CHAPTER II

ROLE OF THE CONGRESS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR
(1939-1942)

It became clear by the beginning of 1939 that the gathering Second World War clouds in Britain would engulf India too. Gandhi sensed in the dismal development a danger for Indian progress. There were exchanges of ideas as to what stand India should take if the Britishers plunged into the war and forced India too into it. Would it be right to insist that India participate in the war efforts only on the promise of grant of freedom? Or even if denied the rights of self-government would it not be the duty of Indians to make the positive contribution of defending a democracy like the U.K., even though it was a colonial power? The irksome details over the role that the Congress should play if war broke out were gone over and over by Indian political leaders.

The Congress Working Committee decided that the Congress Ministries should quit. This was the natural reaction to the unilateral declaration, (without taking into confidence the national leaders of India) of the U.K that India was at war with Germany. Treating India as if it were an appendage of Britain was repugnant to Indian self-respect. The Nationalists fully sympathised with the cause of Britain and earnestly desired to be
of help in fighting Fascism. But it irked them in no small measure to be pushed into a war, however righteous it would be without being given the right to steer the course of the war as an equal partner with other nations fighting on the side of democracy.

Consequently, by a resolution the All India Congress Committee recommended the resignation of Congress Ministries in eight provinces, of which Madras was one. At the meeting of the Legislative Assembly held on 26 October, 1939, Rajaji, the then Premier, moved a resolution which regretted that India had been made to participate in the war without her consent. Rajaji tendered the resignation which was a moving appeal to the common sense of the Raj to concede the demands of the Congress and thereby make it possible for Indians to collaborate in the war effort. He attacked the British for their failure to explain their


2 Confidential Fortnightly Report of the Chief Secretary to the Home Secretary, (F.R), Government of India, Home Pol. p.4-20, 3 November, 1939, TA.

war aims. On 30th, as no other party was in a position to form a Ministry, the Governor issued a proclamation under Section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935. When he declared that he had assumed the powers of the Legislature and appointed three members of the Civil Service to be his advisers, Congressmen were happy as he did not appoint an interim ministry. The opposition parties too were happy that the Congress Ministry went out of office.

4 MLAD, Vol.XIV, 26 October, 1939.
5 Ibid., p.125.
6 Ibid.
7 Erskine Papers, India Record Office, MSS, EUR.D.596, File 17, NA (Microfilm) On 29 October, 1939.

Erskine wrote to Linlithgow:

"I have this morning seen Kumararaja Muthiah Chettiyar, the leader of the opposition in the Madras Assembly who informed me that it would not be possible for him to accept my invitation to form a ministry. I have also seen various other leading politicians and it has become quite obvious that it will not be possible to obtain an alternative Ministry in Madras in the near future. This being the case I see no point in prolonging discussions and propose to accept the resignation of my Congress ministers at 11 A.M. tomorrow Monday, 30 October. I therefore now formally request your consent on the issue of a Proclamation under Section 93 of the Government of India Act." To assuage Linlithgow, Governor-General, he added: "I shall therefore if possible come to a private agreement, with C.R. that I shall do nothing to make difficult for him to return as Premier in a week or two so long as he keeps his own people quiet for that period."
During the war years Rajaji displayed more qualities of statesmanship than of political manipulations. A.R.H. Copley explains the stand of Rajaji during that period thus:

"His sovereign concern was national defence. For its sake, he did everything possible to effect a war-time collaboration between Raj and Congress. Somewhat rashly, he came to argue that Congress should accept office and decide the terms later."

Rajaji's political armoury, however was quite inadequate for his task. He put a great deal of faith in the Congress Legislature party. He was treated with great suspicion by the Raj and the Congress alike. Rajaji's standing in the party had always been dependent on his friendship with Gandhi. But their views markedly diverged during the war, and Rajaji's political isolation in these years was increasingly felt. Those who were politically opposed to Rajaji in Madras took this opportunity to oppose Rajaji in his endeavour to help the Raj in its war efforts. They sincerely followed Gandhi which resulted in stronger

opposition to Rajaji. Their personal conflict was thus mixed up with a new kind of ideological dimension.

Gandhi was adamantly opposed to any reacceptance of office and felt that the future of the party lay in its return to some form of Civil Disobedience. He also saw that his belief in non-violence had no substance if he were now to abandon it for the sake of national defence. Rajaji was by then a convinced dependent of office acceptance. He was not convinced of another Civil Disobedience Movement at that stage. He believed that national defence should take precedence over the interests of the party.

Factions in the Tamilnadu Congress Presidential Election of 1940

Against the backdrop of war-time development, the Tamilnadu Congress Presidential election was conducted in 1940. Satyamurthi wanted to put up Kamaraj for the Presidentship of the TPCC. Congress leaders like C.N. Muthuranga Mudaliar, T.S. Avinasilingam Chettiar and O.P. Ramasamy Reddiar and others wanted to ascertain Rajaji's views with regard to the Presidential election. Rajaji told them that

there was no hurry for taking any decision, for he was
toying with the idea of putting up a non-Brahmin in
whom he had confidence because only a non-Brahmin had
the chances of electoral victory. Rajaji disliked
Kamaraj since he was the supporter of Satyamurthi. 10

On the eve of the Presidential election, Rajaji
went to Satyamurthi’s house, and sounded him about
C.P. Subbiah, a candidate of his choice. Rajaji was
not in favour of Muthuranga Mudaliar or O.P.R. for the
Presidential chair. At the same time he did not want
any member of Satyamurthi’s group to become the
President of the TNCC. Without understanding Rajaji’s
plan Satyamurthi agreed to support Subbiah’s
candidature. Kamaraj continued to be the right hand
man of Satyamurthi and it still remains a mystery as to
why he agreed to Rajaji’s choice or what made him
accept his choice. But from the writings of Kalki it
is evident that even though they were personally or
ideologically opposed to each other Rajaji and
Satyamurthi remained friends. According to Kalki
Rajaji and Satyamurthi were close friends upto 1941.

