CHAPTER III

POST BKD DEVELOPMENTS, 1970-77

(A) Political Situation in U.P.

(B) Emergency and Non-Congress Movement
Alliance of Four Opposition Parties

While the Congress(R) General Secretary H.N. Bahuguna said on October 2, 1970 that his party would certainly form a ministry in U.P., four other parties, Congress(O), Jana Sangh, Swatantra and BKD got together to form a United Front and agitated for the early convening of the U.P. Assembly. These parties were not talking to form a ministry in U.P. but, "were mobilizing forces to demonstrate that the action taken to prevent Charan Singh proving his majority on the floor of the House and promulgation of President's rule in the State were both unconstitutional and morally wrong."

The four party alliance failed to agree on their joint leadership, while the Congress(R) asked the Governor to invite it to form a government "obviously to present a fait accompli to Parliament when it had to meet on November 9, 1970."

On October 7, 1970 Charan Singh withdrew the contest for the leadership of the revived SVD in U.P. He issued the following statement:

"It is being propagated in certain quarters that the SVD has not come into friction because of my insistence on being elected as its leader. This is not entirely correct. I have expressed it as my desire to friends of the BKD more than once that
they should allow me to retire. But they would not. I made a last attempt today and fortunately they have agreed to my proposal though much against their better judgement.

"This is just to declare to the people that I am no longer a candidate for leadership of the proposed SVD and would extend whole-hearted support to my friend whom the Parties opposed to the Prime Minister may elect to this office of great responsibility. It should be the aim of all those who are concerned with the future of the country, to ensure that the conspiracy of Prime Minister to become a dictator or handover the country to communism is defeated and democracy saved. She split her organization into two parts for the sake of her personal power. She has now decided to subvert the constitution itself to that end."

2. The S.V.D. Government

Legislators belonging to the Congress(O), BKD, Jana Sangh, SSB and the Swatantra and some independents failed to arrive at a decision on the leadership issue of the proposed SVD at a joint meeting. The matter then was referred to the national leadership of the Parties.

Welding themselves into a new Samyukta Vidhayak Dal, the five U.P. Parties chose T.N. Singh, a Congress(O) member of Rajya Sabha, as their leader soon after they staked a claim

1. The Statesman, New Delhi, Oct 8, 1970
to form a Ministry in the State on the support of 250 members in a House of 426. The deputy leadership was expected to go to the BKD. The Governor was immediately informed and asked to invite T.N. Singh to form a popular Ministry. The BKD was asked to nominate one of its members as deputy leader who would be the deputy Chief Minister if the SVD government was formed.

Kamlapati Tripathi submitted a memo to the Governor on October 14, 1970 which said that duly formed SVD of U.P. was "neither a recognized party in the Assembly nor was it known to be functioning outside the House." He said that his party could provide a stable and progressive government in the State.¹

The leaders of eight opposition parties - BKD, SSP, Swatantra, Congress(O), Jana Sangh, CPI(M), Soshit Dal and Vishal Haryana had decided to meet the President and to ask him to urge the Governor to invite T.N. Singh to form the government in U.P. The U.P. Congress(R) leaders Kamlapati Tripathi and H.N. Bahuguna also asserted the claim of their party to form the government in U.P. The delay in calling upon T.N. Singh to form the government and delay in submitting his report to the President had added doubt and suspense in the minds of the opposition parties.

¹ The Statesman, New Delhi, Oct 12, 1970
The SVD leader T.N. Singh was sworn in as Chief Minister on October 18, 1970. Girdhari Lal Congress(O) and Virendra Verma (BKD) were administered the oath of office as Cabinet Ministers by the Governor. Initially it was a three member Cabinet.

The total strength of the T.N. Singh Ministry was expected to be 33 (24 Ministers of cabinet rank and 9 junior Ministers). The BKD and Congress(O) were supposed to have eight members of the Cabinet rank, Jana Sangh four, SSP three, Swatantra one, and the junior Ministers were to be more or less in the same proportion. The Congress(O) quota included the Chief Minister.

The constituents of the SVD had agreed that the Chief Minister T.N. Singh (C-O) would exchange views with their representatives later and also finalise proper shape of the Coordination Committee for the purpose of such deliberations. Charan Singh told later on that in a meeting of SVD leaders it was decided that the Chief Minister would call leaders of the SVD constituents for consultations whenever found necessary.

In the mid-term poll to the Lok Sabha in 1971, the BKD contested 67 seats in U.P. but won only one although the total percentage of valid votes it obtained there worked out

1. *The Times of India*, New Delhi, Oct 19, 1970
to 12.7 percent i.e. next to the Congress(R). In other States the BKD contested 33 seats but won no seat.

