While Gandhi and his Rightist associates were engaged in ousting the left from the INC, the world was heading towards another great war. And when Britain declared India as a belligerent country a state of confusion prevailed among the political parties of India. The INC demanded that Britain should declare its war aims clearly before it sought India's participation and as she never declared her war aims and the future status of India the INC refused to participate in the war and declared that only an independent India could participate in any such war—Gandhi's attempts to arrive at an 'honourable settlement' notwithstanding. The CPI's attitude in this regard was more or less pro-Congress. The CSP thought that in case of any war the CPI would take the side of Soviet Russia as its main interest, it maintained, was to serve Soviet national interests. The CPI refuted such allegation and declared that India must not and could not participate in any such war as a dependent nation. Adhikari, for example, denied Morsani's charge that the CPGR was advising India to support Britain in the war. Adhikari observed that "In case imperialist (emphasis original - U.G.) war breaks out, the communists would undoubtedly stand to convert that war into a civil war — so that the warring capitalist governments are overthrown
and we in the colonies strike for freedom."\(^1\) (Emphasis added - U.G.)

He also observed that in case a powerful anti-fascist front was formed on an international scale the communists must join that "but only on the conditions that they are able to do so as completely free and independent nation ...." \(^2\) (Emphasis original - U.G.)

Long before the outbreak of the war the CPI declared that it would not wait sine die for an opportunity when Britain would be involved in the war, rather it would mobilise the forces of the national struggle against Britain's war preparations. \(^3\) Again, by way of commenting on the Delhi session of the AICC the National Front criticised the INC for its passive attitude:

\[\text{The strategy visualised was one of passivity, of disarming the popular forces and of compromise. It was not one of decisive action of moving the masses for a determined blow to turn the critical situation to the advantage of our freedom's battle.} \] (Emphasis original - U.G.)

It also denounced the Congress resolutions on non-violence because it thought that such resolutions were intended to weaken the militant elements. The CPI clearly stated that the Congress could enter the war only when 'complete control' over the army and foreign policy was assured. "On no other terms must the Congress support the war. To agree to anything less would be a betrayal of our independence movement...." \(^5\) (Emphasis original - U.G.) Not only that, the Editorial also mentioned
that in case Britain joined the USSR, France and Czechoslovakia India
would not participate in such a war; it could participate only 'as a free
nation'. 'Nothing but freedom can deviate us', it was argued, 'from the
path of opposition to every war to which Britain is a party.' The CPI
expected that the gravity of the situation would force the Congress to
adopt a policy of struggle, at least on the old satyagraha model. And
once satyagraha was declared, the CPI hoped, mass repression would follow
and by utilising that opportunity it would "continue a widespread guerrilla struggle" and by drawing the bulk of the masses they would, in course
of time, reach its final victory. If favoured the idea of putting resis-
tance to exploitation of India's man, money and resources for war purposes
and preferred adoption of "a policy of immediate nation-wide struggle aga-
inst Ordinance Raj and against every measure on the one hand, and for the
attainment of independence and democracy on the other." Clearly, there
is not a single word in support of Britain's war efforts.

The Congress resigned from the Ministries as a mark of protest aga-
inst the declaration of India as a belligerent country. But there were
Congressmen who still cherished some hope of returning to power again.
From the writings of P. Sitaramayya we can have a profile of the then
Congress sentiment. He writes:

.... How many years of toil and suffering, of negotiation and ad-
justment lay behind these Ministries! It was as if a work of Art
constructed after half a century of planning and preparing was smash-
ed to smithereens by one incendiary ... 8 (Emphasis added - U.G.)
In the Ramgarh session (March 1940) of the Congress a resolution entitled 'India and the War Crisis' was adopted wherein the INC disapproved the declaration of India as a belligerent country and exploitation of its resources and described it as an 'affront' to the Indians. It noted that Britain was carrying on the war for imperial purpose by way of exploiting India and other Afro-Asian countries and that was why India could not be a party to this war and Congressmen would not help the war in any way.  

Previously Linlithgow, the Viceroy, rejected the Congress offer of full co-operation in the war effort provided the following minimum demands were met, viz., (i) a promise of post-war Constituent Assembly to determine India's future political structure; (ii) immediate formation of a genuine and responsible central government and (iii) the declaration of war aims. Publicly the Viceroy declared that (a) the Dominion Status remained the goal for India; (b) that the British Government was prepared to reconsider the scheme of the present Act at the end of the war in consultation with the leaders of opinion in India and (c) that the Government wanted to set up a consultative group of Indian politicians and princely representatives devoid of any real executive power. And privately he repeatedly gave vent to his intention to 'lie back' and avoid 'running after the Congress'.  

As against this, the Ramgarh Congress, however, stated:

... that nothing short of complete independence can be accepted by the people of India. Indian freedom can not exist within the orbit of imperialism, and dominion or any other status within the
imperial structure is wholly inapplicable to India ... and would bind India in many ways to British policies and economic structure. The people of India alone can properly shape their own Constitution and determine their relation to other countries of the world, through a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage. 11

The resolution noted that the communal problem could be solved only through a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage. It also noted that the rulers of the princely states could not be allowed to stand in the way of Indian freedom. It was clearly stated that the Indian vision of freedom was all-India in character. And a declaration to start a non-violent civil disobedience movement in the near future was made. But though the resolution emphasised the Gandhian principle of non-violence it was felt that the pursuance of strict non-violence in the days ahead might be impossible. The Working Committee in its proceedings on political situation stipulated:

... The Committee have deliberated over the problem that has thus arisen and have come to the conclusion that they are unable to go the full length with Gandhiji. But they recognise that he should be free to pursue his great ideal in his own way and therefore absolve him from responsibility for the programme and activity which the Congress has to pursue under the conditions at present prevailing in India .... 12

In July 1940 following Hitler's advance in Europe, the fall of France and the deepening war-crisis the Congress made a new offer of co-operation:
The Working Committee are more than ever convinced that ... the complete independence of India is the only solution of the problems facing both India and Britain ... and that as an immediate step in giving effect to it, a provisional National Government should be constituted at the Centre, which though framed as a transitory measure, should be such as to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the Central Legislature ...

... The Working Committee declare that if these measures are adopted, it will enable the Congress to throw in its full weight in the efforts for effective organisation of the Defence of the Country. 13

This offer explicitly rejected the Gandhian line of non-violence as to external defence by 2/3 majority votes at Poona in 1940.14 The Viceroy's statement of August 8, 1940, commonly known as the 'August Offer', negatived Congress demands on the bogey of communal issues. The alternative offer put forward by the government included: (a) post-war establishment of a body representing principal elements in India's national life to devise the framework of the new constitution (not a Constituent Assembly elected by adult suffrage); (b) expansion of the Viceroy's Executive to include some more Indians, and (c) formation of a War Advisory Council. This unsatisfactory reply forced the Congress to adopt an individual civil disobedience campaign under the leadership of Gandhi in October 1940. The British Government, however, felt that the August Offer would aggravate the communal problem of India. This becomes evident from a letter of Mr. Amery: "... I get some quiet amusement from the fact that our Declaration of August 1940 is being more and more looked upon as the charter of Muslim minority rights ..."15 Again,
referring to the Nagpur Resolution of the AIML where the League warned
the government that the consequence of going back on 1940 pledges would
be fatal, Amery wrote to Churchill: "... It would be far better for
your proposal to be rejected by Congress than to have it accepted by Con-
gress and treated as a breach of faith by the Moslems." 16

As we have noted in the previous chapter that Gandhi was hesitant on
the declaration of any civil disobedience movement, leave alone a mass
movement similar to that of the early 1930s. Until October 1940 he was
for an 'honourable settlement' with the British. He did not agree with
Jayprakash Narayan's militant attitude, appealed to the students not to
leave their schools until a clarion call was given, and advised the work-
ners not to leave their workshops. He disfavoured the idea of mass civil
disobedience movement 'because mass civil disobedience' was 'not required
for this occasion'. 17 He was afraid of mass strikes because, he feared,
it might lead to violence, anarchy and 'red ruin'. He wrote:

.... I must confess that I have no positive plan in front of me
.... I am sure that socialist leaders and other dissentients do
not expect me to embark on a struggle which I know beforehand
is likely to end in disaster .... I hope I am not expected know-
ingly to undertake a fight that must end in anarchy and red ruin. 18

