. In his presidential reply to the third annual general meeting of the FICCI on 16.2.36 G.D.Birla said: "I am very sorry that we have not been able to influence the government or to convert them to our views, but we never anticipated that. It is impossible in the present circumstances and in the present political condition of our country to convert the government to our views; but I think the only solution of our present difficulties lies in every Indian businessman strengthening the hands of those who are fighting for the freedom of our country... The prosperity of the country depends entirely on the amount of political freedom which we get and I think that not only the interests of the country but in the interests of the capitalists, the employers, and the industrialists we should try to fight and strengthen the hands of those who are fighting for Swaraj." (emphasis added - G.D.) 'Report of the Proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the FICCI, vol. III, Third Annual Meeting (1930), pp.264-65. Cited in Chandra, op. cit., p.169. See n.8.

10. Nehru observed: "I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism, and when I use this word I do so not in a vague humanitarian way but in the scientific, economic sense. Socialism is, however, something even more than an economic doctrine; it is a philosophy of life and as such also it appeals to me. I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation and the subjectation of the Indian people except through socialism. That involves vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry as well as the feudal and autocratic Indian States system. That means the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative service. It means ultimately a change in our instincts and habits and desires. In short, it means a new civilization, radically different from the present capitalist order. Some glimpse we can have of this new civilization in the territories of the U.S.S.R. ...." 'President's Address' in Report of the 49th Session at Lucknow, 1936 (AICC, 1936), pp.20-21.

12. ibid., pp.iv-v.

13. ibid., pp.17-18, 33. As to affiliation of the mass organisations within the INC, Nehru said: "An additional method for us to increase our contacts with the masses is to organise them as producers and then affiliate such organisations to the Congress or have full co-operation between the two. Such organisations of producers as exist today, such as trade unions and peasant unions, as well as other anti-imperialist organisation could also be brought within this sphere of mutual co-operation for the good of the masses and for the struggle for national freedom..." ibid., p.33.

14. ibid.


18. Linlithgow to Zetland 19.3.37. ibid., pp.79-80. NAI. Taking exception to the general attitude of the Congress that an assurance of non-interference had been given by the Government, Linlithgow maintained: "... it would be most difficult, and indeed in my view impossible, for us to allow to pass unchallenged a positive and untruthful statement that an assurance had been given by a particular Governor in regard to the use of his special powers. My general attitude on this is first, that there can be no question of any assurance; secondly, that we shall be driven to contradict, however relu-
ctantly, any positive statement made by a Congress leader that such an assurance had been given; and, thirdly, that we should be very ill-advised to enter into any discussions or negotiations with the Congress, as to the terms...

.." (Emphasis added - U.G.) ibid., pp.70-80. A note on Birla-Linlithgow talk on the above issue is enclosed with this letter wherein we see a tactical and somewhat moderated tone of the Viceroy which was also made with an intention to reach Gandhi: "I went on to say that I thought it unlikely that Mr. Gandhi has fallen into error of thinking that I or any Governor could..... contract out of our statutory duty under the Act. I had already made plain in public my own inclination to work the constitution in a spirit of sympathy, help and co-operation .... But if the question is put to me: Will you give some undertaking limiting or defining your discretion as to the safeguards, the answer would be: No! I said I felt it important that this should be clearly understood and that Mr. Birla was at liberty so to report to Mr. Gandhi..." ibid., p.91. This note bears the Viceroy's signature dated 12.7.37. In his letter to Zetland of 9.4.37 Linlithgow wrote that any such concession would enhance the prestige of the Congress to 'a most dangerous level' and also that he was at pains to hear from some Muslim visitors that 'a tendency on the part of the rank and file of Mohammedans to drift towards Congress' was taking place. ibid., p.91. Besides the reasons mentioned above, the Government had other considerations also. In his letter to Zetland of 22.4.37 Linlithgow wrote that he was sure that any concession to Congress would seriously 'shake the services' and "... would so alarm the princes as to make it at least doubtful if they could be brought into the Federation... if they (the Congress - U.G.) were able to secure power in circumstances in which they would be freed of the effective check of the Governor's safeguards... agrarian mischief and ultimately revolution on the grand scale might be launched with good hope of success..." ibid., pp.107-8. He indicated that such a possibility would place 'a very heavy strain' on the Government's military resources.


20. ibid., p.631.

22. ibid., pp.193-95.