Soon after the Mid Term Poll to the Lok Sabha, the U.P. Chief Minister, T.N. Singh declared that he would quit on March 18. He said that he would be placing his resignation before the SVD General Body on March 18, 1971 and ask it to elect a new leader.¹ He also informed the BKD Chairman, Charan Singh. The SVD General Body rejected the resignation of T.N. Singh the same day and asked him to continue as the leader.

3. Defections in SVD Government and its Collapse

In a surprise move many BKD MLAs defected from the Party and joined the Congress(N). The first defection was made on March 17, 1971 when D.P. Bora, MLA and Secretary of the State BKD and Party Whip in the Assembly decided to join the Congress(N). He said that "the SVD government had bred instability and failed to deliver the goods and that is why the people had voted for Mrs. Indira Gandhi."¹⁴ Independent MLAs who had left the BKD a few months ago also joined the Congress(N).² Tej Bahadur Ganjwar and Sattar Ahmad (both BKD) left their party on March 22, 1971. They said that they did so because of differences with their party leader Charan Singh.³

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1. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, March 16, 1971
2. Ibid., March 18, 1971
3. Ibid., March 29, 1971
With over a dozen more SVD members including two Cabinet Ministers and two Deputy Ministers defecting to Congress(N) the T.N. Singh Ministry lost its majority in U.P.

The Congress(N) with 212 members urged the Governor to dissolve the SVD Ministry. The Congress(N) could count among its allies CPI-4, CPM-1, PSP-3, Republican-1 and Muslim Majlis-1. The opposition could thus muster an official strength of 222 in an effective House of 416 members. It also claimed the support of the Independents and two SSP rebels. The five parties constituting the SVD had a total strength of 189, the break up being: Congress(O)-64, BKD-61, Jana Sangh-41, and SSP-19.1


The five and a half months old SVD government headed by T.N. Singh which was sworn in on October 18, 1970 came to an end on April 3, 1971. Following the defections on larger scale and fall of the government, the Governor B. Gopala Reddy immediately invited the Congress(N) leader Kamalapati Tripathi to form a Ministry.2 Kamalapati Tripathi was sworn in as the

1. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, March 28, 1971
2. Ibid., March 31, 1971
Chief Minister of U.P. on the same day.

The Government headed by Kamalapati Tripathi lasted till the General Elections of March 1974 where the Congress was returned to power with a majority of 213 seats in the 425 member Assembly. The Partywise position was:

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<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats contested</th>
<th>Seats won</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>403</td>
<td>213</td>
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<tr>
<td>Congress(O)</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jana Sangh</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>BKD</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>106</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>226</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>CPI(M)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim League</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swatantra</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>LTS</td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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1. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, March 2, 1974
On March 5, 1974 after the General Elections an eleven member Cabinet headed by the Chief Minister H.N. Bahuguna was installed in U.P. The Governor Akbar Ali Khan administered the oath of office and secrecy to the new Ministers.

Within 24 hours of its installation the Cabinet was expanded to include A.R. Jaiswal as Cabinet Minister and A.C. Grice was renominated as the member of the U.P. Assembly to represent the Anglo Indian community.

Charan Singh accused the Congress of resorting to "illegal and dishonest practices in securing their election victory." In a statement he charged some civil servants of having done active work for the success of the Congress against law and rules.

The triple alliance consisting of the BKD, SSP, and Muslim Majlis had urged the Governor "not to recognize Bahuguna's illegal Government nor deliver his address as prepared by it to the joint session of the State Legislature on March 2, 1974."

The BKD had also accused the Government of "repression following the arrest of thousands of Party workers on false charges." It further alleged that some BKD men had even been murdered.

1. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, March 6, 1974
2. Ibid., March 13, 1974
3. Ibid., March 17, 1974
5. **Split in the BKD and Formation of BLDP**

The first split in the BKD occurred when its National Executive by a majority vote, expelled its Chairman Charan Singh from the Party and elected the Party's treasurer M.S. Oberoi as the new Chairman on July 23, 1974. In a surprise move, seven of the twelve National Executive members of the Party met in Delhi on 23rd July 1974 resolved against the merger of the party with 6 other opposition parties and unanimously expelled Charan Singh. It was alleged that he had not consulted the National Executive before announcing the Party's merger with other opposition parties.

On July 26, 1974 the BKD Parliamentary group expelled the party's newly elected Chairman and party's erstwhile treasurer, hotel magnate M.S. Oberoi on the charges of his anti-party activities.

Charan Singh had maintained that he continued to be the elected Chairman of the Party and asserted that the group of executive members nominated by him had no right to oust him from the Chairmanship.