10 T.S. Chockalingam, op. cit., p.12.
This may probably be the reason for the acceptance of Rajaji's choice by Satyamurthi.\textsuperscript{11}

Satyamurthi had agreed to Rajaji's suggestion without consulting Kamaraj or others.\textsuperscript{12} And when Kamaraj met Satyamurthi, he convinced Satyamurthi not to support Rajaji's candidate. Though he had agreed to Rajaji's suggestion earlier, Satyamurthi later informed Rajaji that he could not support Subbiah.\textsuperscript{13}

Subbiah was not even a member of the Provincial Congress Committee at that time. But Rajaji went ahead with his choice and forced the issue of Presidential election.\textsuperscript{14} Kamaraj's name for the Presidentship was proposed by Annamalai Pillai at the election for the Presidentship held at Theagaraya Nagar, Madras. Muthuranga Mudaliar proposed Subbiah. Kamaraj won by securing 103 votes as against 100 votes of his rival. Rajaji's candidate was thus defeated.

\begin{thebibliography}{14}
\bibitem{12} T.S. chockalingam, \textit{op. cit.}, p.21.
\bibitem{13} Kavirathna Kanchi Amilthan, \textit{Perumtalaivar Baktavatsalam}, (The Great Leader Baktavatsalam), (Madras, 1964), p.103.
\bibitem{14} \textit{The Mail}, 15 February, 1940.
\end{thebibliography}
particular against India's participation in the war that was on.\textsuperscript{17}

As per the decision of the AICC, the TNCC transformed itself into the 'Satyagraha Council' and proceeded with the plan of Individual Satyagraha. By the end of the year 1940 Individual Satyagraha had been pursued in the city of Madras and in eight districts. The actual date for commencing the Satyagraha varied from district to district.\textsuperscript{18} The method adopted was either delivering letters to selected persons, usually members of District War Committees, urging them to refrain from assisting British war efforts or shouting slogans of a similar nature.\textsuperscript{19} The Government in the first twelve weeks of the campaign in Madras arrested fifty-six people including thirty-one MLAs and two MLCs. They arrested included Rajaji and Satyamurthi.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} Indian Annual Register, 1940, Vol.II, pp.212-13.

\textsuperscript{18} F.R. Home Pol. p.4-7, 18 April, 1940, TA.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p.4-22, 11 December, 1940, TA.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
Satyamurthi, on his release wrote a letter to Gandhi on 27 August, 1941 to indicate the trend of Satyagraha.

"As the movement is more or less a symbolic one to vindicate the principle of non-violence, it should be confined to very select satyagrahis in whom you have fullest confidence. I regret to say that in Madras the latest situation has not been happy. I am very keen that the activities on the Parliamentary front should be begun again. Among Congressmen themselves, I believe that overwhelming majority accept this view. A noisy minority is against this view, Largely consisting of a few satyagrahis who have returned from jail but who have no intention of going back at all."²¹

That the movement was losing the momentum was recognised by the Congress party leaders themselves and attempts were made to give a new turn to the form of Satyagraha.²² The policy of refraining from arresting any Satyagrahi who was not a person of influence was followed by the government assiduously much to the chagrin of the Congress.

By the middle of 1941 many of those who were jailed in the early stages were released. In a number of districts there was such a lull in the movement that

²¹ F.R., p.4-17, 3 September, 1941, TA.

²² F.R. Home Pol., p.4-10, 18 May, 1941, TA.
only few old Satyagrahis who had been ignored by the government were active.\textsuperscript{23} The system of removing the more important Congress organisers from the scene to jail and of ignoring unimportant Satyagrahis was continued with success by the Government.\textsuperscript{24}

Acharya Kripalani, the General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee came down to Tamilnadu to give directions and to revive their sagging enthusiasm. He conferred with Rajaji who was in the Trichy Central Jail. This incident proved that, though Kamaraj was the President of the TNCC he had not yet received as much recognition as Rajaji from the High Command.\textsuperscript{25}

During August-September 1941 when the Movement was completely at a standstill, Satyamurthi publicly urged that Congress should resume office in the provinces, as the public interest in the Satyagraha had completely died. Congressmen began to discuss actively the suggestion of Satyamurthi to return to office.

\textsuperscript{23} F.R., Home Pol., p.4-12, 18 June, 1941, TA.

\textsuperscript{24} Letter No.2032, 17 September, 1941, Public (Confidential) Department, TA.

\textsuperscript{25} AICC File No.P. 18/1940-42, NMML.
C.R. Srinivasan, Editor of *Swadesamitran*, a Tamil daily, in a speech at Salem vigorously supported Satyamurthi's plea and urged that the Congress should take up office once again.\(^26\) At a Congress meeting at Tiruvannamalai in the North Arcot District, one Assembly member who had been released just then from jail was reported to have said that it was time for the Congress leaders to reconsider the continuance of the Satyagraha.\(^27\)

**Japanese Invasion of South**

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, in Hawaii, the European war became a global war. British strongholds in South East Asia began to fall into Japanese hands one by one. The security of the Indian sub-continent was perceived to be at danger. "India was threatened", Churchill recorded, "for the first time under British rule with large scale foreign invasion by an Asiatic Power."\(^28\) Rajaji formulated his

\(^{26}\) F.R. Home Pol., p.4-18, 21 September, 1941, TA.