23. Birla seemed to be instrumental in negotiating between the Congress and the British leaders. Birla wrote to Gandhi on 15.2.35: "... The Governor (of Bengal - U.G.) now tells me definitely that there will be some overture for establishing some point of agreement after the Bill (Government of India Bill, 1935 - U.G.) is passed... To enter into a pact after the Bill is passed would be a difficult job for Congressmen, but let us hope that your resourcefulness will be able to help at the proper time..." ibid., pp.144-45. In his letter to Samuel Hoare, the then Secretary of State, of 16.12.34 Birla put emphasis on personal contact with Bapu. ibid., pp.148-49. Also see Birla to Hoare 19.1.35 ibid., p.153; Birla to Mahadeb Desai 18.12.34. ibid., p.150; Birla to Gandhi 29.6.35 wherein a detailed report of his dialogue with eminent British politicians, e.g., Chamberlain, Baldwin, Churchill et al. is available. He wrote: 'Determined to pull every possible string on Gandhi's behalf, I sought out every one who might be of assistance...'; ibid., pp.188-89. It should be mentioned here that though most of these letters were addressed to Gandhi, Mahadeb Desai (hereafter M.D.), Gandhi's Secretary, used to write replies on Gandhi's behalf and some letters are directly addressed to M.D. In his letter (16.6.37) to M.D. Birla wrote: "I utilised this opportunity (of visiting London in the Summer of 1937 - U.G.) also to renew my efforts to dissipate mutual suspicions (with regard to Governor's veto - U.G.) and arrive at an understanding which could enable the Congress to accept office in the provinces.... The position here is not unhopeful, and until I find nothing doing here, I hope the Working Committee will not take steps to bang the door. People here are most anxious to get the Congress into office... So let the door be kept open until it is banged on this side; and I hope it will not be banged." (Emphasis added - U.G.) ibid., pp.216-17.


26. ibid., p.94.

27. ibid., pp.88-89.

28. Among the prominent signatories were Naoroji Saklatvala, Purushottamdas Thakurdas, Chimanlal Setalvad, Cowasjee Jahanmir, Homi Mody, Walchand Hirachand, K.R.P. Shraff et al. This manifesto was published in the Tribune on May 20, 1936. For an interesting study of the role of the Indian capitalists during 1936 and Gandhi's assurance to Birla that office would not be rejected in the Lucknow Congress, see 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the Capitalist Class, 1936' in Bipan Chandra, op. cit., pp.171-203. On April 18, 1936 Thakurdas wrote to Birla: "... The way it strikes me... is that Jawaharlal meant to go the whole hog, but evidently, he found restraint in the opposition which he encountered from what I would call the 'Mahatmaji group'... I would like to know what you think of things, as far as they have gone, and whether you think that Mahatmaji's and your expectations have been fulfilled." See Thakurdas Papers F.N. 177/1936-43. NMML. In his reply (20.4.36) Birla wrote: "... I am perfectly satisfied with what has taken place. Mahatmaji kept his promise and without his uttering a word, he saw that no new commitments were made. (emphasis original - U.G.) Jawaharlalji's speech in a way was thrown into the waste paper basket because all the resolutions that were passed were against the spirit of his speech... .... The Working Committee which he has constituted contains an over-whelming majority of "Mahatmaji group"....."

".....It could be said therefore that the things are moving in the right direction. The election which will take place will be controlled by "Vallabhbhai Group" and if Lord Lintilhgow handles the situation properly, there is every likelihood of the Congress men coming into office." ibid. In his letter dated May 26, 1936 to Walchand Hirachand Birla mildly criticised him for putting his signature on the Bombay manifesto: "Do you think you were right in signing that manifesto against Jawaharlal? If its merit is to be judged by the
results then I must say that you have been instrumental in creating further opposition to capitalism. You have rendered no service to your castemen. It is curious how we businessmen are so short sighted. We are against socialism and again nothing is being done to carry on argumentative propaganda and even people like Vallabhbhai and Bhulabhai who are fighting against socialism are not being helped... If we can only strengthen their hands, we can help everyone..." ibid. On July 1, 1936 Birla wrote to Thakurdas: "... The manifesto has given impetus to the forces working against capitalism..." ibid. Also see Thakurdas to Birla 29.5.36. All these documents are available in Thakurdas MSS File No 177/1936-43. NMML.

29. M.K. Gandhi, 'Congress Ministries', Harijan, 5(23), 17 July 1937, pp.100-81. Gandhi's line of argument was strikingly similar to that of Birla who wrote to Gandhi on 15.2.35: "I still stick to my view that it is not correct to say that the proposed constitution is worse than the Montagu Reforms. Of course, this bill could be made worse, even tyrannical, but it as well be made better... and I would therefore ask you to keep an open mind about the truce." Birla, op.cit., p.145. In this connection it should be mentioned that in one of his articles in Harijan Gandhi let the people know, "I had not studied the Act when I advised office acceptance." See M.K. Gandhi, 'My Meaning of Office Acceptance', Harijan, 5(30), 4 September 1937, p.236.

30. ibid., p.130.

31. ibid., p.181.


33. ibid., p.188.

35. Home Political (I) File No 4/17/1940. NAI.

36. According to R.I. Crane, the Congress leadership included such persons who were prepared to give "no more than lip service to an election manifesto which they viewed opportunistically." p.157. He even opines that the Congress ministries in U.P. and Bihar "were not anxious to implement the Agrarian programme in a meaningful way. The leitmotiv was one of undue concern for legalisms and for the rights of the Zamindars...." p.163. He maintains that the Congress Governments had 'more money in hand' than the previous governments and notes that though adoption of costly reform measures was not possible "they were not as miserly as some apologists have claimed." Robert I. Crane, The Indian National Congress and the Indian Agarian problem, 1919-1939. An Historical Study. Yale University Thesis, 1952 unpublished p.109. (Microfilm) NMML.