The BKD State Executive, under the Chairmanship of Charan Singh, terminated the primary membership of party MLAs who in a joint statement declared that "they have shifted the area of
their operation to Delhi under the direct patronage of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi." The Executive also terminated the Primary membership of Jai Ram Verma, State Chairman of the BKD rival faction and Prithvi Nath Sethi, Primary membership of Shyam Lal Yacav, Zainul Basher and Balwant was also terminated by the Executive. After these expulsions the BKD strength in the Assembly had been reduced from 107 to 101.

On July 20, 1974 Charan Singh had declared that with the coalition of seven opposition parties namely BKD (Charan Singh group), Swatantra Party (Piloo Modi group), Lok Tantra Kisan Dal (a group broken from Jana Sangh), Utkal Congress (Orissa), Kisan Mazdoor Party (Haryana) and Khetra Zamindar Sabha of Punjab, he was forming a new political party, the Bhartiya Lok Dal (BLD). A resolution in this regard was passed on August 29, 1974 by the coalition of opposition parties and on the same day Charan Singh had declared the formation of the new political party. Charan Singh was unanimously elected as Chairman of the BLD.

This newly formed Political Party claimed to be the national opposition and to be an alternative to the Congress.

1. The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, July 21, 1974
2. The Statesman, New Delhi, Aug 30, 1974
B. Emergency and Non-Congress Movement.

A Non-Congress SVD (Samyukta Vichayak Dal) Government was formed in U.P. in 1967. This was the first success achieved by these Parties in capturing political power in the State providing an alternate to the monolith Congress. These governments formed from time to time were founded on a negative basis, namely non-Congressism. A common agreed programme had, no doubt, been chalked out, but soon after the formation of these governments, the inner contradictions among the various constituents began to surface as a result of which none of these governments could last for more than two years at a time. In the absence of a common ideology, these SVD governments were bound to meet this fate.

The constituents of these governments included the Communist party on the extreme and Jana Sangh on the other. It was clearly an agreement based on political expediency. During this period, no attempt to forge a united non-Congress party as a national alternative could succeed. The relations among them became very strained and there were allegations and counter allegations. The SSP and its leader Raj Narain accused Charan Singh of violating all agreements. Although later on they were to join hands with him in the formation of Bhartiya Lok Dal and Janata Party. These allegations were o- very
serious nature. Charan Singh was accused even of accepting money from the industrialists and of its misuse.

On April 1, 1967 Charan Singh left the Congress and was elected leader of SVD. In a letter to Smt. Indira Gandhi, he explained his reasons for leaving the party. In September, 1968, Charan Singh formed the Bhartiya Kranti Dal. It was a party which tried to project an alternative to both capitalism and socialism. The alternative was to be within the broad framework of Gandhian thought. The basic principles were enunciated in a brochure "Aims and Principles of Bharatiya Kranti Dal" published in amended form in 1973.

It was declared in 11 articles that "the BKD does not believe either in a system known as capitalism under which individuals enjoy unrestricted freedom to exploit the economic needs of others or in a system known as socialism or communism, under which the state possesses an unlimited power to curb or take away the economic freedom of entire people. The BKD believe in the middle Gandhian path, an economy based overwhelmingly on self employment. It believed in a system of private property where exploitation is reduced to minimum, if not eliminated altogether. In BKD's view democracy is found

upon the ownership of property. Indeed a wide dispersion of property is the only assurance that democracy is safe. There can be no democracy in a system where only few individuals at the top, i.e. the rulers or politicians own or control everything, where political and economic powers are vested in the same hands."

The most important factor which marked off the BKD from other political parties was its view about the method of political agitations. It was the most significant contribution of Charan Singh to the political methodology of those days. Unfortunately this was diluted later where BKD dissolved itself to take the form of BLD and still further when it went to form the Janata Party. This change was due to the influence of SSP a group which gave top priority to political agitations of a different sort.

The articles of BKD (published) stated: "The BKD stands for the preservation and strengthening of democracy and of the rule of law in the country and will not tolerate anything that injures it. It does not believe in such political agitations and propagandas as designed to promote breach of law. Such methods are bound to foster disrespect for law in the minds of people and eventually pave the way for dictatorship." In fact the last sentence proved to be prophetic when in 1975 such
methods were adopted, and led to the kind of events which culminated in the declaration of emergency. It goes to the credit of Charan Singh that he maintained this view in the subsequent years also. Although, to accommodate various political groups he had to drop this from the declared policy of the new organization which he formed or of which he was the main architect. Had he insisted on his methodology and were he to succeed in bringing round others to accept it, the history of India would have been different and events which took place would not have taken place at all.