At long last when he decided to start individual civil disobedience
movement he restricted it to a few individuals, viz., Binoba Ghave, Jawa-
harlal Nehru et al. For Gandhi it was to be the last civil disobedience
movement which he would have conducted. The issue before Gandhi was freedom of speech. Evidently, given the gravity of the situation, it was a non-issue. That Gandhi opted for a policy of non-embracement is clear from a copy of the note between Birla and Gandhi. The note informs us that Gandhi had instructed to suspend satyagraha 'during X-mas, on all Sundays and at any time before 9 a.m.' His plan was to fill in the jails. He was much worried about the mentality of the youth. 'Communism appeals to youth, unfortunately' Gandhi commented. Why a non-issue like freedom of speech was made an issue? Birla observed: "The issue for Satyagraha is again confined to a narrow issue, viz. freedom of speech and not the constitutional issue. This again seems to be a wise move since it is a point comparatively easier of solution ..." Gandhi had no illusion about the probable results of the civil disobedience movement. He wrote:

... I do not offer civil resistance myself .... I do not wish to do so for the very good reason that my imprisonment is likely to cause greater embarrassment to the authorities than anything else the Congress can do .... My going to jail may be interpreted as a general invitation to all Congressmen to follow suit. They will not easily distinguish between my act and speech.... 20

Gandhi observed that civil disobedience would be withdrawn 'if free speech was genuinely recognised and the status quo (emphasis original - W.G.) restored ....' 21 In tune with the Gandhian sentiment the Bombay Resolution of the AICC observed,
.... The Congress i.e., however, no desire at the present moment to extend non-violent resistance, should this become necessary, beyond what is required for the preservation of the liberties of the people. 22

At the end of 1941 the Bardoli resolution of the INC once again declared its readiness for armed resistance to the Axis provided India was granted a national government. It is evident from the Congress resolution of 1940-1941 that the Congress had clearly understood the true nature of imperialism and fascism; it opposed fascism and imperialism and wanted to participate in the war against fascism as a free nation. The Bombay resolution of the Congress said,

.... Effective disarmament ... depend ultimately on the removal of the causes of wars and national conflicts. These causes must be rooted out by the ending of the domination of one country over another and the exploitation of one people or group by another. 23

The Bardoli Resolution of the Working Committee pointed out:

.... The whole background in India is one of hostility and of distrust of the British Government and not even the most far-reaching promises can alter the background nor can a subject India offer voluntary or willing help to arrogant imperialism which is indistinguishable from fascist authoritarianism. 24

This leads us to share Sumit Sarkar's opinion that "Congress hostility to fascist aggression had been incomparably more forthright and consistent than Britain's own record so far." 25
Even the 'peculiarly limited' and 'deliberately ineffective', to
quote Sumit Sarkar's phraseology, nature of this civil disobedience mo-
vement made the Indian national bourgeoisie panicry. It would be inter-
esting to note the reaction of one of the leading capitalists of India, 
Birla. Birla strongly detested the idea of civil disobedience in 1940,
because, he thought, this kind of movement would bring about new dangers 
not only to the present government but also to the government of independ-
dent India. He stated:

.... But if this psychology (of adoption of civil disobedience 
movement and consequent violent attitude of the masses - U.G.)
continues, any Government, even our own, would become an impo-
sibility. We have a large number of budding 'Satyagrahis'.
They will all come out against our own Government and through 
terrorism and corruption make all good government impossible. 
The truth perhaps is that nobody believes in non-violence....
By identifying himself too much with the Congress, he (Gandhi 
- U.G.) has effaced the distinction between himself and the 
Leftists .... (Emphasis added - U.G.)

.... Bapu's non-violence has a better chance of success if he is 
alone. It is a mockery that the Congress should try to re-
present this creed when it is not qualified for this. 26

Another portion of Birla's letter states:

.... At times I feel that we are over-emphasising the fighting 
part of our programme and ignoring settlement through persua-
sion. We have pitched our demands so high that we have made 
it impossible for Englishmen to come to an honourable settle-
ment. That is where I complain. There are others even in the 
Working Committee who feel like myself .... we have not played 
our cards well. 27 (Emphasis added - U.G.)
As to the communal problem it was repeatedly stated that no permanent solution was possible except through a Constituent Assembly where the rights of all minorities would be protected by agreement or by arbitration, if agreement did not come forth. It denounced the British policy of divide and rule.  

Clearly, the Congress attitude to war during 1939-42 was strongly anti-fascist and anti-imperialist. It had no illusion about the true nature of British imperialism. It was opposed to the British policy of divide and rule and sought solution of the communal problem through the establishment of a Constituent Assembly elected by adult suffrage. But its method of struggle was compromising in nature. Until August 1942 Gandhi dwelt upon the idea of an honourable settlement with the British; he strongly detested working class militancy and made it known to the kisans that 'no-tax' campaign was not suitable for that time. The fear of mass movement forced Gandhi to adopt a civil disobedience movement of limited nature on a non-issue, viz., freedom of speech. From the correspondence between Gandhi, Birla and the government one thing becomes clear that both the industrial bourgeoisie and the National Congress wanted to follow the path of compromise. And when the pressure tactic could not bring further concessions from the government the Congress was forced to adopt limited civil disobedience movement. But the Indian capitalists took exception even to this kind of
movement and advised Gandhi to abandon the method of civil disobedience and the latter assured them that civil disobedience movement would not be taken to such a height that might cause disarray in the government.

The British Policy during these years was to support the demands of the Muslim League. The Government decision to consult the leaders of different communities and the August offer made it evident that the British intended to foment communal rifts. The government decided not to transfer power to any system of government which would ignore influential elements in Indian life. This indirectly fulfilled Jinnah's intentions who thus managed to secure a Muslim veto on any future constitutional change.

The Working Committee of the AIML met at Poona on March 29, 1939 to examine the nature of the Government of India Act 1935 and observed that the provincial schemes had 'utterly failed to safeguard' the elementary rights of the Muslim minorities in various provinces. The major reasons for which the League could not accept the Act were as follows: Firstly, the act was framed on the assumption that India was a composite nation which, according to the Working Committee, it was not. On the contrary, there were two separate nations drawing direct inspiration from two opposed religio-cultures. Secondly, the Congress governments in the Provinces were in essence a government of a
single nation, viz., the Hindus. Thirdly, the adoption of the Act meant reduction of the Muslims "permanently to the position of a helpless minority." Fourthly, such adoption would deprive the Muslims of their economic regeneration and cultural development on Islamic lines. Fifthly, it would reduce the historic importance of the Muslims by putting them under the Hindu domination. And, finally, the Working Committee observed, the Act would intensify 'religious', 'social', 'economic', 'educational' and 'Political' clashes between the two communities. On the plea of these defects the League demanded replacement of the Act in its favour. The solution was found by the League in the establishment of a confederacy. The resolution stipulated:

A lasting confederacy for India will be possible only when these zones (based on nationality-wise divisions - U.G.) are finally formed and rendered culturally homogeneous. This being the goal, and only solution to the problem of Indian unity, a constitution will have to be devised for the transitional period which will not allow any single nationality to oust the upper hand over the other, and yet afford them all the equal moral urge to work together for the evolution of the needed homogeneous free status. 30

The League was unwilling to give support to the war efforts unless and until their demands were met, the sympathy for Poland, England and France was shown though. It was stipulated in the Working Committee Resolution of September 18, 1939 that the League's support for the War could not be sought until the government secured 'liberty,
person, property and honour of the Muslims, which were in danger and were 'most callously trampled upon' in the Provinces under Congress government. The Working Committee resolution of June 15-16, 1940, held in Bombay, expressed some concern for the growing Nazi menace and the problem of Indian defence but it was made clear that the League's co-operation in war effort could not be achieved under the present 'scope and function' of the provincial and district war committees. In an article in India and India on February 13, 1940 Jinnah repeated his fear of Hindu domination and urged (a) to revise and revise the entire problem de novo; (b) opposed 'any federal objective' which would ultimately result in Hindu domination 'under the guise of democracy and parliamentary system of government'; and (c) demanded that no 'declaration regarding the question of constitutional advance for India should be made' without its consent and approval. Linlithgow assured Jinnah on February 6, 1940 that British sympathy should not be expected 'for a party whose policy was one of sheer negation' - 'If he and his friends wanted to secure that the Muslim case should not go by default in the UK, it was really essential that they should formulate their plan in the near future.' Anyway by 1941 the Pakistan plan took a concrete shape. Jinnah made it clear that the Muslims would not accept any constitution of all-India character with one government at the centre but would like 'to establish a completely independent state in the North-West and Eastern zones of India, with full control of finance,
defence, foreign affairs" etc. 34 According to the Working Committee, the idea of expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council and setting up of a National Defence Council was undertaken as a concession to the demands of the Hindus in utter disregard of the Muslims of India and the solemn promises made to them ... 35 It called upon the government to stand by their pledges.