37. "I have no doubt", wrote Ghosh to Prasad, "in my mind that such separate organisations will do more harm than good to the country..." In an attached letter addressed to the General Secretary, AICC, Ghosh observed: "Congressmen should not encourage growth of any other political organisation in the country, because it might prove a thorn in its way one day." (Emphasis added - U.G.) P.C.Ghosh to Prasad 2.7.37 Prasad MSS 1/37. (Microfilm) NMML.

38. Patel to Prasad 2.10.37. He wrote: "The kisan sabha will give much greater trouble in future and my opinion has always definitely been against its formation... They are waiting for a time when they could displace us..." Prasad MSS II/37. (Microfilm) NMML.

39. See Home Political File No 4/18/1940. NAI. Nehru wrote to Gandhi on 28.4.38: "... Among the matters that have disturbed me is the new orientation of the Gandhi Seva Sangh... it is distressing to find that even the Gandhi Seva Sangh which... refused to become just a party organisation... has descended to the common level. I feel strongly that the Congress Ministries are working inefficiently
and not doing much that they could do. They are adopting themselves far too much to the old order and trying to justify it ....

"... I have felt out of place and a misfit... I have found difficult to discuss any matter at length with you... And then I have also felt that such discussions do not yield any worthwhile results." Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters* (Bombay, 1960), pp.283-84. Henceforth *BDL*.

40. See AICC File No G.80 (KWI) 1938. *NMML*.

41. W. Hauser, *The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha 1929-42: A Study of an Indian Peasant Movement*. Chicago University thesis, 1961. Unpublished. p.129. (Microfilm) *NMML*. Prasad admitted in a letter that kisan demands were not fulfilled: "... You will gather that our proposals meet the Kisan demands only half-way..." Prasad to Patel 23.11.37 *Prasad MSS II/37*. On 21.12.37 Prasad wrote to Patel: "... There is much anger and resentment among Kisan Sabha workers... The atmosphere in the Province is at present disturbed and we have to deal with it cautiously and get (sic) [act] firmly." ibid. III/37. Hauser also maintains that the formation of Congress Kisan Enquiry Committee before the election was an eyewash and its 'primary object was electioneering'. Also see Linlithgow to Zetland 4.2.37 *Linlithgow Papers*, NAI. A Note on the Congress Agrarian Programme compiled by the Intelligence Bureau stipulated: "[The report of the enquiry committee] ...is reported to contain proposals of so mild a nature as to differ little from those formulated by the present minority ministry. Rajendra Prasad... is said to be averse to publication of the report at present and possibly averse to publication at all, should Congress decide to take office, for fear of embarrassing the ministry...." The *Note* also stipulates that orthodox Congressmen like Kripalani were against weighted representation demand of the kisans because they disliked to see 'the kisan movement in the hands of the socialists and communists with drastic programmes for debt repudiation and expropriation..." Home Political File No 11/1/1937. NAI. This note was prepared in July 1937.
M.D., 'Situation in Bihar', Harijan, 5(45), 20 November 1937, p.392. Gandhi vehemently opposed kisan militancy. Taking exception to the fact of taking possession of a zamindar's land by the peasants in Madras he wrote: "The Congress Government will dig its grave if it fails to restore the land to the legal possessor. I may add in parenthesis that the dispossessed zamindar is reputed to be a docile man with pro-Congress tendencies." M.K. Gandhi, 'Accumulating Evidence', Harijan, 6(32), 17 September 1938, pp.259-60.


Nehru put it on record that he was opposed to such strong measures: "The use of Special Powers by a Congress Government on any occasion gives the final justification for their imposition by the British Government during the civil disobedience movement. It is an invitation to the British to use those again when the time for conflict comes, and when they are so used, ... our mouths will be shut and all criticism hushed...."

"More important still is our agrarian and labour policy and specifically the former. There is a tendency to tone this down for fear of estranging the big landlord elements.... when vital issues are at stake and there is conflict between the masses and small groups, we must share the interests of the former... Any attempt to choose half-way houses will please nobody and will discredit us with the masses." See Nehru's circular (24 November 1937) to members of the Working Committee on the need of a policy on vital issues. P.N. Chopra (ed.), Towards Freedom 1937-47 (New Delhi, 1985), vol.I, pp.1192-93. Also see Nehru to Pant 25.11.37. Nehru wrote: "... the Congress ministries are tending to become counter-revolutionary.... I am quite clear that we are better out than in unless we can go ahead much than..."
Until we have found the correct remedy in terms of Satyagraha the Ministers must be permitted to deal with such offences in the manner they consider best. If they are not, the freedom that is possible under Congress raj will soon degenerate into goondaism pure and undefiled..." (Emphasis added - U.G.) M.K.Gandhi, 'Congressmen Beware', Harijan, 6(31), 10 September 1938, pp.250-55.