6. Jayaprakash Narayan Movement

The BLD had not joined the J.P Movement as it wanted to keep its identity of a Parliamentary opposition party. The BLD National Executive, which met in June 1975, decided not to join the J.P. Movement but emphasized the need of Uniting the opposition parties and challenging the ruling party (the Congress(N)) to hold elections. It was felt that this course would enable the democratic opposition to capture power at the centre and in the States also.¹

On June 21, 22 and 23, 1975 just 3 days before the declaration of Emergency, the Working Committee of the BLD, Congress(O), Jana Sangh and Socialist Party met jointly.²

¹ Brahm Dutt, _Op.cit._, p.10
² _Ibid._
Charan Singh made a strong plea for forming a new party and dissolving the old ones. He said that this was the only course open. Morarji Desai, who had presided over the meeting, disagreed. He was in favour of Gujarat type Morcha. He claimed that the Morcha experiment had been successful in Gujarat could succeed elsewhere also. The Jana Sangh leaders were reluctant to dissolve their party but were ready to join a federal structure.

The Socialist Party President George Fernandes was against any party merger. He pleaded that political parties are formed on the basis of ideologies and the ideologies can not merge. He was all for a United Struggle. The meeting ended without reaching an agreement. This was the greatest tragedy that could happen to a country. Had the opposition parties agreed to form a joint front to challenge the ruling party to hold elections, things would have been different. Electoral chaos would not have resulted in the type of confrontation that developed. Instead of adopting this course on the 26 June, 1975 a Sancharsh Samiti was formed to launch a struggle for the removal of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi. Charan Singh did not attend any meeting of the opposition leaders after the 2nd June 1975. On June 25, 1975 Jayaprakash Narain, Morarji Desai, Nanaji Deshmukh, Asoka Mehta and others came to the U.P. Niwas in Delhi where Charan Singh was staying. The
announcement for the formation of Sangharsh Samiti and launching a satyagraha at New Delhi was made, although, the satyagraha was of a very limited nature. Some of them, particularly Nanaji Deshmukh and Raj Narain were of the view that the scope of struggle could be widened and it could take the shape of a national struggle to oust the Prime Minister. Deshmukh said that 10 Lakh RSS Swayan sewaks were ready to join the struggle. The rallies were held in the third week of June 1975.

Here a fact may be mentioned that after the failure of joint meeting of the different working committees to agree on the formation of party, some BLD leaders, particularly Piloo Modi, proposed on June 23, 1975 that the BLD should merge into Congress(O). Brahma Dutt, Lok Dal MLC of U.P., had gone to Lucknow to bring certain papers for Charan Singh. When he returned Charan Singh told him about this proposal. Brahma Dutt was not happy about it. It was felt by all BLD leaders that no useful purpose would be served by their joining the Congress(O). It was decided to call a meeting of the National Executive of the BLD to consider this proposal. This meeting could not be held as the leaders were arrested on June 26, 1975. The proposal to join the Congress(O) was again discussed by the BLD in 1976, but it was not acceptable to the majority.

7. B.L.D. and the Pre-Emergency Movements

During the months April to August, 1974 attempts to form a democratic opposition to the ruling party were continued. Talks were held with the leaders of the Congress(O), Jana Sangh, D.M.K. and others. These attempts met with a partial success and resulted in the formation of the Bharatiya Lok Dal. The B.L.D. was inaugurated on August 29, 1974. On August 25 just 3 days before the decision of BKD to take the form of BLDO, Jaya Prakash Narayan visited Lucknow. He inaugurated a Youth and Students Conference. Charan Singh, Raj Narain, C.B. Gupta and Nanaji Deshmukh met him. Jaya Prakash advised them to unite and lead the youth and students in a movement. He told them that there was a lot of enthusiasm in the young men and if all the leaders rose above party politics, success could be achieved.

On August 18 and 19, 1974 the Congress(O) decided to launch a movement against corruption and the rising prices in U.P. The Congress(O) also considered the formation of the BLDO. The Congress(O) leaders were of the view that if the BLDO makes satisfactory progress the Congress(O) should consider to join it, but there was no unanimity about cooperating with other

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
opposition parties.