\(^{27}\) Ibid.

policies against the background of the threat of a Japanese invasion of South India.

The Government's release of Satyagrahis in November and December, 1941 was the occasion for Gandhi summoning an important meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Bardoli on 23 December, 1941. The following resolution was passed at Bardoli:

"While there has been no change in Britain's policy towards India the Working Committee must nevertheless take into full consideration the new world situation that has arisen by the development of the war into a world conflict and its approach to India. The sympathies of the Congress must inevitably with the peoples who are the subject of aggression and who are fighting for their freedom, but only a free and independent India can be in a position to undertake the defence of the country on a national basis and be of help in the furtherance of the larger causes that are emerging from the storm of war."29

After the Bardoli meeting the TNCC Working Committee met on January 8, 1942 at the 'Congress Home' in Teynampet, Madras under the Presidentship of Kamaraj in which 16 members of the Working Committee were present. Rajaji was also present by special invitation. The TNCW Committee unanimously welcomed

the resolution of the AICC Working Committee which met at Bardoli on 23 December 1941 and decided to suspend the Satyagraha. At a meeting of the MLCP the decision of the CWC at Bardoli was once again approved, but Prakasam and a few members from Andhra expressed their dissent.

Congress formed protection committees, ostensibly to work in collaboration with the Police and the Armed Reserve Police and Rajaji embarked on a tour to persuade the South that only 'a popular Government could effectively deal with the war situation'. Rajaji addressed several public meetings. He was reported by the Government as follows:

"His main demand for independence was that Britain was no longer in a position to defend the country. He also suggested that it would be impossible for the Government to function in villages and that it was the duty of the Congressmen to organise villages on the basis of self-sufficiency."

In view of the cooperative attitude of the Congress and the grave danger to the defence of the

30 The Mail, 8 January, 1942.

31 F.R. Home Pol. F18/1/43, 23 January, 1942, NA.

32 Ibid.
Empire, the political situation was discussed by the War Cabinet. Churchill and almost all his colleagues felt that efforts should be made to break the political deadlock. It was decided to make an offer of Dominion Status after the war to the people of India "in the most impressive manner", and to send Sir Stafford Cripps to India "to conduct direct discussion on the spot with the leaders of all Indian parties and communities." On March 11, Churchill made the announcement regarding the Cripps Mission.33

Cripps Mission and TNCC

Cripps arrived in Delhi on 22 March, and soon after, started conferring with leaders of various parties. There was nothing very new and really substantial in what Cripps offered. While the Congress demanded changes in the governmental system immediately, Cripps's proposals laid emphasis only on the future. On 11 April, the CWC adopted a resolution rejecting the Cripps proposals. Towards the end of April the AICC met at Allahabad and confirmed what the CWC had decided, viz. that it was impossible for Congress to "consider any schemes or proposals which retained even a partial measure of British control in

33 A.C. Kapur, op. cit., p.320.
India". The Cripps mission failed, and on 12 April he left for London by air.34

After the failure of the Cripps Mission the political situation in India deteriorated. The most important change was Rajaji's attempts at seeking an agreement with the Muslims and restoring popular government in the former Congress-governed Provinces. Rajaji's reaction to the failure of the Cripps Mission was reported by Linlithgow thus:

"I have seen Rajagopalachari, Srinivasan and Subbaroyan, and they are all very upset and say that Congress have made a fatal mistake. Rajagopalachariar was most reasonable on the whole although blaming Cripps for the breakdown, most unfairly I think. However, he was all for office acceptance, and he is going to break away from the Central Committee here."35

Just after the departure of the Cripps Mission from India, the MLCP met on April 23, 1942, under the presidency of Rajaji at Madras.36 About 80 members of the Party including T.S.S. Rajan, Subbaroyan, Munuswami Pillai, Prakasam, B. Gopal Reddi, A.


36 Indian Express, 24 April, 1942; The Mail, 24 April, 1942; Nicholas Mansergh, op. cit., Vol.II, p.842.
Kaleeswara Rao, K. Koti Reddi, Bulusu Sambamurthi, M. Bakthavatsalam, Mrs. Rukmini Lakshmipathi were present. Mrs. Radhabai Subbaroyan, Santhanam, T.S. Avinasilingam, Muthuranga Mudaliar, Anantasayanam Aiyangar, Members of the Central Legislature and seven office bearers of the various District Committees were also present on invitation.

National Government and Association with Muslim League

The failure of the Cripps mission and the approaching menace of the Japanese invasion were fresh in the minds of the members who were determined to find a way out of the impasse. The proceedings were carried on in camera.\(^{37}\) Rajaji sprung a surprise on the members of the MLCP when he brought forward a resolution recommending to the AICC that the All India Muslim League’s demand for separation from a united India might be acknowledged and that the League might be invited for consultations for arriving at an agreement for securing the installation of a National

\(^{37}\) *Indian Express*, 24 April, 1942.
Government to meet the national emergency.\textsuperscript{38}

When the resolutions were passed the attendance was very thin. No individual notice of the meeting

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\textit{F.R. Home Pol. p.4-9, 12 May, 1942, TA; Rajendra Prasad Papers, 24/42, S.No.33, p.53, NA.}
\end{flushright}

\textbf{Rajaji’s Resolutions}

His two resolutions read as follows:

1) The Madras Legislature Congress Party notes with deep regret that the attempts to establish a National Government for India to enable her to face the problems arising out of the present grave situation have failed and that as a result of this Nationalist India has been placed in a dilemma. It is impossible for the people to think in terms of neutrality or passivity during an invasion of an enemy power. Neither is it practicable to organise an effective defence measure of the Government. It is absolutely and urgently necessary in the best interests of the country at this hour of peril to do all that Congress can possibly do to remove every obstacle in the way of establishment of a national administration to face the present situation and therefore in as much as the Muslim League has insisted on the recognition of the right of separation of certain areas from United India upon the ascertainment of the wishes of the people of such areas as condition precedent for united national action at this moment of grave national danger, the MCLP is of opinion that to sacrifice the chances of the formation of a National Government at this grave crisis for the doubtful advantage of maintaining a controversy over the unity of India is a most unwise policy and that it has become necessary to choose the lesser evil and acknowledge the Muslim League’s claim for separation should the same be persisted in when the time come for framing a Constitution for India and thereby remove all doubts and fears in this regard and to invite the Muslim League for consultation for the purpose of arriving at an agreement and securing the installation of a National Government to meet the present emergency.
were sent to members. Out of the 190 members of the party only 146 were present at the time of voting. What probably weighed with the members in the final voting was the still attitude of Rajaji who had stated that he would fight the battle at the All India Congress Committee meeting even if the Madras Legislature Congress Party did not give him the authority.

2) Whereas the Province of Madras is seriously threatened with enemy invasions and practically all the districts under daily expectation of bombardment and enemy landings and life is consequently subjected to growing dislocation all round, whereas it is suicidal for the present and disastrous for the future, for the people's elected representatives to remain passive and let the people suffer under these conditions all the incidents of the present autocratic administration and also submit to aggression without participation in the defence of the mother land and whereas participation in defence is practicable only if the people are armed and organised to some extent and inspired for sacrifice, the MCLP voices the general feeling in this part of the country that there should be at this critical juncture a popular Government in this Province doing its utmost to secure the requisite conditions for the people to play their part. The Party is of opinion further that to facilitate united and effective action in this regard by such a popular Government, the Muslim League should be invited to participate in it. This Party therefore requests the AICC to permit this Party to take steps to this end, notwithstanding the general all India policy followed by the Congress.

Indian Express, 24 April, 1942.
The two parts of the resolutions were put to vote separately. The first part was carried, thirty seven voting for and six against while three remained neutral. Thirty nine members voted for the second part and two were against and five members did not vote. Prakasam, immediately after the meeting questioned the propriety of the meeting as no previous notice had been issued to the members. Those who opposed this action of Rajaji, including Prakasam, pointed out that the British Government was not willing to part with power and that any amount of pleasing the Muslim League would not solve the problem and more concessions would only increase the obduracy of the League. Prakasam while narrating the circumstances that led to the voting remarked that Rajaji had done disservice to the country and to himself. He even challenged Rajaji to come out and address the people along with him and explain his stand. Thus again group activities were revived in the Presidency of Madras.

The resolutions and Rajaji’s role were criticised by the national leaders though they had

40 C.R. Reddy Papers, File 67, NMML; Indian Express, 24 April, 1942.

41 Ibid.
respect for Rajaji. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the AICC President in a Press statement remarked: "It greatly astonished and pained me that a man like Rajaji inspite of his being a member of the Compress Working Committee should have adopted such an attitude."42 Rajendra Prasad, Nehru, Purushothama Das Thandon and C.D. Deshmukh also took exception to Rajaji's stand.43 It was felt everywhere that the Congress Legislature Party under the leadership of Rajaji had earned the unenviable distinction of misleading the country and the procedure adopted by the Party was unconstitutional.44

At that time the Nationalist English daily, The Indian Express in its editorial on April 25, 1942 under the caption "A Panicky recommendation" condemned the stand of Rajaji.45 E.V.R. the Justice Party leader felt that the move was yet another hectic attempt by Rajaji to get into office under the cover of a National Government for the defence of the country.46

42 Indian Express, 26 April, 1942.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid., 27 April, 1942.

45 Indian Express, 25 April, 1942.

46 The Liberator, 26, April, 1942.
In a letter to Rajaji the President of the AICC, Maulana Abulkalam Azad wrote:

"The President observed that the resolutions passed by the Madras Legislature were at variance with the declared policy of the Congress. As a responsible member of the Working Committee Sri Rajaji, should have avoided all association with the two resolutions. If he felt strongly on the subject he should have discussed the matter with his colleagues of the Working Committee before giving expression to his views. In the event of his being unable to carry the Working Committee" with him and then propagate his views, Rajagopalachari admitted that knowing as he did the views of colleagues of the Working Committee on the subject, he should have first talked the matter over with them before moving the two resolutions at the Congress Assembly Party in Madras. He was however unable to withdraw the resolutions as they represented his considered views."47

Allahabad Resolution and Resignation of Rajaji

Rajaji resigned from the Working Committee of the AICC so as to have the freedom to argue his case before the AICC General Session at Allahabad during the First week of May.48

47 Congress Bulletin, AICC No.3, 1942,'Satyamur- murthi Papers'.


Letter of Rajaji to Maulana Azad.

Dear Maulana Sahib,

With reference to your observation on the resolutions passed on my motion by the Madras Congress Legislature Party I admit that I should have talked the matter over with you and other colleagues of the Working Committee before moving the resolution, knowing as I did their disagreement on the subject. I write this to express my regret.
Rajaji submitted a resolution for the consideration of the Allahabad meeting of the AICC on May 2, 1942, and it was seconded by Santhanam. Rajaji's resolution which acknowledged the Muslim League's claim for separation was the same as that passed in the MLCP. The First resolution was rejected, 120 voting against and 15 for it. The Second resolution was not even put to vote.