50. Taking exception to kisan militancy in Bihar he wrote: "... I fear that in course of time indiscipline will grow more and more unless strict measures are taken. I only hope that the Congress authorities are fully alive to the situation and will take necessary measures..." Birla to Mahadeb Desai 4 September 1937. See Birla, op.cit., pp.227-28.

52. See Bose to Nehru 28.3.39 in BDL, p.341.


55. Cited in Uma Kaura, Muslims and Indian Nationalism (Delhi, 1977), p.123.

56. The General Secretary admitted that the INC could not solve the problem in the 1930s. See Report of the General Secretary, Indian National Congress (March 1939-February 1940) (AICC, 1940), pp.41-50. Also see Sitaramayya, op.cit., pp.150-56.


58. ibid., pp.207-8.


61. ibid., p.11.

62. See Report of the 51st Indian National Congress, pp.199-201. For the Tripuri resolution see The Indian National Congress (March 1939 - January 1940), pp.5-6.

63. The Indian National Congress (March 1939 to January 1940), pp.38-39. Also see Congress Resolution 'India and the War Crisis' passed by the AICC at Ramgarh, 1940 in The Indian National Congress (March 1940 - September 1946), (AICC, 1946), p.1.

64. ibid., p.40.

65. ibid., p.42.

66. Gandhi wrote: "...my sympathies are wholly with the Allies. Willy nilly this war is resolving itself into one between such democracy as the West has evolved and totalitarianism as it is typified in Herr Hitler..." M.K.Gandhi, 'Commudrum-s', Harijan, 7(34), 30 September 1939, pp.288-89. Gandhi suggested: "If the Congress helps the Allies as a representative of non-violence, it will give the Allied cause a prestige and a power which would be invaluable in deciding the ultimate fate of the war..." (Emphasis added - U.G.) M.K.Gandhi, 'On Trial', Harijan, 7(36), 14 October 1939, pp.304-5. Also see M.K.Gandhi, 'Notes', Harijan, 7(37), 21 October 1939, pp.309-10.

67. In the note entitled 'The A.I.C.C. Resolution' (originally written on 13 October 1939) Gandhi wrote: "Its (of the AICC Resolution - U.G.) merit lies in not fixing any time limit for the declaration (of war aims - U.G.) ...It is to be hoped that the British Government will appreciate the friendly spirit in which the Congress is approaching the situation..." (Emphasis added - U.G.) See Harijan, 7(37), 21 October 1939, pp.309-10.
68. The Indian National Congress (March 1929 to January 1940), p. 52.


71. Sitaramayya puts it on record: "... It is interesting to note that when the Working Committee discussed the war situation in September (1938) in Delhi, Gandhi made it clear that if they wanted to exploit the situation for political advancement of India, he would not be able to help them or lead the movement and they have to look up another leader ..." Sitaramayya, op.cit., vol.2, p.101.

72. Tomlinson, op.cit., p.123; also Sarkar, op.cit., p.372. That Gandhi was determined to get rid of Bose becomes evident from Kripalani's letter to Prasad of 7 February 1939 in Prasad MSS 2-A/39. Patel, Prasad, Doulatra, Kripalani, Bajaj, Shankarlal Deo and Bhulabhai Desai, all members of the AIICC, issued a statement at Gandhi's instance recommending Sitaramayya's candidature against Bose. Referring to the idea of publishing a statement on this line Kripalani pointed out to Gandhi that in case Bose won then all the Working Committee members would have to resign. In reply Gandhi said: 'Certainly, how could you be in his cabinet?' Prasad MSS 2-A/39 cited in Tomlinson, op.cit., p.127. But it is missing in the microfilmed copy of the MSS in NMML.

73. Namboodiripad, op.cit., p.675.

74. ibid., p.675.

75. Gandhi to Bose 10.4.39. He wrote: 'Pandit Pant's resoluti-
on I cannot interpret. The more I study it, the more I dislike it... Nobody put me up against you... You are wrong if you think that you have a single personal enemy among the Old Guard." Subhas Chandra Bose, Crossroads (Calcutta, 1981), pp.176-77. But later Gandhi himself admitted that he was instrumental in drafting the Working Committee resolution sanctioning disciplinary action: "... I must confess that the Subhas Babu resolution was drafted by me... Not to take some action would have amounted to abdication of their primary function of preserving discipline among Congressmen... In my opinion the action taken by the Working Committee was the mildest possible..." (Emphasis added - U.G.) Gandhi advised Bose to appeal to the AICC for redressal! See M.K.Gandhi, 'The Two Resolutions', Harijan, 7(29), 26 August 1939, pp.248-49. S.Satyamurti wrote to Prasad Babu Subhas Chandra Bose...and the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee as it supports him now must go out of the Congress and the Congress must function through other agencies in Bengal..." Satyamurti to Prasad 4.8.39 in Valmiki Choudhuri (ed.), Dr. Rajendra Prasad: Correspondence and Selected Documents (Delhi, 1985), vol.4, p.185. Also see Satyamurti's letter to Prasad dated 14 August 1939 which includes a copy of his letter to Gandhi wherein he betrays satisfaction over Bose's removal but also notes his dissatisfaction for taking 'no steps about the Forward Bloc and its activities.' ibid., pp.31-32.