On October 12, 1974 Charan Singh said at Kanpur that the BLD supports the J.P. Movement in Bihar, but for the present the BLD will give top priority to the organization. He was not for joining or starting a Bihar type movement in U.P. On October 13, 1974, the Executive Committee of the U.P. BLD met at Lucknow. It was decided to hold demonstrations on the December 5, 1974 against the rising prices, unemployment and famine conditions in U.P. Raj Narain wanted the BLD to join the struggle of total revolution. He appealed to all opposition parties to join the BLD, but neither the opposition parties nor BLD itself was influenced by his views. Raj Narain issued an 11-point charter of demands drafted by him. The demands were:

1. All political, economic and moral corruption should end;
2. Unemployed people should be given employment or allowance;
3. Essential commodities should be available at cheaper rates;
4. The price of sugarcane should be Rs. 20 per quintal and the price of sugar should not exceed Rs. 300/- per quintal;
5. The price of paddy to be paid to the farmer should not be less than Rs. 100/- per quintal. There should

2. *The Times of India*, New Delhi, Oct 14, 1974
be a just balance in the prices of the agricultural products and the goods manufactured by factories;

(vi) Enhanced rate of land revenue and electricity should be withdrawn;

(vii) The ordinance about the electoral expenses should be withdrawn;

(viii) All the adults attaining the age of 18 years should be given right to vote;

(ix) Education, medicine, manure and water should be inexpensive;

(x) The Educational and electoral system should be completely changed; and

(xi) There should be no firing on the unarmed people.

On November 25, 1974 a Conference of opposition parties was held in New Delhi presided over by Charan Singh.1 It was decided to extend the J.P. Movement to the whole country. After this Conference an impression was created that BLD had joined the J.P. Movement. But it was not a fact. To remove this impression, Shri Krishna Bajpai, General Secretary of the U.P. State BLD issued a circular which expressed the views of the party. It was stated in the circular that the J.P. Movement would cause public awakening but partyless democracy of which J.P. was talking was not possible in the country in the circumstances that prevailed at that time. J.P. has not accepted the

request made by Charan Singh to lead the new party. On the one hand he was challenging Indira Gandhi to hold elections and on the other he was hesitating to lead a national party.

The Executive Committee of U.P. State BLD met on January 28, 1975 and decided to celebrate "Save Democracy Day". It decided to warn the people about "the coming danger and to act in a manner which might save democracy in the country." In this programme also, the BLD decided to go alone.¹

On March 6, 1975 the BLD participated in the demonstration held in New Delhi under the leadership of Jaya Prakash Narayan.² Several opposition parties participated in this demonstration. They submitted a memorandum to the President of India in which they demanded dissolution of the Bihar Assembly. The memorandum included the demands that the provisions of Emergency, MISA, DIR and other such provisions as were against the freedom of the citizens should be repealed. Students, teachers and the non-teaching staff should be allowed to form their own unions. The workers of public sector should be given a right to organize their unions. There were certain other economic demands also.

¹. The Statesman, New Delhi, Jan 29, 1975
². Naik, AJ. The Great Janata Revolution, Chand & Comp. New Delhi, 1977. p. 29
After the 2-day meeting of BLD National Executive, a resolution was passed that Indira Gandhi had no moral right to continue as the Prime Minister after the Allahabad High Court Judgement.

On June 26, 1975 Charan Singh was arrested under MISA from U.P. Niwas, New Delhi.¹ This news was not much shocking under the prevailing circumstances. People were so demoralized that there was no sign of any protest or agitation. People seemed to be quite apathetic, business was normal and people were going to their offices as usual. No excitement was visible in the buses and taxis.

In the fourth week of July 1975 the Legislative Council and the Assembly of U.P. met.² On July 30, 1975, Brahm Dutt (member of U.P. Legislative Council) wrote a letter to the Chairman of the Legislative Council informing him that the BLD Jana Sangh and Congress(0) had decided to boycot the session because of the restriction imposed on their functioning.³

3. Ibid.
8. Opposition Parties in Disarray

In the meantime, several meetings of the opposition parties in the U.P Legislature were called to discuss the steps to be taken. The legislators were not ready even to forgo their D.A. and they advanced the argument that in the Parliament also, the opposition members had decided to go to the House so that they could draw their D.A., but would not participate in the proceedings. Brahmi Dutt opposed this. By going to the House and drawing D.A., their participation would be on record. Majority of the BLD members, who were outside the jails were of the view that they should issue a statement condemning the declaration of Emergency and the arrests clarifying at the same time that the BLD was functioning as a responsible opposition party and had nothing to do with the alleged subversive activities. There was so much confusion among the leaders and legislators that no regular resolution could be passed.