We have noted earlier how the British Government enjoyed 'quiet amusement' when the League looked upon the August offer as a charter of minority rights and how it assured Jinnah of the fulfillment of Muslim demands and advised him to formulate a draft plan. Securing such direct and indirect assurances, the Muslim League finally expressed its willingness "to shoulder the burden of the defence of the country ... on the basis that real share and responsibility is given in the authority of Government at the centre and in the Provinces ... but without any prejudice to the major political issues involved in the framing of the future constitution." 36

Compared to the hesitant attitude of the Congress and a purely communal attitude of the Muslim League, the Forward Bloc's scheme of action was much more militant. Denouncing the Gandhian policy Bose told the Indian people that "the idea of winning swaraj through spinning is moonshine" and took exception to the outing of the leftists from the Congress and thought that the "struggle between the
Right and the Left is but an unconscious class struggle going on all the time." In the hesitant and anti-struggle attitude of the Congress, Bose found signs of compromise and negotiation with the British. As to the Congress's demand of a Constituent Assembly, he observed that "An assembly convened by and meeting under the aegis of an Imperialist Government and electorate will surely end in disaster to the Congress and to the Indian people." He thought that an opportune moment had come for launching a nation-wide mass struggle which 'we can miss at our own peril', and referring to the repeated demand of the Congress for a Constituent Assembly, Bose observed that this time "this demand has slipped in unnoticed as a virtual substitute for our National Demand for Burma independence." He apprehended that disputes would arise between different parties and the British under whose aegis the Constituent Assembly would have to function and "will be in a position to do all the wire-pulling that they consider necessary." Denouncing such a move Bose observed:

... A Constituent Assembly to-day demanded by the Congress, will most surely become a platform for intrigues and manoeuvres ... the Rightists being in charge of the Congress machinery today will be returned in much larger numbers than the Leftists ... the greatest common measure of agreement will be determined not by the most progressive but by the most moderate opinion ... therefore, the demand for a fake Constituent Assembly should be repudiated in the most emphatic manner. 40

Bose thought that given the gravity of the war situation in Europe
the Britishers would like to have a compromise with Congress at the
cost of minorities and in that case "Gandhiji and all those who stand
by him will line up with British Imperialism" and this would also split the League.41 He argued that the INC did not command
the confidence of the peasants, workers, students and that of the mi-
norities. His pro-struggle attitude was amply demonstrated in his an-
ti-compromise conference held at Ramgarh in 1940. He suggested the ad-
option of a line of immediate struggle and thought that any compromise
with the Britishers would convert the anti-imperialist struggle into a
civil war and in that case the Indian leftists were to fight against
imperialism and its new Indian allies.42 He vehemently attacked the
CPI leadership for not acting in unison with the Forward Bloc and du-
bbed the policy of the CPI as a 'dog in the manger policy'. As the
CPI demanded unity with the Congress, Bose angrily wrote:

... The ultra-leftists have yet to learn that unity is real
and is worth having which leads to action and struggle. Unity
which paralyses action is meaningless and ineffective ... 43

Taking exception to Congress inaction and the League's emphasis
on communal demands, Bose favoured immediate action against the Brit-

ish because, with the deepening of crisis in Europe, Western imperia-
lism would be weakened more and more and also because if British imperi-

alism ultimately suffered a reversal, the problem of national stru-
ggle would lose its importance.44 But this, he wrote, would become
very difficult "when there is deliberate hostility on the part, not only of Rightists, but also of so-called Leftists."\textsuperscript{45} As to the British proposal of Dominion Status after the war, Bose commented that India could not help Britain until all powers were transferred to a 'provisional national government vested with full sovereign powers.' And when the present crisis 'flows over,' wrote Bose, this provisional national government would convene a Constituent Assembly for framing a constitution of India best suited to her new status and then and then only, the question of help to other nations would arise.\textsuperscript{46}

He worried that the Royists and the CPI had deserted the Left Consolidation Committee on the plea of 'unity'. Especially, the CSP, strongly influenced by Nehru, had returned to the Congress fold. 'The C.S.P. affords an illustration as to how bad leadership can ruin the future of a great party', he argued. He was afraid that the Congress leadership would suppress the leftists with a heavy hand and make organisation of a 'Left wing party' impossible.\textsuperscript{47} He took strong exception to the Gandhian decision of individual satyagraha and fast. Pointing to the pro-compromise tactics of the INC and the ouster of the leftists, Bose argued, Gandhi had taken resort to individual satyagraha only as a tactical move.

In a letter to Sarat Chandra Bose he wrote:

Mahatma Gandhi probably realised that this process of disintegration would have tragic results for his party and sought to buttress himself and his followers by recanting his original attitude...
of unconditional co-operation and launching selective individual civil disobedience instead. But is not this an eye-wash (sic)? It is neither co-operation nor mass struggle. It pleases nobody and will lead us nowhere. And this campaign has nothing to do with swaraj .... 48

Bose was afraid that the future of India, if it remained under the leadership of the Congress, was bleak. In another letter he wrote:

The more I think of Congress politics, the more convinced I feel that in future we should devote more energy and time to fighting the High Command. If power goes into the hands of such mean, vindictive and unscrupulous persons when Swaraj is won, what will happen to the country? If we don't fight them now, we shall not be able to prevent power passing into their hands ... 49

He suggested that the Forward Bloc would not support such Gandhian method of satyagraha or fast and court arrest because in the past the progressives suffered and others ran away with the harvest. 50 Bose was rather convinced that the hunger strike by Gandhi this time was nothing but a device to avoid mass struggle at a time when the Congress was reduced to impotency. Bose wrote:

... We find that as at Rajkot, so also in this case, fast is to be resorted to when the mass-movement has been deliberately killed ... Sidetracking the issue in this way cannot possibly serve the public cause ... The situation would have been different if the fast had come naturally in the wake of a mass-movement as the result of the pressure of unavoidable circumstances.

... We who believe in mass movement, cannot give it our moral support. It should rather be our duty to openly denounce the fast even at the risk of being misunderstood or abused in Gandhian quarters. 51
That Subhas Bose was not fabricating these things became clear from a British intelligence report too. According to the report, the decision of civil disobedience was taken because

... the 'leftists' are led to believe that direct action is inevitable while the 'rightists' are warned that in the absence of perfect obedience to Gandhi's dictates such action is bound to end in disaster. 52

That Gandhi wanted to linger the stalemate and capitalise on other parties is verily manifest in the Central Intelligence Officer's (Nagpur) report. 63 All these prove that the apprehensions of Bose were not altogether unfounded, Congress denial notwithstanding.

The CSP, however, decided to co-operate with the Congress. In 1940 the communist members were ousted from the CSP on the ground that the CPI had captured the CSP and was trying to use the CSP platform for its narrow political ends. We have already seen elsewhere that there developed a hitch between the CSP and the CPI regarding the latter's allegiance to the CI. Allegations and counter allegations were published in National Front and Congress Socialist. Especially, Minoo Masani betrayed strong anti-communist attitude and suggested ousting of the CPI from the CSP. And when the CPI left the CSP a large number of socialist members were converted into communists. Naturally, from now on the relation between the two parties underwent severe strains. Thus A.N. Deva
took exception to CPI's dubbing of Congress as a party of the bourgeoisie having no support of the workers and the peasants. He thought that the CPI wanted to isolate Gandhi and the Congress from the people and that their policy of united front from below and their call for immediate struggle would in effect "produce disorganisation of the forces of struggle." He was also opposed to Bose's idea of launching immediate struggle and shared M.N. Roy's views of transforming the INC until it achieved the qualities of a revolutionary platform. He thought that the Congress was the symbol of 'Indian unity and democracy' and given the gravity of the situation a 'high sense of loyalty' was demanded. He thought that by describing the Congressmen as anti-struggle and pro-compromising Bose was sabotaging the struggle. However, he maintained that the CSP did not believe in Gandhian philosophy and technique of struggle but argued that no all-India struggle was possible without Gandhi the prime need of the day was to 'work for Congress unity' accept its 'democratic decisions' and 'observe its discipline.'

Though it appears from the above that the CSP favoured a policy of close co-operation with the INC since 1939 and virtually surrendered to Gandhian leadership, in a letter to Bose Jaiprakash Narayan wanted to 'chalk out a line of action fundamentally independent of the Congress. For him, the Congress was no longer the main basis for political action
as its leadership was 'concentrated in the hands of a coterie' which was, according to Narayan, 'anti-peasant', 'anti-people' and 'completely bourgeois in ideology and sympathy.' As he thought that the multi-class character of the Congress was lost he suggested conversion of the kisan sabhas into peasant soviets and formation of "a new revolutionary party out of the C.S.P., the Anushilan, the Forward Block(sic), the Kirti, the Labour Party and other such groups or elements. A party based squarely on Marxism-Leninism, independent of all other political organisations and parties." He, however, intended to exclude the CPI because, according to him, owing to its affiliation with the CI it was unable to merge itself with the new socialist party and might disrupt the new party. However, he favoured the idea that "there should be a Working alliance between the two."58

II

Unlike other parties the CPI, however, could not disassociate itself from the CI. Communist movement in India and other parts of the world was organised with direct and indirect help of the CI. Dissociation from the world organisation would have resulted in isolation from the international socialist movement, particularly because the task of the CPI, an embryonic party with little mass base, to organise revolutionary movements on Marxist-Leninist line was not an easy one. Again the
presence of a mammoth party like the INC, with a big mass base under the leadership of a leader like Gandhi, made the problem much more difficult.