76. Gandhi wrote: "I am not spoiling for a fight. I am trying to avoid it. Whatever may be true of the members of the Working Committee, I wholly endorse Subhas Babu's charge that I am eager to have a compromise with Britain if it can be had with honour. Indeed Satyagraha demands it. Therefore I am in no hurry..." (Emphasis added - U.G.) M.K.Gandhi, 'The Dissentients', Harijan, 7(50), 20 January 1940, pp.418-19.


78. The resolution reads: "Those Congressmen who do not believe in the prescribed pledge should notify their disapproval..." Of course, to do away with suspicions it noted, "This information is required not for the purpose of any disciplinary
action but for the purpose of ascertaining the strength of disapproval of anything in the pledge ..." See The National Congress (March 1939 to January 1940), pp.60-62.


80. M.K. Gandhi, 'The Independence Day', Harijan, 7(51), 27 January 1940, p.432. Especially points 4, 5 and 8. In point 4 he refers to the independence day pledge and notes "... that those who do not believe in and use khadi cannot take the pledge."

81. Gandhi observed: "... there will be no mass civil disobedience, because mass civil disobedience is not required for this occasion..." See the revised speech of Gandhi at the AICC. Harijan, 7(33), 29 September 1940, p.304.

82. 'Leaders Misleading', Editorial, Forward Bloc, 30 December 1939 in Bose, op.cit., p.256.

83. 'Meerut Resolutions', Congress Socialist (Henceforth CS), 1(7), 1 February 1936, p.19.


85. 'Congress and the Coming Elections', Editorial, CS, 1(26), 20 June 1936, p.5.


88. The CSP also felt that the parliamentarians "... do not desire fight with imperialism. Consciously or otherwise they feel that they have more to lose thru (sic) a compromise..." 'The Meerut Conference', Editorial, CS(NS), 1(7), 1 February 1936, p.13.

89. 'The Thermidor Sets in', Editorial, CS(NS), 2(11), 20 March 1937, pp.5-6. It reads thus:

"... conditional acceptance makes clear that the Congress ministries seek to work within the framework of the Constitution - it thus makes a complete volte face (emphasis original - U.G.) from the wrecking programme on which we fought the election...

"There is no doubt that the Congress right wing has capitulated before imperialism. The wrecking talk was just a facade (emphasis original - U.G.) that cleverly covered their capitulatory designs...."

90. 'Central Executive on Acceptance of Offices' (Statement of the Executive Committee of the AICSP on the AICC decision regarding office acceptance), CS(NS), 2(12), 27 March 1937, p.17. Also 'No Surrender', Editorial, CS(NS), 2(24), 19 March 1937, p.5. Such uncompromising attitude is also manifest in 'The Reverse Gear Again', CS(NS), 2(5), 6 February 1937, pp.5-6.

91. Mehta wrote:

"... For us, the legislatures only exist for being used in such a way as would further our revolution. As we do not recognise the Constitution of the government, so we do not recognise the legislatures.

"... The high pedestals of the legislatures should be made places of propaganda against imperialism. (Emphasis original - U.G.)

"... Reformism in Legislatures will but consolidate imperialism. Their revolutionary use alone can ensure its destru-
One of the resolutions adopted in the Lahore Conference (held in 12-14 April 1938) stipulated: "This Conference records the appreciation of the work so far done by the Congress ministries in fulfilment of the election pledges... The Congress has thus justified the confidence reposed in it by the Indian people who registered their vote in favour at the last general election..."

Again,

"... it (the CSP - U.G.) not only does not intend to embarrass or create difficulties for the Congress Ministries but desires to strengthen them... and to help them in carrying out the Congress Election Programme." 'Resolutions of the Lahore Conference', CS(NS), 3(16-17), 23 April 1938, p.292.

Also see 'The Resolutions For Lucknow', CS(NS), 1(15), 28 March 1936, p.7.

'What Lead From Lucknow?', Editorial, CS(NS), 1(17), 11 April 1936, pp.5-6.

Ashoke Mehta observed: "Until freedom is won there should be no exception to our anti-war attitude. There can never be a war which can warrant a truce between us and our imperial rulers..." 'Our War Opposition', CS(NS), 1(25), 13 June 1936, p.11.


98. Narendra Deva wrote in 1939: "Gandhism has become a cloak for vested interests and selfish groups who have nothing in common with the Congress ideology of mass struggle. These persons are attempting to convert Congress activity into support of reaction..." A.N. Deva, 'To the States People' in Y. Meherally, (ed.), A.N. Deva, Socialism and the National Revolution (Bombay, 1946), pp.107-109.