The Jana Sangh legislators were panicky and they did not want to cooperate with allied parties. Nobody could persuade the president and the secretary of the BLD to convene a meeting of the State Executive. All the time the president, Bhanupratap Singh who was a member of the Rajya Sabha, was staying at Delhi. He was trying to contact Congress MPs and
was in search of a solution. Nobody paid any attention to him. The meeting was fixed for August 24, 1975. In the meantime, there was no organized protest against the arrest of Charan Singh and others. Shri Krishna Bajpai (Party Secretary) offered satyagraha at Kanpur with some of his friends and this was repeated at a few more places. Generally the response from the party workers was very poor. They were not ready to associate with these activities. It is strange that the districts of Meerut and Muzaffarnagar were also without any sign of commotion. Charan Singh publicly rebuked the people when they came out of jail for this apathy. During this period C.B. Gupta also, who was very outspoken in his criticism of the Government, could not give any line of action.

On August 15, 1975, Brahm Dutt addressed a few meetings in Dehradun district. The C.I.D. had received instructions to watch his activities but they did not interfere with his movements. There he met important workers of the opposition parties, but could not inspire them for any demonstration of protest. He returned to Lucknow on 18 August. Later on he was told that if he had travelled by train on 23 August, he would have been apprehended as there were instructions to arrest him at Dehradun.  

The saddest experience was to come on August 24, 1975 when the State Executive of U.P., BLD was to meet. The meeting was to be held in the Royal Hotel in the room of Kali Charan, an MLA, who was one of the secretaries of the party. The meeting was to commence at 10.00 a.m. but the BLD President who had come from Delhi, did not turn up even till 11.30 a.m. He had somehow received the information that he might be arrested so he was quietly sitting in the house of the Party treasurer. This gentleman also preferred to remain in hiding in the house of a Congress leader and did not dare to contact members waiting for meeting. Police officers and C.I.D. had arrived at the Hotel by 10 in the morning. Most of the party members were so frightened that even the secretary in whose room the meeting was to be held, was seen leaving the Royal Hotel through a back door. He was not ready for arrest. At about 12.00 noon, Jagdish Narain Saxena and MLA, Smt. Gayatri Devi (Mrs. Charan Singh) and Brahro Dutt were arrested. When all the three come out of the Hotel, a message was received that Smt. Gayatri Devi was not to be arrested. Both Brahro Dutt and Jagdish Narain Saxena were taken to Hazrat Ganj Kotwali. But to their surprise, they found the BLD President and Treasurer of the party already there. In the afternoon, all of them were taken to the cantonment station where a magistrate noted their statements and served them with a notice.
On the same night they were shifted to the District Jail, Lucknow. Smt. Gayatri Devi was released the next day probably on the intervention of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. There were about 100 people in a compound known as 'reformatory'. Out of them, 60 belonged to RSS and its different front organizations the rest of them were from BLD, Congress(O) and Socialist Party. A few Anand Margis and Jamat-e-Islami people were also there.

In the Jail the most shocking and surprising thing was that the relations among the political prisoners were very much strained. The prisoners, who were practically in confrontation with each other, were divided into two camps. In one camp were the RSS and some BLD men, the other camp consisted of the majority of BLD leaders and members of Congress(O) and the Socialist party. The differences were mostly personal. There were complaints that the RSS men were so much demoralized that most of them had sent written apologies.1

There were regular meetings in the jail for discussing different topics. The RSS men, Anand Margis and Jamat-e-Islami people had their own gatherings. While the Anand Margis and Jamat-e-Islami people were more concerned with their religious functions, the RSS people regularly had their separate discussions.

The general feeling was that they considered the Congress raj to be a Ravana raj. In their opinion the non-RSS opposition leaders were like vibhishana who belonged to the same family. They thought that merely replacing the Ravana raj with Vibhishan raj was not enough; what was required was to establish Ram raj. This could come only through the RSS. Most of the non-RSS persons were of the opinion that adjustment with these elements was not possible.¹

During August 1975, prisoners detained in jails were becoming anxious to be released. RSS men had already made attempts to obtain their release. It was decided to file habeas corpus applications in the High Court, so that the petitioners might have an opportunity of going out of the jail. After the Supreme Court judgement that such applications could not be entertained and after the President's order suspending fundamental rights, these petitions were suspended in January and February, 1976. Although some of the hard core supported the action of Jana Sangharsh Samiti and the other groups, the majority was in favour of suspension of such activities, as these activities were merely prolonging the detention period.

On October 15, 1976 the Jana Sangharsh Samiti gave a call for Satyagraha.² Satya Pal Malik who offered Satyagrah in

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¹ Brahmi Dutt, Œop.cit., p.18
² The Statesman, New Delhi, Oct 16, 1976
Garh Mukteshwar fair in Meerut district was detained in Fatehgarh jail but later on transferred to Tihar Jail where Charan Singh was detained. But Charan Singh was released on March 7, 1976.