Until 1939 there remained some kind of working relationship between the INC, the CSP and other parties. But with the reelection of Bose as Congress president there emerged a crisis and the CPI faced a serious dilemma. The problem was one of consolidating the left forces vis-a-vis the INC which by then was out to make a clean sweep of the communists and socialists from its fold. And when, after vehemently decoupling the INC for such attempts, the CPI opted for unity with the INC and advised the AIFB not to alienate the Gandhian leadership, the working relationship between the CPI, the FB and the CSP got a rude jolt.

In the meantime the international situation worsened to a great extent. In August 1939 the Nazi-Soviet pact drastically changed the world balance of power. We have already noted that the INC was hesitant on the question of support to the British in the Second World War. Gandhi initially favoured unconditional support, while others demanded a clear declaration of war aims and India's future status and finally in its Ramgarh session the INC opted for conditional support. This mood of hesitancy on the part of the Congress led to inaction. The INC first followed a wait and see policy, criticised any attempt to initiate mass movements, emphasised constructive programmes and in 1940-41 started
individual satyagraha on a limited scale and Gandhi was insistent on the creed of non-violence.

For the CPI the war was an opportunity to further the cause of Indian revolution. It dubbed the war as imperialist in nature having no connection with democracy and feared that having no intention to make any concession to the Indians the British would intensify offensive against the most militant sections in the Congress. It also feared that the vanguard organisation, the INC, would be crushed in isolation and inaction and "imperialism would be able to dictate terms and demand complete surrender." According to Adhikari, the First World War was a product of the cut throat competition between the imperialist states of Europe for colonies and not a war for defending democracy. In the treaty of Versailles, he wrote, Germany was forced to obey a 'dictated peace' and it wanted to 'solve the inter-imperialist conflict by maintaining defeated states, especially Germany in a state of political inferiority' and made division of the "spoils of war among victor states, fixing the frontiers of Europe, distributing colonies and colonial mandates in such a way that their hegemony throughout the world was maintained." He further noted that by temporarily solving the inter-imperialist conflict "British and French imperialists pursued the policy of isolating and encircling the Soviet Union with hostile pacts and of provoking a war against it." According to him, fascism
and its aggressive phase was the product of the extreme decay of the world capitalist system as seen in the great economic crisis. Britain followed a policy of appeasement because, Adhikari observed, she was afraid of Soviet Russia. He observed that British imperialism allowed the fascists to destroy the Popular Front in Spain because it wanted to solve the 'inter-imperialist contradiction' at the cost of destruction of the small nations, and of the Soviet Union.62 According to him, though Britain declared that her war aim was to save democracy from the onslaught of the fascists all their "efforts right up to the last moment of the outbreak of the war were to achieve a settlement with Hitler - an appeasement - a Munich ... it is out to "destroy Hitlerism" (not fascism). It would like Hitler to be replaced by another reactionary military clique which would be willing to come to a settlement with Britain ... These are the war aims of British imperialism."63 " ... Only when the present governments of Chamberlain and Dallin are replaced, Adhikari maintained, by real anti-fascist popular governments would it be possible to convert the present imperialist war into a real democratic war against German fascism."64 The CPI time and again maintained that the war was not a war of democracy against fascism but an imperialist war, the heir and successor to the First World War.

It was opposed to the Gandhian policy of vacillation, welcomed the resignation of the Congress ministries but rued over the fact that the
Congress only withdrew support and did not resist imperialist war, but rather emphasised constructive work. It alleged that the "initiative was left with imperialism. The Haripur resolution which demanded active resistance to war and not passive non-co-operation was not implemented. The door was left open for a "solution" of the crisis for compromise."\(^6\) It took exception to the attitude of some Congress leaders like Rajagopalachari who favoured co-operation with imperialism, if responsibility in the centre was conceded to the Congress. It appealed that the Congress should immediately form 'broadest based war councils' in every corner of India and must take necessary measures for production and distribution of anti-war materials and enrolment of volunteers. The CPI also demanded that in close co-operation with the trade unions, kisan sabhas and other anti-imperialist organisations the Congress must organise mass meetings and demonstrations to condemn war ordinances. It wanted that the Congress should organise movements in close co-operation with the Muslim League. It demanded that special efforts "must be made to draw the Muslim masses in these demonstrations, to explain to them the reactionary character of the Muslim League's policy."\(^6\) It thought that by organising mass demonstrations and 'intensive campaign against the war' such a situation 'must be created' as would compel the Congress leadership to initiate 'struggle'.\(^6\) It visualised that political and economic effects of the war would result in mass starvation and suppression of civil rights and would thus bring the common
people in direct conflict with the government. The CPI planned to take advantage of this turbulent situation. It stipulated:

If in this situation, we act boldly, decisively and unitedly making revolutionary use of every conflict— the isolation of the Government would grow apace. The war crisis shall develop into revolutionary crisis. The imperialist war shall be transformed into war of national liberation. 68

The CPI's reading of the nature of the war—especially in its first phase, i.e., during 1939-1941—was not unrealistic. The Congress resolutions identified fascism and its reactionary nature, but still hesitated to take any concrete action; everytime final decisions were deferred and ample scope was left for honourable settlement. Compared to this half-heartedness of the Congress, the CPI's policy was much more tangible. To quote a politbureau resolution adopted in 1939:

... The question before the Indian people in this war is not whether they support imperialist Britain or sympathize with Nazi Germany. The question is whether they stand with the forces of reaction, fascism and war, or with those of freedom, democracy and peace. To help imperialism in this war is to strengthen fascism in Europe, to consolidate the imperialist status quo, is to perpetuate wars and the enslavement of subject nations, is to help a reactionary refashioning of the world. To oppose the imperialist war which is being forced upon us, to link up our resistance to war with our struggle for freedom is the way to weaken British imperialism, the main bulwark of world reaction and therefore world reaction itself. 69

This long excerpt reveals one thing that for the CPI war opposition and struggle for liberation were inseparable. There remained no ambiguity
in its approach when it stipulated that revolutionary utilisation of the war crisis 'for the achievement of national freedom' was the central task before the national forces. For the CPI the capture of power seemed to be 'an immediately realisable goal'. It observed that for the conduct of the war the British needed the support of the INC and peace in India but it would not be reciprocated with major concessions to the Indians. It noted that "war does not mean the beginning of "decolonisation" or a turn in the imperialist policy towards conciliation of the national bourgeoisie through major political and economic concessions." 70 It was pained to note that representing "the national bourgeoisie the dominant leadership of the Congress wants to utilise the war crisis for securing concessions from imperialism." 71

The Congress's hesitancy to oppose imperialism and war by concrete actions, its proposal to give conditional support to the government made the CPI afraid of the real implications of these overtures which ultimately might have resulted in compromise with the colonial masters: "Compromise between Imperialism and the Congress on the issue of war would be treachery to the cause of world democracy and disaster for the national movement." 72 Any compromise, it was maintained, on the basis of some sort of responsibility at the centre would mean operation of imperialist laws like Defence of India Rules against the anti-imperialist and patriotic people of
India and co-operation with the compromising Indian bourgeoisie. Hence it asked for isolation of the compromisers by developing the "anti-war movement from the bourgeois restrictions and develop it along revolutionary lines." The CPI, however, had no illusion as to its own strength for launching anti-imperialist movement against the Britishers.

It clearly stated:

It must be clearly realised, however, that the movement for freedom can acquire national dimensions and be really effective only when it is led by the Congress, that the proletarian hegemony in the national anti-war movement has to be achieved not outside and independent of the Congress but through it. Nor shall we be able to break through the stalemate by ourselves issuing "call" for nationwide direct action against war. 74 (Emphasis added - U.G.)

