Acharya Kripalani, who had taken active interest in the Indian National Congress since 1921, was made its General Secretary in 1934. After he was appointed as General Secretary he started taking greater interest in its activities. Till then the office of the party had no permanent or fixed building of its own. The office shifted from place to place depending on the choice of the president. The office used to be taken usually to the home province of the president. Kripalani, after assuming the charge as General Secretary, felt it necessary to have a permanent place for the office. He convinced Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the then Congress President, of the need and then shifted the party office to the Swaraj Bhawan, Allahabad.

Kripalani was the first General Secretary to establish a permanent secretariat for the Indian National Congress. As mentioned earlier, he started the various departments like — Information and Publicity, Labour, Peasants, Agrarian Reforms, Publications, Women's Work, Foreign Relations, Election
Campagns, Economic Affairs, Conosructive Work, Planning, Parliamentary Affairs and the Seva Dal (Volunteer Corps) — to bring clarity and speed in the work of the organisation. He assigned these departments to capable heads. The office of the party under his leadership functioned efficiently in spite of the usual harassment of the British government and the raids and seizures, etc.

After Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad became Congress Presidents. Kripalani continued to work as General Secretary under all these stalwarts. None of them thought of replacing Kripalani although the relations were not always harmonious.

Kripalani not only ran a well-oiled machinery at the headquarters but he also maintained a constant and continuous vigil over the functioning of the Provincial Congress Committee and governments through correspondence and personal visits. He nipped in the bud every case of inefficiency or indiscipline. He contributed a lot to the Congress party building. He worked for 12 years as the General Secretary with distinction. However he had to leave this office in 1946. The Congress Party did not consider him even for the membership of the Working Committee. He had to vacate the Swaraj Bhawan where he had been living.
since 1934. All these happenings however had no effect on Kripalani. He did not take them to heart.

In the meanwhile, the Viceroy asked Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Congress President, to form an Interim Government. A majority of the members of the Congress Working Committee were of the opinion that Nehru should resign the post of presidency. But a few took the view that Nehru should hold both the posts. Nehru however expressed his inability to hold both the posts. In a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee, Nehru said, "It is impossible for a person to hold office in the Interim Government and at the same time continue to be Congress President as well."¹

Since Nehru considered the post of Prime Minister more important, he relinquished the post of party president in order to head the Interim Government.

Surprisingly, Acharya Kripalani was elected the 54th President of the Congress at the Beerut session in November 1946. Kripalani's candidature for the post of president was opposed by the big bosses of the Congress. But Ganéhiji intervened and told the opponents that "Kripalani's turn for the presidency

¹ D.P. Bose (ed.), New India Speaks (Calcutta: A. Mukherjee, 1947), pp.30-33.
had come in the natural course and he must contest."? Gandhi knew Kripalani better than the other Congressmen. Further it was argued that "Kripalani had also been closely connected with the constructive work in the field of education, his experience seemed to make him an ideal choice to rebuild a Congress organisation." 3

The choice also fell on Kripalani because the other leading Congressmen like Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, C. Rajagopalachari were inducted in the Interim Government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru and hardly any able leaders were left behind to head the office of the Congress.

Kripalani's long and close association with the Congress Executive Office had had a great influence upon his conception of the importance of the party organisation and its president in policy-making for the nation building. 4 During his term as Congress President, some of his views brought him into an open conflict with his senior colleagues in the government, for Kripalani made it an issue that all crucial decisions to be taken


4. Ibid.
by the Congress members of the Interim Government should be finalised only after consulting the Congress President and the Working Committee. But, in contrast, Nehru, Patel and other senior Congressmen in the government consented only to keep the president and the Working Committee informed of the decisions of the government. They were not prepared to accept Kripalani's views and argued that the party executive should play an important role in the formulation of the long-range objectives but the government could not be expected to consult the party organisation on all immediate and specific issues. Thus the relations between the Congress Party and the government, President and the Prime Minister, Kripalani and Nehru became strained. 5

Sardar Patel pointed out that the government could be responsible only to the elected legislature and not to the party. But Kripalani strongly felt that the party is a link between the government and the people and the views of the party executive should be considered on all important problems of the nation.