On December 1, 1975 Brahm Dutt was transferred to Varanasi Central jail. Since he had to appear before the High Court, in January he was transferred to Lucknow. In Varanasi jail there were about 70 or 80 detenus, where the atmosphere was similar to that of Lucknow. In Model jail Lucknow there were about 40 detenus who were divided into two groups - the RSS group and the non-RSS group.

One of the close associates of Jaya Prakash and convenor of the Sangharsh Samiti, Mahavir Bhai was also in this jail. He was also not adverse to the idea of reconciliation. N.G. Gora and H.M. Patel, who were leaders of opposition groups in the Parliament were making attempts in this direction. They had decided not to boycott the Parliament Session and wrote some letters to Mrs. Indira Gandhi. On January 11, 1976 N.G. Gora wrote to Mrs. Indira Gandhi. She asked the opposition to abandon the path of obstruction and violence and to create an atmosphere helpful cooperation for a dialogue.

On February 15, 1976 Mrs. Indira Gandhi gave a call at Bharatpur. She asked the opposition parties to follow the path of democracy so that democratic system could function in the country. A large majority of the people detained in the jails were in favour of a national reconciliation. Only a hard core opposed it. People started becoming disillusioned about J.P.'s capacity to find out a solution. This was the atmosphere by the end of February, 1976.

In March 1976 elections to the Rajya Sabha were declared. Bhanu Pratap Singh, an MLA was one of the candidates of the BLD. After assurance from the then Chief Minister of U.P., N.D. Tewari that Bhanu Pratap Singh would not be arrested and Charan Singh would be provided a shadow of his choice, they participated in elections. All the BLD leaders were elected to the Rajya Sabha. Most of the opposition candidates were outside the jail and those who were inside the jail were allowed to vote by postal ballot. One Jana Sangh nominee was also elected.

The Congress(O), although it had only 8 members in the Assembly, did put up a candidate. The BLD, Jana Sangh and Congress(O) decided to vote together on a set pattern. Subse-

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Also see Pandit, C.S., End of An Era, (The Rise and Fall of Indira Gandhi), Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1977, p.93
quently it was discovered that the actual voting that took place was against the spirit of the agreement. But inspite of this, the results were as expected. Several meetings took place attended by the representatives of BLD, Congress(O) and Jana Sangh. The Socialist Party had only 2 members in the Assembly and both of them were in prison. These 4 parties decided to form a united group inside the U.P. Legislature. Charan Singh was elected as the leader of that group, and Brahm Dutt was the leader of the united group in the U.P. Legislative Council. This group was called Lok Paksh.\(^1\) Formation of Lok Paksh was described as another step towards the opposition unity.

On March 20 and 21, 1976 Jaya Prakash Narain invited leaders of opposition parties. It was decided to form a new party. A Steering Committee was appointed to draft the policy and programmes. The Committee drafted 'Approach Paper'. In fact, some talks had already started in Tihar jail. On April 4, 1976 the BLD appointed a Sub-Committee to consider this draft.\(^2\) An alternate draft was sent and Charan Singh suggested that the Lok Sangharsh Samiti movement should be withdrawn for the formation of an alternative party. The Acting General Secretary forwarded the draft to the Convenor of the Steering Committee, together with a copy of Charan Singh's reaction to 'Approach paper'.

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When the leaders of the four parties again met in Bombay on 22, 23 May, 1976, surprisingly there was no talk or discussion either on the Approach Paper or the alternative draft prepared by the BLD. In fact no other party had in any manner communicated its reaction to any of the two papers. At the last moment, on May 23, 1976 when the BLD leaders were about to leave they were assured that their ideas had been or would be incorporated in the Approach Paper. It was on this assurance that the BLD leaders agreed to the launching of the New Party by Jayaprakash Narain. They made it clear that the joining of Lok Dal in the New Party was conditional on merger of other parties.

On July 8, 1976 Jayaprakash Narayan announced the formation of a new party in the presence of Charan Singh, Bhanu Pratap Singh, Brahm Dutt (all BLD), Asoka Mehta, Manubhai Patel, (Congress(O), N.G. Gorey (Socialist), O.P. Tyagi and Sat Prakash (Bharatiya Jana Sangh). ¹

On November 8, 1976 Charan Singh wrote a letter to Jayaprakash Narayan that he himself should take initiative to launch a new party and should ask the existing parties to join it. ² On November 13 and 14, 1976 representatives of BLD, Congress(O), Jana Sangh and Socialist Party met Jayaprakash

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2. Ibid.
Narayan at Patna. No concrete result could be achieved in that meeting also.¹