Through anti-war demonstrations it wanted to create an anti-war sentiment among the people in general and the masses of 'Congressmen in particular' and thus orient the Congress towards struggle. The resolution stipulated: "Even Satyagraha struggle, when launched by the Congress immediately assumes mass form on a national scale and therefore acquires revolutionary possibilities; but when "call" for such action is given by one tiny group it becomes adventurism, disrupts the national movement and dissipate our forces...." 75 It thought that the stalemate cannot be broken by giving a call for nation-wide "action" or 'by organising "revolt" against the Congress' but by patient and systematic anti-war propaganda, strikes, demonstrations etc. and by 'sharp but convincing criticism of the present policy of "wait- and see" pursued by our national
leadership'. For the CPI it was the 'only way' towards struggle. Hence it spoke for movement through Congress organisations and through closest alliance of working class and peasants organisations with them. That the CPI did never want to isolate itself from the Congress during this period becomes very manifest from the following lines:

... in the measure we are able to develop mass actions through and in unity with the Congress in that measure we shall succeed in creating the basis for nation-wide movement, in that measure we shall succeed in defeating disruption. 77 (Emphasis added - U.G.)

Thus in close co-operation with the Congress and by organising mass anti-war strikes, rallies and demonstrations, it tried to give proletarian colour to the rational struggle. Not only that, the CPI also noted that "confining proletarian action only to struggle for economic demands, higher wages in view of rising prices, etc., would mean renouncing the task of making a bold bid for proletarian leadership of the political struggle ahead." 78 Accordingly, it was stated that the chief task of the CPI would be to give the mass movements a revolutionary content and form and when the no-tax, no-rent campaign would gain momentum, when this movement breaks through all restrictions imposed by the Gandhian technique of non-violence and develops into mass insurrection against imperialist rule, then and only then shall capture of power becomes the immediate perspective..." 79 (Emphasis added - U.G.)

It time and again emphasized the importance of co-operation with the Congress, taking advantage of the Congress led movements, whatever its forms be,
and convincing the Congress cadres of the effectiveness of the technique of agitation and action. That is, in short, the CPI favoured close co-operation with the Congress, but was vehemently opposed to the Gandhian technique of movement. It maintained:

Our tactics of to-day are designed not only to move the whole Congress into action but also to influence and shape the struggle in such a way that it bursts the bonds of bourgeois technique, of the Gandhian technique, and makes a sweep of a full blooded revolutionary struggle involving active mass action and mass initiative by the working class and the peasantry.... In the process of such action and through such action the proletariat would come forward as the most revolutionary class before all the people, would consolidate its alliances among the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie and thus would, in fact, establish its hegemony. This is the Bolshevik path ... leading finally to capture of power through armed insurrection and paving the way for the passing over of the bourgeois-democratic revolution into the proletarian revolution. 80

This long excerpt shows that the CPI wanted to prepare the ground for an armed insurrection leading to capture of power by the working class. And as it was conscious of its small strength and the mass basis of the Congress, it planned to reach its goal by making the Congressmen follow the path of revolution. But it rejected the Gandhian path of non-violence which it described as a bourgeois technique. Characterising its own tactic as 'Bolshevik' the CPI described the tactics of AIFB, CSP and Roy as 'Menshevik' ones. 81 It is also clear from the excerpt that the CPI had in its mind two stages of revolution, viz., bourgeois-democratic and proletarian. And for the achievement of the bourgeois-democratic
revolution it favoured a class coalition of the working class, the peasantry and the petty-bourgeoisie. A similar programme of action is also found in the Proletarian Path, an illegal manifesto of the CPI. Here we find the same enthusiasm to start no-rent and no-tax campaigns, strikes in the major industries and thus to deepen the revolutionary crisis. Thus, it believed, that entrance to higher phase— the phase of armed insurrection—would be possible. Destruction of government institutions, storming police stations by a national militia, it was thought, would deepen the crisis to such a point that the British Indian army would face a serious problem and the Indian soldiers would increasingly come over to 'people's militia.' Following the Leninist theory of revolution it wanted to achieve a bourgeois-democratic revolution first and the proletarian revolution next. It was argued that "The national movement must lead to defeat or compromise if the peasantry remain a reserve of the bourgeoisie and act under bourgeois leadership..." To avoid such a consequence it stressed the formation of a 'revolutionary alliance' between the proletariat and the peasantry on the success of which depended the success of 'the National Revolution'. It noted that though the Britishers exploited every section of the people including the bourgeoisie, the latter still remained anti-struggle because it was conscious of the explosive situation of India and was 'more opposed to mass struggle than it ever was'. It was stipulated that the national leadership was aware of this grave national situation and wanted to restrain the mass movement and sometimes by using these struggles it wanted
'to extract concessions from imperialism'. It was noted that: 'With the growing explosiveness of the situation, the national leadership will grow more and more anti-struggle, its tactics will grow more and more disruptive of national unity.'  

The Gandhian leadership was attacked and was described as "the most disruptive, most demoralising, most anti-struggle force" within the national camp. The CPI felt the need to isolate and smash its mass influence. For it the 'non-violent mask' of Gandhi was but a 'policy and technique of the compromising bourgeoisie'. It emphasised the need to politically expose the true nature of the Gandhian technique, i.e., the technique of sidetracking the main question of launching mass movement against imperialist Britain by reducing the Congress 'into an instrument for carrying out the policy of compromise...'. But simultaneously it was pointed out that the communists did not intend to fight on "two fronts". On the contrary, 

... The front of the people is only ONE, the front against Imperialism. Inside the national front, Gandhism represents anti-struggle, disruptive trend. The more we EXPOSE this character of Gandhism, the more we mobilise the masses for ACTION against Imperialism... The "theory of two fronts" results in the tactic of verbal condemnation of compromise coupled with complete inaction... It strengthens compromisers and their policy. It results in disruption of the fighting front of the people..." 

It is interesting to note that though after 1939 almost all socialists and communists were ousted from the Congress and the AICC and the
Working Committee were manned exclusively by the rightist men, the CPI adhered to the principle of pre-empting the Congress by organising mass movements; it followed the principle of acting in unison with the Congress for a radical goal. Enamoured of this goal as it was, it denounced the tactics followed by Bose and Roy. For the CPI neither the policy of splitting the Congress (as proposed by Bose) nor the policy of 'alternative leadership' (as proposed by Roy) was of any great significance. It was stated

It is the National Congress that constitutes the organ of peoples' struggle for freedom. It is through the Congress and under its banner that nation-wide struggle against imperialist rule has to be launched and developed. The proletariat shall fail to become a national force unless it succeeds in decisively influencing the Congress...86 (Emphasis added - U.C.)

It thus becomes evident that the CPI opted for close co-operation with the INC and gradually dissociated itself from the AIFB. Thus, in P.C. Joshi's opinion, Bose represented 'left nationalism' which was in reality "only more militant bourgeois nationalism".87 Bose's urge for starting partial movements was described as a 'slogan to escape struggle'; that in the name of nationalism Bose favoured provincialism and setting up of an 'alternative Congress'. Joshi wrote that as Bose considered the Working Committee a greater danger than imperialism and wanted to organise a separate Congress in Bengal the CPI could not be any party to it.88 He emphatically noted that Bose had adopted the slogan...
of 'struggle' which in ultimate analysis turned into 'a slogan to escape an actual struggle.' Even he went to the extent of describing Bose's non-violent satyagraha as essentially Gandhian. Bose's left nationalism appeared to Joshi as 'disruptive factionalism', 'factionsal anti-nationalism' and he felt the necessity to democratize the CPI from the AIF. But it is interesting to note that though he opposed satyagraha calls by Bose he declared that the CPI would support any such call given by the IFC and try to 'transform it into a real mass struggle.' This was so because the CPI thought that the satyagraha calls by Bose were bound to be very limited in scope while any such call given by the Congress might lead to mass movement and the CPI would take the most of the situation. As to Bose's call for struggle, Joshi commented:

... It confines within the four walls of bourgeois constitutionalism the mass radicalization that is growing apace. Its words are Left, its practice is anti-struggle, anti-unity, its aim remains settlement with imperialism.

He felt that Bose's stand amounted to an 'unprincipled opportunism' difficult to find elsewhere. "... the bourgeoisie today is the splitter of nationality. Gandhian bourgeois nationalism creates it from one end, Bose's Left nationalism creates it from the other. Objectively they are variants of the same policy...," Joshi observed.