A counter resolution moved by Jagat Narayan Lal, and seconded by Prakasam that, "any proposal to disintegrate India by giving liberty to any component state or territorial unit to secede from the Indian Union or Federation will be highly detrimental to the..."

I have explained to you already how strongly I felt. I believe that I should be failing in my duty if I do not endeavour to get people to think and act in the direction which my conviction leads to. I feel that in the public interest I should move the resolutions already notified by Mr. Santhanam. I desire therefore to request you to permit me to resign my place in the Working Committee.

Let me tender my grateful thanks for the unqualified trust and affection bestowed on me during all these many years that I have served in the Congress.

(Sd.) C. Rajagopalachari.

49 The Hindu, 3 May, 1942; The Indian Express, 3 May, 1942; The Mail, 2 May, 1942; The Indian National Congress Resolutions, 1940-46, p.28 (n.d.,)

50 AICC File No.G22/1942, NMML.
best interests of the people of the different states
and provinces and the country as a whole, and the
Congress cannot agree to any such proposal" was, passed
by 92 voting for and 17 against.\(^5\) In a letter
addressed to Satyamurthi, the AICC President Azad
regretted the stand taken by Rajaji.

The above developments at Allahabad were a
starting point for the renewal of the old rivalry
between Rajaji and Satyamurthi. The Madras District
Congress Committee met on May 11, 1942 under the
Presidentship of Satyamurthi. Satyamurthi appealed for
the cooperation of the members of the District Congress
Committees to counter any move of Rajaji and criticised
the attitude of Rajaji.

Wherever Rajaji went to address meetings, there
were black flag demonstrations against him. From May
18 to May 30 Rajaji addressed meetings at
Trichirappalli, Tanjavur, Madurai, Ramanathapuram,
Tirunelveli, Dindigul, Calicut, Mangalore, Cannanore,
Palghat, Coimbatore, and Salem and returned to Madras
on 30 May, 1942.\(^6\) Rajaji was constantly heckled in


\(^6\) *Indian Express and The Hindu* from 18 May to
30 May, 1942.
most of the meetings. At Madurai violence prevailed and Rajaji was assaulted. Rajaji was later whisked away in a car.\textsuperscript{53} At a meeting held at Madras on 16 May, Rajaji assured that if the Congress came to terms with the Muslim League freedom would come by post.\textsuperscript{54} To an audience at Ramanathapuram on 22 May, he stated that the rejection of his AICC resolution did not take away his right as a Congressman his freedom of speech. Though Rajaji went on expressing his views against the AICC, he did not resign from the AICC and such flagrant indiscipline could not be indefinitely ignored.

In its meeting held on 20 May, 1942 the TNCC Working Committee decided to popularize the resolutions and decisions of the AICC among the people.\textsuperscript{55} The main subject of discussion in the newspapers was Rajaji's attitude towards forming a National Government and conceding of Muslim League's demand of Pakistan. In regard to Rajaji's motion about Pakistan views of TNCC differed somewhat sharply. While some of the Dailies like The Mail, The Hindu, Swadesamitran and the Muslim papers welcomed Rajaji's move, some others like The

\textsuperscript{53} Indian Express, 22 May, 1942.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid, 17 May, 1942.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 20 May 1942.
Indian Express, Bharata Devi and Dinamani to some extent opposed the proposals of vivisection of India.

Rajaji in order to convince the people about his stand often mentioned in his speeches that his attitude and views were similar to that of Gandhi. However, a statement to the contrary, was issued by Gandhi to clarify his position. This emboldened those who were opposed to Rajaji considerably.\textsuperscript{56}

At Udayarpalayam a political conference was held on 27 May, 1942. At that Conference Kamaraj openly criticised the attitude of Rajaji. A resolution was also passed in this Conference:

"The Conference whole-heartedly endorsed the resolutions adopted by the AICC. The Conference expressed the view that the propaganda now being conducted by Mr. C. Rajagopalachari created needless confusion and agitation in the minds of the masses. The Conference hopes that Mr. Rajaji would desist from his propaganda".\textsuperscript{57}

Andhra Congressmen also showed their solidarity against Rajaji's move by requiring the followers of Rajaji from Andhra region like Bulusu Sambamoorthy, a former Speaker of the Madras Assembly, to explain why

\textsuperscript{56} Indian Express, 25 May; Nicholas Mansergh, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol.III, p.115, Harijan, 24 May, 1942.

\textsuperscript{57} Indian Express, 28 May, 1942.
disciplinary action should not be taken against them.\textsuperscript{58} Though Rajaji and his followers toured the districts, addressed meetings against the policies of the AICC, no action was taken by the TNCC, against the Committee Members who helped Rajaji's propaganda against the AICC resolution. They expected the concerned members to relinquish their office before the Committee could act in pursuance of the institution of the General Secretary of the AICC.\textsuperscript{59}

At Tanjore, Kamaraj, Bakthavatsalam, O.P.R. and others met and discussed the future course of action of the Congress and the necessity of taking disciplinary action against those who indulged in propaganda against the Congress.\textsuperscript{60}

The TNCC decided to take disciplinary action against Rajaji for having acted detrimentally to the interests of the Congress. The Working Committee of the Tamilnadu PCC, met at Courtallam on 29 June, with Kamaraj in the Chair.\textsuperscript{61} The latter expressed the

\textsuperscript{58} Indian Express, 31 May, 1942.

\textsuperscript{59} AICC, File No.P.1 Part 2/1942, NMML.

\textsuperscript{60} Indian Express, 15 June, 1942.