101. 'Wait and Watch in Excelsis', Editorial, CS(NS), 2(17), 1 May 1937, p.5.

102. For a statement of this anti-politbureau Position see Moonj's Thesis, Communist II(11), August 1936, pp.13-27. Cited in Datta Gupta, op.cit., p.226. A thesis entitled 'The Communists and the Congress' was published in the National Front (Henceforth NF), the party weekly, on 17 April 1938. A CP publication says: "This thesis was necessary because there were still hesitations on the part of some comrades to work whole heartedly inside the Congress." See Guidelines of the History of the Communist Party of India (Delhi, 1974), pp.53-55.

103. For the defence of the new line see Swadesh Priya, 'The National Congress and the Immediate Task of the Communists', Communist II(11), pp.8, 10-12. Cited in Datta Gupta, op.cit., p.226. Also see To All Anti-Imperialist Fighters, Gathering Storm. (n.d.) This document was proscribed on 5 March 1937. The document runs thus:

"... The United Front is not a vague lining up of allied groups and organisation for passing pious resolutions...

"... It presupposes a broad and a militant organisation of the working classes including its backward sections. It requi-
res the wide development of the united struggle of the work-
ers against the capitalist offensive of wage cuts and again-
st imperialism repression. It means a rapid class organisa-
tion of the peasants throughout the country, and increasing
manifestation of collective resistance against oppression
and exploitation on the part of the peasantry. It means mov-
ing the active(sic) [active] section of the Congress rank
and file out of the reactionary "constructive programme" of
Gandhism....

"Does this mean that we are out to split the Congress... Th-
is is not what we propose. The I.N.C. as it stands today do-
es net(sic) [not] represent anti-imperialist united front.
But it could be used as the basis for anti-imperialist unit-
ed front..." pp.6-9. NAI.

104. See 'The Thesis of the Congress Socialist Party'. Adopted at
the third annual conference at Faizour on 23-25 December

105. E.M.S.Namboodiripad, 'The Congress Socialist Party and the

106. ibid., p.55-56.

107. ibid., p.56.

108. ibid., p.58.

109. Namboodiripad writes: "... I was elected one of the four Jo-
int Secretaries of the All India Congress Socialist Party
along with Masani, Goray and Gautam at the very first confe-
rence in October 1934. None of the delegates who attended
the Bombay Conference from Kerala (including Krishna Pillai,
A.K.Gopalan and myself) had in fact any earlier contacts wi-
th the Communist Party at that time..." p.60. He also writes
that Pillai and he himself had had their first contact with
the CPI through Sundarayya only in 1937 and after two years
of this contact the first unit of the CPI in Kerala was founded. See ibid., p.60. Also his article 'Advance and Retreat From Congress Socialism' in The Statesman, Calcutta, 16 April 1984.


112. See Anil, 'The Red Star' in ibid., pp.27-31. In most of these articles emphasis was given on the pursuance of the united front tactics and reference was made to the mistakes of the sectarian line of the party prior to the Seventh Congress. Also see 'For the United National Front' - Statement of the Polit Bureau, Central Committee, Communist Party of India. See Communist, 1(15), March 1937, pp.1-6. Also see 'The Communist Party in the Fight Against Imperialism' in ibid., pp.15-22. All cited in Datta Guvta, op. cit., p.229.


115. Ibid., p.1059.


118. ibid., p.9.

119. ibid., p.9.

120. Siraj, 'The Tactics of the United Front in Action', ibid., pp.11, 17.

121. Nirmal, 'Anti-Imperialist United Front is not Royism' in ibid., pp.7-9.


124. ibid., p.101.

125. ibid., p.101.


128. ibid., p.6.

129. ibid., p.6.

130. ibid., p.6.
131. ibid., p. 6.

132. ibid., p. 7.

133. 'British Communists’ Message For Haripura. Solidarity with the Congress and the Indian People', NF, 1(2), 27 February 1938, pp. 5-6.

134. 'They Must Speak', NF, 1(22), 17 July 1938, p. 4. Also 'Rally Against Federation', NF, 1(23), 24 July 1938, p. 4. And also see P.C. Joshi; 'A Step Backward', NF, 9 October 1938, p. 5.

135. B.T. Ranadive, 'No Compromise', NF, 1(31), 18 September 1938, p. 5.

136. 'For Constituent Assembly. Against the Federation', Editorial, NF, 1(31), 18 September 1938, p. 4.

137. 'Communist Resolution for Tripuri: Unity and Struggle', NF, 2(4-5), 12 March 1939, p. 57.

138. 'The Congress Election Campaign', Editorial, NF, 1(35), 16 October 1938, p. 4.

139. 'Arm in Arm. Not Face to Face', Editorial, NF, 1(51), 5 February 1939, p. 4; S.Mahmuduzzafar, 'Change Gear', NF, 2(1), 12 February 1939, pp. 8-9. For the joint appeal see ibid., p. 9.

140. ibid., p. 9.