In the first week of November, 1976, there was some correspondence between Asoka Mehta Congress(O) and the BLD leaders in which chairman Charan Singh wanted BLD to join Congress(O). The Socialist party was also approached for joining Congress(O) along with the BLD. Only the Jana Sangh was to be kept out. O.P. Tyagi of Jana Sangh told Jayaprakash Narayan that the Jana Sangh would not accept Charan Singh as the leader of the new party. He suggested the name of Justice Hegde for the chairmanship. Another important meeting of BLD National Executive was held on January 13 and 14, 1977 to discuss the political situation.²

On January 16, 1977 it was announced by Mrs. Indira Gandhi that the Lok Sabha elections would be held in March.³ She advised the President to dissolve the Lok Sabha and order the elections. Emergency was relaxed. Mrs. Indira Gandhi in her broadcast on January 18, 1977 assured the political parties that they would be able to place their point of view before the electorate. She told her cabinet colleagues on the same day that the process of democracy must have its way and that

¹. *The Statesman*, New Delhi, November 15, 1976
all parties must go back to the people who are the real masters. The information about the Lok Sabha Elections was also given to the Chief Ministers who met in New Delhi, the same day. In her broadcast the Prime Minister told the Nation that the conduct of business was possible only if people lived by codes and norms of behaviour. None should imperil the welfare of any section of the people or safety of the Nation. "If India is to live and prosper, there will have to be no preaching of hatred, no practicing of violence, no encouragement of subversive activities or lowering of standards of public life." Emphasising the supremacy of the people she said: "We strongly believe the Parliamentary government must report back to the people and seek sanction from them to carry out programmes and policies for Nation's strength and welfare." She declared her unshakable faith in the power of the people.

On January 13, 1977 the AICC(O) informed the BLD leaders on joining move of both the parties and that it would amend its constitution. ¹ Asoka Mehta would resign from the chairmanship of Congress(O) and Charan Singh would be elected its chairman.

For this the BLD suggested that the AICC(O) should adopt a resolution electing Charan Singh its chairman and dissolving itself and the State and district units. The newly elected

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chairman should be authorised to nominate a new Working Committee, new AICC and new units at state and district level. Only then the BLD will have its proper place in that organization otherwise the BLD people will remain merely ordinary members. As some of the BLD leaders expected, the Congress(O) was not ready for it.

On January 18, 1977, Lok Sabha elections were declared. The President of India dissolved the Fifth Lok Sabha the next day. The opposition leaders were yet undecided about their future move. After the declaration of elections and dissolution of Lok Sabha, Leaders of the 4 non-communist parties began exploring the possibility of their merger. The first meeting was held at Morarji Desai's house, where it was felt that even if regular merger is not possible after dissolving those old parties the opposition should unite to contest the elections.

On January 20, 1977, the BLD, Congress(O), Jana Sangh and Socialist party decided to set up a Committee to contest the elections jointly. Morarji Desai started acting as the opposition leader and decided for opposition parties to contest election in the name of Janata Party. On the same day the

2. Ibid.
Government declared suspension of Emergency and issued instructions to the state governments to speed up the release of political detenus. Public meetings and normal political activities were to be allowed. On January 22, the socialist party Executive met in New Delhi and decided to join the Janata Party.

On January 23, 1977 the Janata Party was launched with Morarji Desai as chairman and Charan Singh as Deputy Chairman.¹

Here it may be pointed out that all through the opposition parties failed to unite into a responsible, responsive, credible and viable alternative to the ruling party on their own, the declaration of elections united them. The basis of the unity was not a common ideology but political expediency. The elections put this heterogenous group in power. The Congress had been assigned the role of opposition by the electorate.

The Janata Party was formally inaugurated on the May 1, 1977.² Soon after the formal inauguration of the party the 'Congress for Democracy' led by Jagjivan Ram also announced its decision to merge itself with the Janata Party. Chandra Shekhar was elected as the new president of the party.

² Ibid.
The Janata Party gave a remarkable performance both in the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. It secured 345 seats out of 539 seats. In the U.P. Assembly out of 423 seats, the Janata secured 350 seats, Congress 46 seats, CPI 9, CPM 1, Independents and others secured 16 seats.

The Janata Party interpreted its victory at the Centre as a defeat of the Congress and a challenge to the moral right of Congress to continue to rule the Northern States. As most of these Assemblies had already completed their term of five years (though their term had been extended to six years under the 42nd Amendment), the Janata Party thought it desirable to seek the verdict of the people. The Union Home Minister requested the Chief Ministers of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal to advise their Governors to dissolve the Legislative Assemblies and order fresh elections. But when the Chief Ministers of these nine States refused to oblige the Janata Party, the Government decided to invoke Article 356. Without the recommendation of Governors of these States, the President of India dissolved these Assemblies.

2. Ibid., p. 443