\textsuperscript{61} F.R. Home Pol. p.4-12, 18 June, 1942 and p.4-13, 8 July 1942, TA.
opinion that "the propaganda carried on by Rajaji and certain others would mislead the public."62

The Committee, therefore, resolved to give notice to Rajaji, Subbaroyan, T.S.S. Rajan and S. Ramanathan former Ministers, Radhabai Subbaroyan and Santhanam, Members of the Central Assembly and A. Subramanyam, Member of the Madras Legislative Assembly, seeking explanation as to why disciplinary action should not be taken against them.63

The threat of disciplinary action by the TNCC was followed by Rajaji's resignation. He also resigned his membership of the Madras Legislative Assembly.64

The AICC Working Committee informed that the TNCC was competent to take disciplinary action against Rajaji if his activities constituted a breach of Congress discipline. Consequent on this Sambamoorthy, Rajan, Ramanathan, Ratnavelu Thevar, Venkatarama Iyer and

62 The Hindu, 1 July, 1942' Muruga Dhanushkodi, Kamaraj Oru Charithiram, (Kamaraj A History), (Madras, 1976), p.89.


P.T. Venkatachari also resigned their membership of the Assembly.65

In a letter dated July 9 published in the Press, Rajaji announced that in order to be absolutely free to carry on his campaign for converting the Congress from its present policy, he had decided to resign his membership of the Congress and to tender his resignation of Assembly membership at the party meeting of 15 July, 1942. Gandhi played some part in this decision of Rajaji. Earlier on 7 May, Gandhi wrote to Rajaji:

"Vallabhai came to-day. He is firmly of the opinion that in carrying on your propaganda you are breaking the written word. So long as you remain a Member of the Assembly under the Congress ticket which binds its members to carry out the policy from time to time laid down by the AICC, you are bound to carry it out. If that is so, it is your duty to resign the membership of the Assembly. You may not discuss at this state the reasonableness or otherwise of the pledge. I want you to be above board. You should obey Vallabhai's ruling. The other members too feel likewise. And in any case I have told you it will be most becoming for you to sever your connection with Congress and then carry on your campaign with all the zeal and ability you are capable of".66

65 Venkatarama Iyer and P.T. Venkata-chari were Congress workers. Ratnavelu Thevar was the former President of the Trichy Municipality.

66 Gandhi Correspondence, Vol.65, NA.
On 12 July he wrote again:

"I like your letter to the President of your committee immensely. Of course your resignation adds to your dignity". 67

At a meeting of the MLCP held on the 15 July, the previous resolutions passed by the body at the instance of Rajaji acknowledging the Muslim League's claim for separation and urging the formation of a National Government in Madras were cancelled. A resolution was also passed at that meeting to the effect that members should not participate in propaganda being carried on by some against the decision of the Congress.

The AICC Working Committee drew up a new programme on 14 July, 1942 which led to the 'Quit India' Movement of August, 1942. Rajaji could not identify himself with the policy of the Congress. This was clearly the decisive factor that drove him out of Congress and into political isolation. 68

**Quit India Movement**

Political situation in India rapidly deteriorated and become more and more unstable as the

67 *Gandhi Correspondence*, Vol. 65, NA.

Cripps Mission failed. On July 14, 1942, the CWC passed a resolution demanding that the British Government immediately abdicate authority in India and if this demand was rejected, the Congress would be compelled to launch, of course with reluctance, a widespread non-violent struggle under Gandhi's leadership. The AICC endorsed the Working Committee's resolution on August 7, 1942. This amounted to a 'Quit India' ultimatum.

On the morning of August 9, 1942, Gandhi, along with the members of the Working Committee of the Congress and other top ranking leaders, was arrested. Moreover, the All India Congress Committee and the Provincial Congress Committees were declared unlawful bodies. However, the sudden arrest of all the Congress leaders led to a spontaneous wave of widespread sabotage, violence and crime. In the Central Legislature, on September 15, 1942, the Home Member, declared that in a period of one month, 250 railway stations were destroyed or damaged, extensive damage done to the rolling stock and railway engines, about 550 post offices attacked of which 50 were completely burnt down and 200 seriously damaged, telegraph and telephone wires cut at 3,500 places, and roads dug out and bridges destroyed. The total number of arrests and
detentions, according to the official source, was 60,000 and 26,000 respectively.\textsuperscript{69}

The arrest of the Congress leaders following the AICC meeting at Bombay on August 8 had considerable repercussions throughout the Presidency. The first two days after the arrest of the leaders were spent chiefly in passing resolutions condemning the policy of the Government. But from August 11, rioting and attack on public office, cutting of lines of communication, Telegraph and Telephone wires and damaging of railway stations and lines were resorted to.\textsuperscript{70} A number of trains were detained and some lines were closed to traffic for many hours. Students in various colleges and schools absented themselves as a protest against the action of the Government in arresting Congress leaders.

Consequently, the Congress organisations were declared unlawful in the Madras Presidency. Important among the banned organizations were: (1) Tamilnadu Provincial Congress Committee, (2) Madras District

\textsuperscript{69} Nicholas Mansergh, \textit{op. cit.}, Vol.II, pp.906-8.

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{F.R. Home Pol.} p.4-16, 25 August, 1942, TA.
Congress Committee (3) The Karaikkudi Town Congress Committee (4) The Periakulam Town Congress Committee (5) The Otacamund Town Congress Committee and (6) The Nilgiris Taluk Congress Committee. Under such circumstances, it was natural that group politics subsided to a great extent. Since Rajaji and most prominent members of Rajaji group had by then left the party (some of them participated in the Movement) there was actually no factional politics during the Movement. But the role played by Rajaji and his lieutenants deserves mention here in detail because in the later history of Congress, his activities and his non-participation in the Movement always figured in the controversies. Because of the arrests and banning, the Congress became weak and it was not in a position to carry on the Quit India Movement. As the prominent leaders were in jail, there was none except Rajaji in Tamil Nadu to guide the people and direct them in the path of non-violence.