The first ever conflict between Kripalani and his colleagues in the Interim Government took place soon after Kripalani's election as president. It is alleged that the members of the

5. Ibid., p.6.
Interim Government had consented to a proposal by the then
British Prime Minister Attlee to send a delegation to London
to ease the deadlock between the Congress and the Muslim League
on the proposals of the Cabinet Mission. Although Kripalani was
informed of the decision before the delegation left for London,
he protested against the government's failure to consult him
or the Working Committee prior to taking such an important
decision.  

Even after independence the friction between Kripalani
and the government continued; it became wider. Besides Nehru
and Patel, other members of the government also came into
conflict with Kripalani. He was much affected by the partition
of the country though he had agreed to it unwillingly. He did
not hesitate to oppose the government's policy towards Pakistan.
He wanted a total break in economic relations with Pakistan
including an immediate economic blockade of Kashmir. He opposed
the agreement with the Rizan of Hyderabad and advocated strong
measures regarding the latter's property. 

It appears Kripalani lacked influence even inside the
Congress organisation. Hence he became more frustrated. Gandhiji

6. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p.10.
came to know that Kripalani had lost the confidence of his colleagues in the government. Kripalani decided to resign the post. But before doing so he consulted Gandhiji, who advised him to wait for some time. In the meantime Gandhiji, in a letter, dated 26 August 1947, addressed to Sardar Patel, made it clear that: "None of you has a high opinion of him (Kripalani). If his seniors have no confidence in him it seems best that he should be allowed to go." 

In November again Kripalani consulted Gandhiji and requested him that he should be permitted to step down. This time Gandhiji gave his consent and Kripalani placed his resignation before the AICC meeting held at New Delhi during 15–17 November 1947. In his last speech, as the President of the Indian National Congress, to the AICC delegates, Kripalani analysed his concept of the proper relations between the party and the government as follows:

"How is the Congress to give the Government its active and enlightened cooperation unless its highest executive or at least its popularly chosen head is taken into full confidence on important matters that affect

the nation? If there is no free and full cooperation between the Governments and the Congress organisation, the result is misunderstanding and confusion, such as is prevalent today, in the ranks of the Congress and in the minds of the people. Nor can the Congress serve as a living and effective link between the Government and the people unless the leadership in the Government and in the Congress work in the closest harmony. It is the party which is in constant touch with the people in villages and in towns and reflects changes in their will and temper. It is the party from which the Government of the day derives its power. Any action which weakens the organisation of the party or lowers its prestige in the eyes of the people must sooner or later undermine the position of the Government.9

In the same speech Kripalani also pointed out some of the factors which caused his resignation. He said,

"...While no one disputes the necessity of a close and harmonious cooperation between the Government and the Congress Executive, the difficulty is how to

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achieve it. The need for this cooperation is recognised in theory but I find it missing in practice. It may be due to the fact that all of us are not united on basic policies. Or it may be that this cooperation is lacking because I who happen to be president of the organisation do not enjoy the confidence of my colleagues in the Central Cabinet. 10

Jawaharlal Nehru, in a note to the Congress President, Kripalani, argued that it is the business of the government to tackle the problems. Where does the Working Committee come into picture? Nehru said the Congress Working Committee should realise that the government will be faced with a variety of problems and should lay down a general policy as to how it should function with or without reference to it (the committee). He made it clear that a continual reference is of course impossible. 11

In response to Nehru's note, Kripalani, in his note on the relationship between organisational and parliamentary wings, explained his stand as follows:

"It is necessary that the Working Committee should not only determine the composition of the new

10. Ibid., p.204.
11. Ibid., pp.194-96.
provincial Government and lay down the policy that it will follow but that it should see that the policy is carried out and is continually adapted to the changing circumstances. This control and supervision should not take away the dignity of the Government nor need it imply interference in the administrative details of the departments. After all the leading members of the Government are also will remain members of the Working Committee as well. They are themselves leaders of the Congress. It is by virtue of this position in the Congress that they occupy their position in the Government."^{12}

Kripalani failed to retain his organisational supremacy. Therefore he resigned. Following his resignation, the Congress Party ceased to be the mainstream of decision-making in India. The functions of the Congress President remained strictly limited to the organisational affairs and all powers of decision-making shifted to the Congress government.^{13}