Again, Ajoy Ghosh criticized the CSP for its total submission to the
INC. The CSP did not actively support the Bombay workers' token strike in the early forties against the imperialist war. As to this Ghosh observed "... The C.S.P. which had grown by reconciling Marxism with Gandhism, proletarian internationalism with left-nationalism, socialism with opportunism, could no longer pursue that path...." Further, Ghosh observed that the CSP "leadership has made its final break with Marxism and has completely gone over to Gandhism" and this allowed itself to be turned into "an appendage of the dominant section of the bourgeois leadership." Again, Joshi took exception to CSP's hostile attitude towards the Soviet-German pact, Roy's march to Poland and he also alleged that the CSP was in line with the 'world bourgeois press', that the CSP wanted to adopt the method of cat-yagrams and did never understand that it was "the bourgeois method of exerting pressure on Imperialism and restricting the real movement." We have already seen in the previous chapter that the CPI attacked the Royist line of 'alternative leadership' and his views on war. In the early forties A.K. Ghosh again strongly criticised Roy for his policy of "Co-operation in the War on the basis of assurance by imperialism and immediate election to the Central Legislature...." According to Ghosh, this line was not an alternative to Gandhism but "the Gandhian line carried to the logical conclusion, to its extreme right." (Emphasis original - U.C.) According to him,

Factional opposition to the present Working Committee, disruption of national forces with pseudo (sic) - revolutionary slogans, opposition to all struggle and finally and above all utter subservience to imperialism - this is the meaning of Royism, its real content.
III

The CPI's strong anti-imperialist and pro-struggle attitude is found not only in the major policy statements of the period but also in its role in organizing the workers and peasants. Though the CPI was banned in 1934 it carried on its activities through two broad organizations, viz., the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS). The militancy of the workers and peasants roused displeasure of the Congress leadership. Two organizations - Majoor - Kehajian, a trade union of the industrial workers based on the Gandhian principle of class harmony, and the Gandhi Seva Sangh, an organization to carry on Gandhian constructive programmes among the labourers - were set up with the blessings of Gandhi which in reality were used to counter the influence of the communists and the socialists. In fact, from 1937 onwards the Gandhi Seva Sangh was permitted to participate in parliamentary work and "to take considerably more active interest in politics. The driving force behind this move was Patel who ... wanted a strong and well-tried organization behind him to combat the Leftist forces in the parliamentary and political fields generally and in particular to prevent the exploitation of industrial and agricultural workers by the Leftists...."102 The national leadership was dead against the strike movements of the workers.
because they, especially Gandhi, thought that such activities would go against the interest of the British which was engaged in a 'life and death struggle'. While the CPI wanted to use the war crisis for achieving freedom, the national leadership followed a policy of utter inaction and tried to negotiate with the British. And only in 1941 forced by popular pressure it started an individual civil disobedience movement of a highly limited nature. Until June 1941 the CPI was against such a method of struggle and tried to use the trade union and the kisan fronts to exert pressure on the Congress leaders so that they could be compelled to initiate a mass movement against the British. The CPI was on the forefront of the strike movements that took place in different industrial centres of India during 1939-1945. A profile of the working class movement can be had from the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of strikes and lockouts</th>
<th>No. of workers involved</th>
<th>No. of working days lost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>409,189</td>
<td>4,992,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>291,054</td>
<td>3,330,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>525,088</td>
<td>2,342,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>848</td>
<td>782,196</td>
<td>3,340,892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident that the number of strikes and lockouts reached its
peak during 1943-1945. Though the number of strikes was small in 1940-1941, the number of working days lost during the same period was 7,577,281 and 3,330,503 respectively. The most notable thing was that on October 2, 1939 90,000 workers of Bombay launched an anti-war strike, the first of its kind in the world working class movement. Again, the general strike of 1,75,000 textile workers of Bombay for dearness allowance began on March 5, 1940 and countrywide struggles followed in its trail. Strikes of the cotton mill workers of Narayangunge, in the district of Dacca, during 1939-1940, strike of 2,000 workers of the Calcutta Tramway in 1942 for 25 per cent dearness allowance are also remarkable. In 1940 the trade union unity was restored. As the AITUC and the NTUF got united the number of affiliated unions of the AITUC stood at 195 with a total membership of 3,74,256. The eighteenth session of the AITUC held in Bombay in 1940 adopted an anti-war resolution which claimed for India freedom and democratic government before she could be expected to take part in the war efforts. It was stipulated that "a war which will not result in the establishment of freedom and democracy in India, will not benefit India, much less will it benefit the working classes in India." During the period the trade union movement of India underwent a remarkable organizational advance. A profile of the organizational growth of the trade unions can be had from the following table:


Registered Unions and Membership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Unions</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>390,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>513,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>780,967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-46</td>
<td>1,087</td>
<td>864,031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-47</td>
<td>1,225</td>
<td>1,331,962</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table includes membership of only those unions which submitted annual returns to the government. Many registered unions failed to submit annual returns. For example, only 585 unions submitted returns in 1945-1946 where the actual number of registered unions was 1,087.

The AIKS was founded in 1936 and along with its allies in the cities, viz., the workers, the kisans were demanding for abolition of zamindari, long term moratorium and for scaling down agrarian debts. The growing militancy of the kisans irritated the Congress leaders and in 1939 the Congress prohibited any such activity without prior permission of the Provincial Congress Committees. The All India Kisan Committee met at Bombay on June 22-23 and 27, 1939 under the presidency of Narendra Deva. The Committee deplored this attitude of the Congress and stipulated that the AICC gave 'undue importance' to 'the parliamentary programme' and it was
an attempt 'to subordinate every other programme to it', that such a de-
cision went against the Tripuri resolution which asked the people to
prepare for a nation-wide struggle and thus, in essence, was an attempt
to check the growth of the mass struggle. It was stipulated that the
resolution would deprive the kisans and workers inside the Congress of
their fundamental right 'to resort to peaceful satyagraha for the protec-
tion of their just and legitimate rights'. As to the attempts of the
Congress ministries to contain the kisan movements by taking resort to
coercive measures, the AIKC noted,

The Committee is particularly shocked to see that even Congress
ministries have allowed themselves to become parties to the new
plan of aggression against class organisations, which is inten-
ded to check the rising tempo of the kisan movement in the coun-
try...

The political resolution of the fifth session of the AIKS held at
Palsa, Andhra Pradesh, in March 1940 betrayed desire of the kisans to
launch 'struggle for freedom' alongside the workers against the British
Government, Indian rulers, the zamindars and shaukars (moneylenders). In his presidential address Rahula Sankrityayana alleged that the British
imperialism "does not in any way desire to touch the rights and privileg-
es of big feudal interests ... imperialism cannot solve the agrarian prob-
lem even for its own benefit. It cannot abolish vested feudal interest
without weakening itself. It cannot hit the indigenous merchant capital,
which has penetrated agriculture, without hitting directly its own co-
mercial and trading interests." Sankrityayana sought the solution in socialism and alleged that in none of its struggles "did the Congre-
ss clearly formulate and include in its programme the basic democratic
demands of the peasantry and the working class. On the other hand cla-
sa collaboration was vigorously preached..." He favoured a struggle
unitedly launched by the kisans and the workers which would prevent Gan-
dhi from bartering away "national freedom for a mess of pottage in the
form of some improvement in the present Government of India Act." This anti-imperialist attitude of the AIKS aroused the wrath of the Brit-
ish and mass kisan movements became almost impossible during 1940-1941.

Meanwhile, the CPI continued to step up its militant activity in as
many areas as possible. For example, the Calcutta District Committee of
the CPI gave a call to the Railway, Dock, Tram and Steamer workers to cr-
eate "a revolutionary atmosphere everywhere among all the people" and to
be prepared for "the revolution for India's freedom." It gave call
to the workers of the Bengal jute millhands to fight for more wages and
bonuses and other demands. In a call to the students the Calcutta
District Committee observed: "The Right wing leadership of the Indian
National Congress ... is carrying on negotiation with the Government re-
garding participation in the war and is waiting. A higgling is on the
foot to wrest rights from the Imperialists by means of a compromise."
Emphasis was placed on the need of continuous propaganda against the war and on the formation of anti-war committees from among 'selected revolutionary students in schools and colleges.' It was stipulated that

...We do not want a Gandhian form of fight, we want a National revolution. The revolution has got to be developed ..... The Congress as a whole may issue a national call and the struggle of the whole people may commence at a time, or so long as the Working Committee refuses to give such a call, the revolution to be developed through the scattered guerilla mass actions on different fronts at different times ... we want to develop at once real mass struggle. 119

Similar call was given to the Seamen, Port and Dock workers and also to the workers of jute-mills, railways and iron factories. 120 The Bengal Provincial Branch of the CPI declared that by freedom they understood around emancipation of the country and 'an everlasting end to all methods of exploitation'. It was alleged that "... A secret conspiracy is going on between British imperialism and the National Congress which is the political party of the bourgeois (sic) in the country, in order to tighten the noose of exploitation around the necks of the masses of India so that some share of the unchecked plunder carried on by British imperialism may come into the hands of the capitalist class of this country. That is why the Congress is making such a strenuous attempt to delude the masses by means of a hollow independence pledge." 121