Rajaji’s activities were directed towards unilateral negotiation for sharing of power in the wartime national government. After the end of the war in

71 F.R. Home Pol. p.4-18, 25 September, 1942, p.4-19. 5 October, 1942, p.4-20, 23 October, 1942, p.4-21, and November 1942, and p.4-25, 7 January, 1943.
1945, when the political situation began to change, the activities of Rajaji during the Quit India Movement constituted the basis for strong criticism and opposition against Rajaji. It stood in his way when he mobilised his support for his reentry and assumption of leadership of the Congress. The question did Rajaji act out of genuine national interest or a desire for power, was constantly raised by his critics.

Rajaji drew up a scheme on 21 October, 1942 for a Provisional Government. The novelty of Rajaji's October proposals lay in the Viceroy's freedom to invite the Congress leader whom he believed had a large following along with members of the Muslim League. Jinnah had decided to gain some advantages for the minorities. The Government was not to be responsible to the Legislature. Though fresh elections in the provinces were to be held and a Central Legislature was to be indirectly chosen, yet should Government and Legislature fall out, the Viceroy was free to dissolve either the Government or the Central Legislature. The October proposals fell flat as Linlithgow saw it was yet another devious way of introducing a Congress majority into the Legislature.

72 Nicholas Mansergh, op. cit., Vol.III, pp.21-318

73 A.R.H. Copley, p.207.
Speculations about Gandhi's release and events that were to follow occupied the minds of the public by now. Informal meetings were held among the Congressmen and resolutions were passed on the necessity of resolving the deadlock. The most prominent leaders like Kamaraj, Muthuranga Mudaliar and O.P.R. were in jail.\textsuperscript{74} In order to consider the situation that would arise out of Gandhi's release it was proposed to hold a meeting of Congressmen at Madras. Invitations to those Congressmen, who were not imprisoned were issued by two prominent Congress leaders, Mrs. Rukmani Lakshmipathi and Koti Reddi in their capacity as office bearers of the Tamilnadu and Andhra Congress Committees.\textsuperscript{75}

Rajaji had been busy addressing public meetings. In those meetings Rajaji not only opposed the August Movement but also ridiculed those who participated in it. As if this was not enough, he attempted to form a Ministry in Madras with the help of S. Sivashanmugham Pillai, a Scheduled caste member of the dissolved Assembly.\textsuperscript{76} No wonder Congressmen felt outraged by his

\textsuperscript{74} F.R. p.4-1, 8 June, 1944, TA.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{76} T.S. Chockalingam, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.29-32.
behaviour and termed them as anti-national activities. 77

Muthuranga Mudaliar, who was released from jail, inaugurated, a new party by the name 'Congress Sangam', on 21-10-1944 at Madras as the Congress was banned. Membership of the Sangam was open only to those approved by the Committee of the Sangam. It was practically confined to released detenus and those who subscribed to the August Resolutions of the AICC. Invitations were extended only to a very limited number. K. Bhashyam, a prominent Congress member and who belonged to Rajaji's group, described this procedure as 'undemocratic'. 78

Mrs. Rukmani Lakshmipathi had been canvassing for support while Communists on the other hand had been perturbed by their non-inclusion in the Sangam which appeared to be the first step to alienate them from all Congress activities. 79 Not only the Communists but also Rajaji's followers found that the charter of this

77 T.S. Chockalingam, op. cit., pp.29-32.
78 F.R. p.4-21, 6 November, 1944, TA.
79 Ibid.
Sangam prevented their entry too. In Madras on 12 November, 1944, following the inauguration of the Congress Sangam an informal meeting of the prominent Congressmen was held with Mrs. Ammu Swaminathan in the Chair. Resolutions were passed in this meeting urging Congress Workers to stand by the August resolutions of the AICC. At this meeting a militant group of Congress supporters led by Mrs. Krishnabai Nimbhakar moved resolutions condemning the Communist Party and repudiating the settlement of Communal Award on the basis of Rajaji's formula, and they urged that the Quit India resolution should be implemented forthwith.80

80 The Indian Annual Register (1944), Vol.I. p.129. F.R.4-22, 27 November, 1944, TA.

Rajaji Formula:

1. Subject to the term set out below as regards the Constitution for Free India the Muslim League endorse the Indian demand for Independence and will cooperate with the Congress in the formation of Provisional Interim Government for the transitional period.

2. After the termination of the war, a committee shall be appointed for demarcating contiguous districts in the North, West and East of India, wherein the Muslim population is in absolute majority. In the area thus demarcated a plebiscite of all the inhabitants held on the basis of adult suffrage or other practicable franchise shall ultimately decide the issue of separation from Hindustan. If the majority decide in favour of forming sovereign state separate from Hindustan such decision shall be given effect to, without prejudice to the right of districts on the border to choose to join either state.
When there was a hope of settlement between the Government and the Congress, supporters of Rajaji wanted to return to the Congressfold. A few followers of Rajaji organised meetings and conferences to pressurise Congress to accept Rajaji’s return. One of the meetings at Salem ended in confusion due to the introduction of a resolution wanting Rajaji to return to the Congress and to resume leadership. The supporters of Rajaji and the Communists were greatly perturbed at the attempt made by the Congress leaders to exclude them from any participation in Congress activities. In all the meetings and the district Congress Assemblies emphasis was being laid on the

3. It will be open to all parties to advocate their points of view before the plebiscite is held.

4. In the event of separation, mutual agreement shall be entered into for safeguarding defence and commerce and communications and for other essential purposes.