Kripalani, in spite of his disagreements with the Congress leadership, was invited by his successor, Dr. Rajendra Prasad,

^{12} Ibid., p.199.
to join the Working Committee. The Governorship of Bihar was also offered to Kripalani. But he declined both these offers. He told his friends that he liked to be free of any official duties so that he can express publicly his disagreements with Government's policies.\[14\]

However Kripalani decided to contest the 1948 presidential election. It is not clear what made Kripalani change his earlier decision, to be free of any official duties. He was the most controversial figure among the aspirants for the presidency. Though he was popular among the rank and file of the party, his chances of winning the election were not bright, for he had resigned the same post just a year back. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was much disturbed by Kripalani's announcement to contest for the presidency. He wrote to Kripalani to withdraw immediately from the contest. The letter reads, "Your election can have only one of two interpretations. Either people may think that your views have been accepted by the bulk of the Congressmen in the country and you are re-instated in your old position because the Congress repudiates the action of the All-India Congress Committee which accepted your resignation and in a way shows its

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14. Ibid., p.11.
want of confidence in the Government for the attitude it
adopted towards you, or the other interpretation may be that
there has been no change in the position at all but that you
yourself have given up that attitude ... more or less after
expressing your repentance at least by implication of what you
did. I do not think either position is good. It is not in the
interest of the country to do anything which might leave an
impression that there is a difference between the Congress and
the Ministry and the Congress has given a slap to the Ministry.”

Kripalani, ultimately, acceded to Mr. Rajendra Prasad's
request and withdrew from the contest.

After two years, Kripalani again decided to contest for
Congress presidentialship. In all, seven names were accepted for
the post of president of the Nasik session of the Congress.
These included Purshottamdas Tandon, J.B. Kripalani, Shankarrao
However the last four persons in the list withdrew from the
contest. Though there remained the first three names now, the
main contest was between Tandon and Kripalani. Deo was not a
serious rival.

As mentioned earlier, by this time there developed strained relations between Patel and Nehru. Tandon was persuaded by his friends, presumably Patel, to contest the election. Tandon admitted the fact that he had not sought the nomination himself. On the other hand, Nehru indicated to Tandon that he should not contest the election, which fact was confirmed by Tandon publicly. The reasons for Nehru's reluctance to support Tandon's candidacy were perhaps expressed more lucidly by a leading newspaper, *Hindustan Times* thus, "Pandit Nehru, it is well-known, was not happy that his old friend, Mr. Tandon, should have stood for the presidential election. On personal grounds he could not himself have chosen a more suitable candidate, but he was not sure what is known as the Congress programme would prosper under the aegis of a person like Mr. Tandon." Although Nehru did not announce his disapproval of Tandon's candidacy, his public utterances formed a bitter attack on Tandon's opinion in regard to several important questions facing the country.

17. *Indian Express* (New Delhi), 25 August 1950.
18. *Hindava* (Nagpur), 16 May 1951.
Mehru, at a press conference, in August, outlined the communal question as a basic issue. At the same time, assuring the competing groups that he did not want to interfere, he made it plain that "the election of the next President of Congress, this issue was important and the result ... was bound to have its effects on the Prime Minister as well as on the country." 21

On the other hand, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai and his followers were trying to find a strong candidate who could oppose Tandon. But they failed in their efforts. First they tried, unsuccessfully, to persuade Pattabhi Sitaramayya. Then Kidwai tried to draft Nehru for the post. When he heard the news that his nomination was considered, Nehru said, "... it had not struck me as a possibility that I might be Congress President again." 22 Ultimately, having failed to draft Pattabhi or Nehru, Kidwai and his followers opted for Kripalani whose popularity among Congressmen would enable him to put up a strong fight against Tandon. 23

Kripalani's candidature for the presidential election again raised the fundamental issue of party-government relation. To Kripalani, it had become essential to explain to his colleagues his relationship with the Congress High Command, especially in the light of his resignation in 1947 and his attitude towards cooperation between the party and the government. 24