By making a false 'show of an arrangement for a struggle for freedom',
by giving a 'revolutionary shape to the desire for freedom in the minds of the people', the Congress wanted, so it was alleged, 'to guide it along a wrong path'.\textsuperscript{122} The CPI's strategy becomes particularly evident if one takes a look at the underground literature of the party during this period. In a cyclostyled pamphlet entitled \textit{Party Organiser} an article written by O.Piatnitsky on communist party's preparation for underground work, utilisation of legal possibilities etc. was published and in the light of the article special guidance was given to the communist cadres to follow different tactics in different situations. For example, it directed the cadres of the CPI to utilise 'the legal existence of the trade unions and kisan sabhas to the utmost through organising fractions in them and by guiding them through Party Committees', to build up 'network of auxiliary groups of militant workers' to maintain and extend 'the capacity to move the masses' when legal organisations were attacked, to decentralise party work.\textsuperscript{123} Available materials reveal that CPI strongly insisted on ousting the British Government. One such leaflet appealed to the people to go forward for freedom and for a Constituent Assembly.\textsuperscript{124} Another cyclostyled leaflet criticised Gandhi-an Satyagraha in the following manner:

\textit{... this satyagraha is not a national struggle; the aim of this limited individual satyagraha is to frustrate the possibility of a national struggle. One year before at the time of the beginning of the imperialist war the people were terribly enthused; at that juncture the power of the Congress and other anti-imperialist...}
organisations was so great that imperialism did not dare attack the Congress as a whole; at that time the reign of repression fell only upon the communists and other leftists. If the Congress had started individual satyagraha at that time it could have taken the form of a mass civil disobedience in no time. Instead of doing this the Congress leadership was following policy of compromise... In such a circumstance if we are to stem the imperialist onslaught and to develop a national struggle all anti-imperialist people of India should unite and fight relentlessly. 125 (Translation mine - U.G.)

It was alleged that the Congress had deliberately followed this policy of inaction to destroy the spirit of the struggle. It stipulated that a few communist cadres must join the limited satyagraha as members of the Congress because still the INC happened to be the national organisation and the people too took it as real struggle. It was stated that it would be its duty to make the people convinced that Gandhi was doing much harm to the future possibility of a revolution by ordering people to fill the jails. Simultaneously the people had to be made convinced about the real road to freedom (i.e., mass struggle - U.G.) it was stipulated. 126

Following the United Front tactics during 1935-1939 the CPI gained both in terms of popularity and strength, but after Tripuri it became clear to everybody that the INC would not tolerate any leftist member inside the Working Committee. The CPI had still some hope that by acting in unison with the INC it might, in course of time, be able to compel the leadership to initiate a mass struggle, and once it was started on a large scale it would be possible for the communists to give it a
'proletarian impress'. That the CPI was conscious of its small size and its relative organizational weakness became evident when Joshi wrote:

We had no illusion that a single party like ours could start a national struggle. All our attention was directed to create the general atmosphere in the country and those conditions among the sections of the people we led that might help the Congress to take the lead. We resisted Subhas Bose's efforts to start a rival Congress as disruptive. 127 (Emphasis original - U.C.)

IV

From the above discussion we can find out the following characteristics of the CPI politics during 1939-1941, viz., the period of the 'imperialist war'. Firstly, during this period the CPI tried to turn the war crisis into an opportunity for national revolution. The possibility of bringing forth the revolution was to the CPI an 'immediately realisable goal'. Secondly, though it anticipated revolution it had no illusion as to its mass basis and organizational strength. That is why, and this constitutes the third point, while Bose deserted the Congress the CPI condemned him and thought that only through the INC, a mammoth organisation with huge mass base, the left could have any opportunity to use the masses for the cause of revolution. Fourthly, its characterisation of the war as 'imperialist' was correct. In this regard there
was no difference between the CPI, the INC, the AIFB and the CSP. Fifthly, while the method of struggle followed by the INC was pro-compromising, half-hearted and one of 'wait-and-see', the CPI and the FB policy was much more forward and progressive in content. It faithfully tried to organise the workers and the peasants for militant activities which the Congress leaders strongly detested. While the CSP toed the line of the Congress method of struggle, the CPI visualised a path of 'insurrection'. Sixthly, the major drawback from which the CPI suffered in this period was its organisational weakness. Acknowledging it Adhikari observed:

The Party had to be strengthened politically and organizationally as a militant body capable of combining legal and illegal work. Special stress had to be given on developing anti-landlord peasant struggles, anti-feudal struggles in princely states, struggle against social backwardness of sections of rural poor. But our forces proved inadequate for the purpose. That is why again serious mistakes occurred in the succeeding period and we were not able to play an effective role in the final stages of the national independence struggle. 128

Finally, it should be mentioned that had there been a close relationship between the CPI, the AIFB and the CSP there might have arisen a possibility of launching a mass united affront to imperialism. Unfortunately, the relationship between the CPI, the CSP and the FB got soured during 1940-1941; especially, when Bose sought co-operation of Germany with an eye to freeing India from British rule the prevalent
working relationship between the CPI and the FG underwent a hard blow.

This leads us to put on record that in a crucial period of India's freedom struggle while the INC was following a policy of utter inaction and was ready for conditional co-operation with British imperialism, the CPI followed a pro-people, non-compromising and anti-imperialist policy which was no less patriotic than the policy followed by other parties. However, its small size and organizational weakness stood in its way to success.
NOTES AND REFERENCES:


2. ibid., p.14.

3. G. Adhikari, 'The British money-bags are behind Hitler', NF, 1(6), 27 March 1938, p.15.

4. See 'Were we Prepared?', Editorial, NF, 1(34), 9 October 1938, p.4.

5. See 'The Impending Conflict. India and the War', Editorial, NF, 1(33), 2 October 1938, pp.4, 13. P. Sundarayya maintained: "... imperialism whether administered by a British Labour Government or a British Conservative Government retains all the salient features of imperialism and India could never be a party to an alliance formed by the British Government for the purpose of its defence against its fascist rivals unless the absolute right of Indian people to freedom of choice in its support is first conceded..." P. Sundarayya, 'A Peace Policy for India', NF, 1(7), 3 April 1938, pp.13-14. In the same article it was also maintained that "The immediate issue before us in India is not the fight against fascism, not yet the preservation of European and American democracy through the agency of British imperialism, but the fight for a true democracy in our own country." (Emphasis original - U.G.)

6. See 'Struggle or death?', Editorial, NF, 2(32), 22 October 1939, pp.500, 510.
19. P. Thakurdas MSS. File No. 177/1936-43. This copy of the note was forwarded by the Secretary to the Governor of Bombay to Thakurdas on 16.1.41.


21. ibid., p.19.

22. Resolution passed by the AICC in Bombay on September 16, 1940 in Mansergh, Transfer of Power, vol.1, Appendix II, p.880.

23. ibid., p.880.

24. Resolution passed by the Working Committee at Bardoli on December 30, 1941 and confirmed by the AICC at Wardha on January 16, 1942 in The Indian National Congress (March 1940-September 1946), (AICC, 1946), p.19.


26. Birla to M.D. 8.3.40 in G.D. Birla, In the Shadow of the Mahatma, (Bombay, 1953), pp. 282-83. M.D. subsequently wrote to Birla that Gandhi had read the letter and remained silent. See M.D. to Birla 11.3.40 in ibid., p.283. M.D. is the abbreviated form of Mahadeb Desai, Editor of Harijan and Gandhi's Secretary.

27. Birla to M.D. 15.3.40 in ibid., p.284.

28. The Indian National Congress (March 1940-September 1946), p.81.

30. ibid., p.367.


32. ibid., p.305.

33. Quoted in Uma Kaura, Muslims and Indian Nationalism (New Delhi, 1977), p.149.


37. All citations are from Bose's Presidential address at the All-India Students' Conference at Delhi in January 1940. See S.C. Bose, Crossroads (Calcutta, 1981), pp.263-66.


39. ibid., p.269.

40. ibid., p.270.
41. 'Stem the Rot', Editorial, FB, 10 January 1940 in ibid., p.278.

42. See Bose's Presidential Address at the All-India Anti-Compromise Conference, Ramgarh, Bihar, 19 March 1940 in ibid., p.294.

43. 'The Caravan Marches', Editorial, FB, 13 April 1940 in ibid., p.301.

44. 'Act Quickly', Editorial, FB, 18 May 1940 in ibid., p.314.

45. 'Is it Fair?', Editorial, FB, 8 June 1940 in ibid., p.320.

46. 'A Provisional National Government'. Statement issued from Kurseong on 8 June 1940 in ibid., p.323. Also see 'Task before the Country', a statement of Bose in FB, 29 June 1940 in ibid., pp.342-43.

47. 'Forward Bloc in Perspective' an incomplete article written by Bose in 1940 in ibid., p.356.