5. Any transfer of population shall only be on an absolutely voluntary basis.

6. The terms shall be binding only in case of transfer by Britain of full power and responsibility to the Government of India.


82 F.R. 4-22, 27 November, 1944, TA.
exclusion of Communists and necessity for confining the Assemblies to Orthodox Congress supporters and the supporters of August resolution alone. Thus the policy for the exclusion of Rajaji’s men was rigorously pursued.

As a counter move, the Pro Rajaji men formed a Congress Sangam. In Madras City as opposed to the Madras Congressmen’s Sangam inaugurated by Muthuranga Mudaliar, a group of Congressmen formed a "First Circle Congress Sangam." This new group was not averse to cooperation with the Communists and expected that when the ban on Congress organisation was removed, Rajaji would come back to the Congressfold and oust Muthuranga Mudaliar who was attempting to assume the leadership of the Congress in Tamilnadu. Thus the year 1944 witnessed the struggle between those who were opposed to the Quit India Movement and those who stood by the August Resolution. While the former made attempts to reenter the Congress, the latter made attempts to

83 F.R., p.4-23, 7 December, 1944, TA.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
thwart the same. At a conference of the Tamilnadu Congress Workers held at Ariyalur in Trichy district, it was decided to abide by the August Resolution of the AICC and follow Gandhi's leadership and to exclude Communists and others who were opposed to the August resolution. In this conference no supporter of Rajaji was present except one Abdul Sattar of Dindigul who was shouted down when he attempted to speak. Congressmen were busy making plans for their constructive programmes and forming Congress Samithis. These Samithis were also created for the purpose of excluding those who were against the Quit India Movement.

While Orthodox Congressmen (Anti-Rajaji Men) were against taking up offices, Rajaji and his supporters were advocating entry into office. In North Arcot, Annamalai Pillai, ex-Secretary of the TNCC who participated in the August struggle and one who was against Rajaji now came out in favour of office acceptance. It was noticed that he became a supporter of Rajaji. The reason for his shifting of his stand

86 F.R. P.4-25, 6 January, 1945, TA.

87 Ibid., p.4-7, 23 April, 1945 and p.4-10, 8 June, 1945, TA.
could not be explained as there is no other source available. This controversy between Congressmen who were in favour of and against taking up office, figured in the Press.\textsuperscript{88} In Madurai a meeting of the Congress Youth League held on the 13th April ended abruptly following a heated dispute between rival parties on this question.\textsuperscript{89} Rajaji at a meeting on 28 May 1945 emphasised the need for the Congress to take up office instead of following a policy of drift.

The \textit{Indian Express} criticised this 'new class of Sangam Congressmen' and said that despite a hectic propaganda by them in regard to the 'Constructive Programme' chalked out by Gandhi, there was a dismal lack of mass enthusiasm for the programme. An editorial entitled 'A Way Out' correctly represented the attitude of Congressmen who were in favour of office acceptance.\textsuperscript{90} The Congress which was already divided due to rivalry among the leaders was further divided on the question of office acceptance.

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{F.R.}, p.4-11, 25 June, 1945, TA.

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Ibid.}, p.4-7, 23 April, 1945 and p.4-10, 8 June, 1945, TA.

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Ibid.}, p.4-11, 25 June, 1945.
It was announced by the Government of India that a conference of the leaders would be held on June 25, 1945 at Simla. The number of the invitees was twenty-one and the Simla Conference lasted till July 14, 1945. The Muslim League insisted that it alone had the right to recommend all the names of Muslim members to be appointed on the Executive Council. The Congress insisted that communal party did not mean that all the Muslims should be nominated by the Muslim League. The Congress was of the opinion that names may be proposed for Hindus, Muslims, Scheduled Castes etc. by all groups in the Conference and to be adopted by the Conference as a whole. But Jinnah was adamant and refused to send the names on behalf of the Muslim League.

The Simla Conference and its proceedings engaged public attention and men like Subbaroyan warmly welcomed the proposals. But Muthuranga Mudaliar presiding over a meeting in Madras on 17 June maintained that the Viceroy's proposals were unsatisfactory and denounced Rajaji and Subbaroyan as office hunters. V.M. Obeidulla, an influential

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91 F.R. p.4-12, 9 July, 1945, TA.

92 Ibid.
leader of North Arcot and acting President of the Congress, in one of his speeches, launched an attack on the advocates of office acceptance.

The release of the CWC members was the occasion for demonstrations and processions mostly on a small scale in various towns all over the Presidency. One by one Congressmen were released when the British started negotiations with the Congress. When Wavell invited some of the Indian leaders for talks, Rajaji was one among them. This was vehemently opposed by Congressmen. 93

The Government also decided to remove the ban imposed on the various Congress Committees in the Provinces. 94 The Government's decision to hold elections for both the Central and Provincial Legislatures caused gearing up the Congress machinery. 95

93 F.R., p.4-12, 9 July, 1945, TA.


95 F.R. P.4-16, 7 September, 1945, TA.
Those who were away from the arena of politics during the August Struggle and after began to flock the Congress Organisation. The year 1945 saw the signs of success of the cause for which the leaders underwent hardships and courted imprisonment. Rajaji had no doubt that the decision of the political fate of peace-time India was getting nearer. Yet he also recognised his relative powerlessness over the High Command of the AICC. It became increasingly clear to him that he must re-establish his hold over the South.