The press also took a keen interest in ascertaining the relationship between the Congress President and the Prime Minister. For instance, the editor of Harjan demanded that either Prime Minister Nehru should declare his preference for one of the candidates or the candidates should make clear their opinions in relation to the Prime Minister. 25 After going through the editorial, Tandon broke his self-imposed silence and made it clear that he had no intention, if elected, of accepting a policy of blind obedience to the government. He said, "While cherishing the desire to strengthen the hand of the government and of its Prime Minister, it is also our duty to place before the government the opinions which we believe in with an honest heart and to press them for their acceptance." 26

24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p.31.
Nehru, in a letter, dated 9 August 1950, addressed to Sardar Patel, said, "I am not particularly interested in individuals, important as they are. Many of those who are standing for the presidency are old and tried comrades for whom I have affection and respect. But in the present crisis in Congress history principles are more important than individuals and I earnestly trust that it is on the basis of these old principles that our election and our work will be approached."27

On the contrary, Patel, in his letter to Nehru, dated 27 August 1950, reminded that both of them disagreed on Kripalani's candidature. He said he was surprised to find that Nehru's choice shifted from Shankarrao Des to Kripalani.28 In reply, Nehru wrote to Sardar Patel saying, "You mention my later preference for Kripalani. I told you exactly what happened. When asked, I clearly gave my preference for Shankarrao. When asked what I would do if Kripalani got elected, I said that I feared conflict and trouble but I did not look upon Kripalani as a symbol of something which I disliked greatly."29

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28. Ibid., p.219.
29. Ibid., pp.221-22.
Yet another comment of Nehru on Kripalani's candidature was, "Nevertheless, my attitude to Kripalani was totally different from my attitude to Tandon. In the case of Tandon, if he were elected the very basis of the Congress policy would be in peril. That would not be so in Kripalani's case. I said, I would not say if Kripalani were elected I would not work with him. I thought there would be no difficulty whatever in Shankarrao's case."30

However, in spite of all this, Tandon won the 1950 presidential election, held on 29 August, defeating his nearest rival, Kripalani by a margin of 254 votes. Tandon polled 1306 votes whereas Kripalani and Shankarrao Deo polled 1052 and 262 votes respectively.31

Within a month of the presidential election, (i.e., on 20 September 1950), Kripalani, along with Kidwai and about fifty other Congressmen from the various states, decided to form a Democratic Front within the Congress. He said that the object of the Front was to purify the Congress in order to enable it to carry out its traditional programme, especially the goal of

30. Ibid., p.214.
Most members of the Democratic Front also supported Nehru's economic, social and foreign policy.33

A few members of the Congress charged that the formation of the Democratic Front was the result of Kripalani's defeat in the presidential election. But Kripalani denied the charge and said that, even before the presidential election, friends within and outside the parliament had been asking him to form such a group within the party.34

Tandon felt that the Front was an obstacle in the way of organisational unity. Therefore he brought the matter to the notice of the Working Committee early in November 1950.35 In the first week of December, the Congress Working Committee decided that the Front be dissolved.36 Accordingly Tandon informed Kripalani and said that "the formation of such a group can only have a disruptive influence on the Congress organisation and

32. Hindu (Madras), 3 November 1950.
34. Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 4 November 1950.
36. Ibid., No.1, January-February 1951, pp.6-7.
lead progressively to a weakening of it. He concluded the letter by extending an invitation to Kripalani to extend the Working Committee to remove the differences.

Kripalani, in reply to Tandon’s invitation, put forward some demands and made it clear that the members of the Front conformed completely to policies and programmes of the Congress and did not intend to quit the organisation. However they were committed firmly to oppose the conservative and reactionary elements. The Front had been formed to fight against certain organisational malpractices. Kripalani, criticising the 1950 organisational election, observed:

"In the last election methods were used to influence the voters that are highly repugnant ... The bribes of offices and other advantages were freely used by some of those in possession of the organisation and the government. May, in many cases administrative machinery was used to secure votes for the dominant group in the centre and the states. The Working Committee appointed an election-disputes sub-committee.

37. Letter from P.P.Tandon to J.B.Kripalani, 7 December 1950, Hitavada (Nagpur), 16 May 1951.
38. Ibid.
Its records bear an eloquent, if damaging, evidence of what was done or attempted.”