141. 'Don't Agitate', Editorial, NF, 1(10), 24 April 1938, p. 3.
G. Adhikari, 'The Heritage We Carry Forward', NF, 1(32), 2 October 1938, p.8. Of course Adhikari also mentioned the progressive role of Gandhi in leading anti-imperialist movements.

ibid., p.8.


ibid., p.362.

'Face Facts', NF, 1(9), 17 April 1938, p.3.

R.S. Nimbakar, 'Don't Split the Congress. Help them to Organise', NF, 1(9), 17 April 1938, p.10.


'Tasks before the TUC', Editorial, Communist, 1(17), May 1937, p.4. PCJA, JNU.

ibid., p.6.

ibid., p.12.

ibid., p.13.
154. ibid., p.13.
155. ibid., p.13.
156. ibid., pp.13-14.

157. J. Bukhari, 'The Kisans at Haripura', *NF*, 1(3), 6 March 1938, pp.8-9, 11. Bukhari wrote: "Most of our national leaders have not yet realised what a tremendous role the organised Kisans can play in the national liberation movement. Instead of welcoming the development of Kisan Movement, they frown upon it, instead of looking upon the Kisan Sabhas as valuable allies in the anti-imperialist struggle, they represent them as anti-Congress bodies, instead of strengthening the Kisan movement as a most vital part of the national movement they seek to weaken and even disrupt it." p.8.


160. A.K. Ghosh, 'Tasks Before the States People', *NF*, 1(3), 6 March 1938, pp.6-8. Ghosh also urged: "... inspite of the Haripura resolution which severely restricts the scope of Congress organisation in States such organisations shall be maintained where they exist and formed where they do not..."

165. 'The Working Committee in Bombay', NF, 1(14), 22 May 1938, p.3.


167. ibid., p.12.

168. A.K. Ghosh, 'Negotiations Versus Direct Approach', NF, 1(18), 19 June 1938, p.10. Also see his article 'Congress and the Muslims', NF, 1(31), 18 September 1938, pp.9, 16. The same theme was reiterated in 'The New Strategy', Editorial, NF, 1(30), 11 September 1938, p.4. And when the Jinnah-Nehru talk failed the National Front blamed the League and dubbed it as an act of betrayal. See 'Current Notes', NF, 1(31), 18 September 1938, p.3.


171. B.T. Ranadive, 'Communal Problem', NF, 2(4-5), 12 March 1939. Ranadive wrote: "No amount of cultural guarantees, negotiations, or special representation will solve the communal problem unless the Congress identifies itself with the woes and difficulties of the minorities in their day to day life. So long as this does not take place, the Congress will continue to move in a vicious circle and be at the mercy of the communal leaders. The present line, which not only neglects economic struggles but also fails to approach the minorities in civic and other elections, which looks upon communal ministries as sacrosanct, and divulges a guilty conscience in its
outlook towards the minority masses, must immediately end.

"... No final understanding is possible without a bolder championing of the economic demands and a distinct approach through them..." p.62.

172. Narayan wrote: "... the Communist Party was in fright. Since Patna, feelings against the tactics of the Communist Party had been growing, and a body of opinion was gaining in strength in the Party that the time had come when the communists should be shown the way out. They had too long been allowed, in the name of unity, to take advantage of the Party." (Emphasis added - U.G.) Jayaprakash Narayan, Towards Struggle (Bombay, 1946), p.175.

173. Masani observed: "The Third International, while it possesses qualities of centralization and a purposeful directive, is so lop-sided in its composition that it is difficult for communists to deny the charge that it has tended to reflect the policies of the Soviet Government. The preponderance of Russian Party in numbers and its financial strength certainly came in the way of its being a real International. It is difficult to postpone war and so the former exponent of world revolution has been compelled by exigencies of her domestic situation to work for world peace." He also thought that the CPI was "mechanically applying the tactics transported from Russia to their own country." Generally, op.cit., pp.65-87.

174. For Masani's stand see his 'Resist the War' in CS(NS), 1(31), 25 July 1936. For Sardesai's critique see 'Russia and World Revolution' in ibid., pp.13-14. For Choudhuri's viewpoint see 'When Zero Hour Strikes' in CS(NS), 1(33), 8 August 1936, pp.13-14, 16.
175. Zaheer wrote: "... no true socialist to-day can allow the slandering of the U.S.S.R. and of giving support under the spacious plea to Trotskyists ... who have ... made themselves the tools of German and Japanese Fascism, ..." p.170. He also opposed Masani's attempts to oust the CPI elements from the CSP. See Sajjad Zaheer, 'Unity is Strength', CS (NS), 3(10), 5 March 1938, pp.171-72. For Sundarayya's opinion see his 'The Dimitrov Test' in CS(NS), 3(13), 26 March 1938. p.231.


177. 'Left Unity', Editorial, NF, 2(11), 19 February 1939, p.4.

178. See 'Towards Left Unity', NF, 1(4), 13 March 1938, p.3.

179. ibid., p.3.