48. Subhas Bose to Sarat Chandra Bose 24.10.40 in ibid., p.358.

49. Subhas Bose to Sarat Chandra Bose 31.10.40 in ibid., p.359.


51. Bose to Sardul Singh Cawasheer 4.11.40 in ibid., p.366.

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

53. The officer visualised the Gandhian plan in the following manner: "... continuation of the stalemate during the period of
the War or a temporary agreement, if any, arrived at between the non-Congress political parties and the British Government is not likely to harm the country's or the Congress cause. On the contrary, he (Gandhi) expects to benefit from either situation." See Review of Political Situation April 1941 by C.I.O. Nagpur in Home (Political) File No 4/8/1941 NAI. This file also includes reports which reveal that a section of the Congress led by Satyamurti and Rajagopalachari wanted to go back to parliamentary programme which Gandhi opposed on the plea that it might demoralise the Congress.


55. ibid., p. 133.

56. This important unsigned and undated letter of Jayaprakash Narayan was written to Bose in 1940 and to be found in S.C. Bose, Crossroads, pp. 419-23. The editor informs that Sri Narayan 'identified the original letter to be his own during one of his visits to Netaji Bhawan, Calcutta.' Sisir Kumar Bose is the editor of the book.

57. ibid., p. 423.

58. ibid., p. 423.


60. G. Adhikari, 'The Second Imperialist War'. For this article and the British review of the activities of the Indian communists see Home (Political) File No 7/6/1939 NAI.
61. ibid.
62. ibid.
63. ibid.
64. ibid.
65. Home (Political) File No 37/29/1940 NAI.
66. ibid.
67. ibid.
68. ibid.
69. 'Statement of Politbureau on CPI Policy and Tasks in the Period of the War' in ibid.
70. ibid.
71. ibid.
72. ibid.
73. ibid.
74. ibid.
75. ibid.
In another important document the CPI vehemently criticised Gandhi's role especially his role after the Civil Disobedience Movement and onwards. It was stated that "...Gandhism has entered into its decadent phase. At the most critical time of our national history it is acting as a fetter on the National struggle. It is acting as a disintegrating force in the mighty national organisation which was its own handiwork... the ideology, the Social theory and the political technique of Gandhism comes more and more in conflict with the urgent demands of national and social growth." Gandhi's role in the twenties was eulogised but it was stipulated that "...In its second phase Gandhism identifies itself with the bourgeoisie completely. It becomes the specifically Indian form in which the oppositional role of the Indian bourgeoisie, vacillating between Imperialism and the revolution, manifests itself. In this period Gandhism develops as a technique of controlling and restraining mass struggle and of using the leadership of the mass national movement for bargaining with Imperialism for petty concession within its framework. In this period the growing forces of proletarian and peasant organisations and struggle have not yet become politically effective and united. That is why Gandhism can extend the mass basis of leadership by launching struggle against Imperialism which it controls and restrains and which it
ultimately disrupts when it threatens to go beyond the pre-determined limits. During this second phase the conflict between Gandhism and the developing forces of national anti-imperialist struggle comes sharply to the forefront..." See G. Adhikari, *Gandhism -- A Review* (Bombay, 1940), pp.3,24.

83. The Proletarian Path. *Inside the National Front*, pp.4-5.

84. ibid., pp.5-6.

85. ibid., pp.6-7.

86. ibid., p.8.

87. P.C. Joshi, *Whom How and Why Bose Fight?* (Bombay, 1940), pp.3, 7, 16. PCJA, JNU. Joshi wrote: "...a new Left Party, like Forward Block (sic) could serve no useful purpose and in fact would prove harmful. It would only divide Congressmen from Congressmen. Its basis could only be Left nationalism which is not an ideology but a political trend. It is the outlook of persons who have become disillusioned with right reformism but not accepted Socialism;..." p.3.

88. ibid., pp.9-10.

89. ibid., p.17.

90. ibid., pp.17-21. Joshi observed: "...the Forward Bloc has to be opposed not as being too Left but as being the disruptive agency of the bourgeoisie. If the Right seeks to keep the Congress away from these mass movements, the "Left" Bose seeks to use them against the Congress... In fact the Forward Bloc exactly does what the Right wants done..." Again, Joshi maintained that the effort of the Forward Bloc to win over the peasants and the working class "...has to be resisted as the infilt-
ration of bourgeois influence over the masses, as an attempt to utilise these movements for factional bourgeois ends... To fall into the trap of Forward Bloc would lead to liquidation of their own fronts, disruption of their organisations, becoming parties to national disruption, going under alien bourgeois influence.” p.19. Also see Home Department File No 37/99/1940 Poll(I) NAI, especially, leaflet No. 4.

91. ibid.

92. ibid.

93. ibid.


96. ibid., p.8.


98. See n.200 of Chapter Two. For Ghosh's views see A.K.Ghosh, Roy -- A Masked Compromiser (Bombay, 1941), pp.26-31. PEJA, JNU. Also see G.Adhikari, Ramgarh. A Review and Evaluation. It is a document circulated in cyclostyled form by the CC,CPI in 1941. pp.14-17. PEJA, JNU.


100. ibid., p.26.
101. ibid., p.31

102. Home (Political) File No 4/18/1940 NAI.


104. ibid., p.387.

105. ibid., pp.390-91.

106. ibid., p.390.

107. ibid., p.395.

108. ibid., p.395.


110. ibid., p.63.

111. ibid., p.65.

112. ibid., p.66.

113. ibid., p.69.

114. ibid., p.71.

115. ibid., p.71.
116. Home (Political) File No 37/1/1940 NAI.

117. Home (Political) File No 37/25/1940 NAI. This file contains translation of two proscribed pamphlets written in Hindi and Bengali respectively addressed to the jute mill workers. The title of the Hindi pamphlet is 'Communist Party Ka Chatkal Majdoorke nam salam' (Communist Party's manifesto to Jute Mill Hands) and the Bengali one is entitled as 'Chatkaler Majur Bhai Bonera' (Brother and Sister Workers of Jute Mills). These pamphlets were issued by the Bengal Provincial Committee of the CPI on November 2, 1939.

118. For two proscribed pamphlets 'Communist Party's Call to the Students' (in English) and 'Chhatrader Prati Ahban' (in Bengali) see Home (Political) File No 37/24/1940 NAI.

119. ibid.

120. See 'Jahazi Port O Dock Majurder Prati Communist Partyr Ahban' (Communist Party's call to Seamen, Port and Dock workers) in Home (Political) File No 37/36/1940 NAI. And 'Communist Party's Manifesto to the workers of Jute Mills, Railways, Iron Factories, etc.' in Home Department File No 37/99/1940 Poll(I) NAI. Also see Home (Political) File No 37/39/1940 NAI.

121. All excerpts are from 'Lal Nishan' (Red Flag), a proscribed leaflet circulated by the Bengal Provincial Branch of the CPI. See Home (Political) File No 37/23/1940 NAI.

122. ibid.

123. For details of the guidelines as to the tactics to be followed by the CP cadres see O. Piatnitsky, 'The Communist Parties' Preparation for Underground Work. Utilisation of Legal Possibilities and Redistribution of Cadres' in Party Organiser 1(4), 25 September 1941, pp.1-8. Piatnitsky made a repo-
rt on the Communist Parties at the thirteenth Plenum of the
Commintern and also dealt with organisational principles to
be followed by the Communist Parties during the war period.
Following the guidelines the editor formulated certain prin-
ciples relevant to the specific Indian conditions and to
be followed by the communist cadres. The original copy of
the pamphlet is in PCJA, JNU.

124. 'Rashtra Kashmata Dakhaler Joney Agrasar Hao' (Go Forward for
capturing State Power), a hand-written leaflet distributed
as secret letter on August 20, 1940 by the Bengal Committee
of the CPI. NAI.

125. 'Pradesik Rajnaitik Patra No. 1' (Provincial Political Let-
ter No.1), a proscribed cyclostyled leaflet circulated on
November 11, 1940 by the Bengal Provincial Committee, CPI.
Also see a printed proscribed leaflet in Bengali entitled
'Bangladesher Pratyek Naronarir Kachhe Communist Partyr Ab-
edan' (Appeal of the Communist Party to every man and woman
of Bengal). It was intercepted on May 7, 1941. Also see ha-
dwritten proscribed Bengali leaflets 'Bharatiya Communist
Partyr Abedan' (Appeal of the Communist Party of India) and
'Communist Partyr Abedan : Saitan Ingrej Sarkarer Juddhe
Sahajya Deo Na' (Communist Party's Appeal : Do Not Give Any
Help in the War of the Devil English). These leaflets were
proscribed on March 12, 1941 and March 12, 1940 respective-
ly. NAI.

126. ibid.

127. P.C.Joshi, *Communist Reply to Congress Working Committee's
Charges* (Bombay, 1945), pp.23, 40.

128. G.Adhikari, *Communist Party of India and India's Path to
National Regeneration and Socialism* (Delhi, 1964), pp.80-81.