180. See 'Carry Forward the Heritage of Struggle' Bose's greetings to National Front. NF, 2(1), 12 February 1939, p.1.

181. Nehru once wrote:

"... the Congress Ministries are tending to become counter revolutionary. This is of course not a conscious development but ... the inclination is in this direction. Apart from this the general attitude is static...

"... And now that the time for going forward comes we show a marked tendency to go back. Of course we cannot go back because the movement is too strong to permit us to go back. But in trying to do so we weaken that movement greatly and do exactly what the British Government has been trying to make us do these many years- create a sp-
lit and get the Congress or part of the Congress to adopt what is essentially a pro-imperialist policy..." Nehru to G.B.Pant 25.11.37 in BOL, p.263.

182. 'A Call to Congressmen', NF, 1(46), 1 January 1939, pp.6-7.

183. 'Arm in Arm. Not Face To Face', Editorial, NF, 1(51), 5 February 1939, p.4. Also see S.Mahumudzafar, 'Change Gear' in NF, 2(1), 12 February 1939, pp.8-9. Also see the joint appeal by Bankim Mukherjee, N.Dutta Majumdar, Somnath Lahiri and Panchu Gopal Bhaduri in ibid., p.9.

184. 'The Decisive Voice', Editorial, NF, 2(34), 31 December 1939, p.5.

185. 'Left Unity', Editorial, NF, 2(2), 19 February 1939, p.4.

186. 'Indian Communists Call For All Round Unity. All Round Advance', NF, 2(4-5), 12 March 1939, p.54. This appeal was signed by P.C.Hoshi, A.K.Ghosh, G.Adhikari, R.D.Bharadwaj, Muzzafar Ahmad, Somnath Lahiri, B.T.Ranade, S.S.Batliwala, S.A.Dange, S.V.Ghate, S.G.Sardesai, Bankim Mukherjee et al.

187. 'Defeat Disruption', Editorial, NF, 2(13), 7 May 1939, p.204.

188. ibid., p.204.

189. 'Close the Ranks', Editorial, NF, 2(14), 14 May 1939, p.220.

190. ibid., p.220.

191. 'Unity of the Left', Editorial, NF, 2(18), 11 June 1939, p.284.
ibid., p.284. It was stated that "... The Left shall not be able to fulfil its political tasks, to check the drifts towards constitutionalism and to move the Congress forward unless it is able to win the majority of Congressmen for the policy of struggle. Though far stronger than before, the conscious Left constitutes a minority in the Congress." (Emphasis added - U.G.)

P.C.Joshi, 'Where does unity of the Left stand?', NF, 2(19), 18 June 1939, pp.309, 311.

'Beware of the Trap', Editorial, NF, 2(23), 16 July 1939, p.364.


It was clearly stated that "... Unity of the Left is necessary today as before and more; but the basis of that unity is to fight to preserve the unity of the Congress, and prepare for a national struggle. To us the united Left is not an oppositional force within the Congress but its active core. We can work together only to the extent we agree on this." (Emphasis original) See 'Cement Left Unity', Editorial, NF, 2(24), 30 July 1939, p.380, 392.

'Provocateurs at Work', Editorial, NF, 2(27), 20 August 1939, p.428.

'Communist call to Congressmen: Ban on Bose must go', NF, 2(27), 20 August 1939, pp.425, 436.


'Tripuri - Political Evaluation', Editorial, NF, 2(6), 19 March, 1939, p.92. Also see 'Turn the Tide', Editorial, NF,
2(21), 2 July 1939, p.332. Also 'Stop the Drift', Editorial, NF, 2(8), 2 April 1939, p.124. The Editorial entitled 'Face the Homogeneous Cabinet', NF, 2(20), 25 June 1939, stipulated:

"The impending struggle requires closer organic links with the class-organisations. The homogeneous cabinet propose to break the links and cut the Congress away from the main theatre of struggle... The homogeneous cabinet proposes to reduce to caricature of a peoples organisation, impervious to the fighting mood of the masses.

"In the midst of the grim menace of Imperialist War... the present leadership has created a situation which smells disaster and ruin. The unity of the people, built through years of suffering and toil is breaking down; the complacent leadership hopes to strike a petty bargain with the hated oppressor." (Emphasis added - U.G.) p.316. Clearly, such statements negative the contentions of Overstreet and Windmiller.


203. ibid., pp.181-82.

204. ibid., p.183.

205. Dipak, 'Royism in Action', Communist, 1(17), May 1937, pp.19, 22. For Criticism of Roy's views that united front policy was a wrong tactic see Nirmal, 'Anti-Imperialist United Front is not Royism', (illegal) Communist, (1937), pp.9-10. PCJA, JNU.

206. Bipan Chandra, 'Struggle for the Ideological Transformati-
That the landlords constituted a part of the primary contradiction has been well substantiated by Kapil Kumar. See Kapil Kumar, 'Ideology, Congress And Peasants In 1930s: Class Adjustment Or Submission?', ibid., pp.40-57.