Kripalani demanded an impartial inquiry into the last Congress election. He complained about the partiality of the general secretaries and asked for an end to such things. The attitude adopted by Tandon in the selection of his working Committee was also objected to and was described as partisan.

The Tandon group was powerful. It had complete control over the party organisation. But at the height of its power the group lost its patron, Sardar Patel, who died on 15 December 1950. Patel's death compelled Nehru to interfere more actively in the organisational affairs of the party. The conflict between Kripalani and Tandon had reached its height. Neither of them was ready for any rapprochement at the time of the AICC meeting at Ahmedabad which was the first such meeting after Patel's death. Nehru felt obliged to iron out the differences by introducing a unity resolution. The resolution was passed by the AICC unanimously.

40. Ibid.
41. Stanley A. Kochanek, op. cit., p. 34.
After a number of unity talks, Nehru and Azad appealed to Kripalani and Kidwai to dissolve the Democratic Front. The dissident leaders (Kripalani and Kidwai) replied that it could be done only in consultation with their supporters. In view of the appeal, they scheduled a meeting of the Front to coincide with the next meeting of the AISSC, which was to be held at Delhi in May 1951. During this meeting both Nehru and Azad met the members of the Front and the dissident leaders agreed to dissolve the Democratic Front but at the same time they made it clear that the Front remained concerned about the Working Committee's past hostility and its reluctance to the initiative to purify the Congress. Nehru promised the Front leaders that he would obtain adequate representation for them on the Central Election Committee.

Ultimately the Front was dissolved; the Congress Working Committee welcomed the dissolution. But it seemed that the old guard (Tandon group) had no intention to relinquish its

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42. Letter from B.Kripalani and Kidwai to Jawaharlal Nehru, 15 April 1951, Hitavada (Bhopur), 16 May 1951.
43. Tribune (Ambala), 4 May 1951.
control over the organisation. When nominations for the Central Election Committee were invited, S.K. Patil, the President of the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee and representative of Tandon group, proposed a list of five names for the five seats. None of the five, proposed by Patil, was drawn from the dissident group of Kripalani. Immediately Seth Govind Das, a staunch conservative from Madhya Pradesh and a strong supporter of Tandon, seconded. Besides these thirteen other nominations were filed. Usually, nominations would have been closed at this level. But Asad made it known to the delegates that private talks about unity were in progress. He suggested that nominations remain open to which suggestion Tandon agreed, and the AICC moved on to the next items of the agenda. 46

In a private meeting held the same day evening of Kripalani, Kidwai and Asad, Tandon offered a seat each to both the dissidents on the Central Election Committee. 47 But, in the light of the list which Patil had submitted that day morning, Kripalani doubted the propriety of Asad or Tandon's making such an offer. Kripalani rejected the offer and the unity talks

46. Ibid., p.85.
47. Hindu (Madras), 18 May 1951.
continued; this resulted in the withdrawal of the nominations by all the dissidents. Azad made one more attempt for unity. He urged the delegates to consider the list submitted by Patil as his individual list and not as a list submitted on behalf of the Working Committee. He also made it clear that, from the unity point of view, both Kripalani and Kidwai be brought into the Central Election Committee. But all efforts of Azad went in vain. All the aspirants except the nominees of Patil withdrew. Thus the Tandon group obtained a majority in the Central Election Committee. 48

On 17 May 1951, Kripalani announced his resignation from Congress Party itself. While resigning, he charged that the Ahmedabad unity resolution had been deliberately ignored by the majority group. Although Kripalani agreed with the principles and programmes of the party, he strongly felt that the Congress no longer remained an effective organisation for the implementation of those objectives. He said his "differences with the Congress President, the condition of the country and the inability of the Congress to arrest the deterioration of that condition were the main reasons for his resignation." 49

49. Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 18 May 1951.
Kripalani and some forty other dissidents decided to hold a convention at Patna in June 1951 to chalk out the further course of action. Before the convention took place, efforts were made by Congressmen to bring about a compromise with the Kripalani group. A good number of Congressmen tried to convene a special session of the AICC which would allow the dissidents to remain in the Congress. But they failed in their efforts to convince Kripalani to postpone the Patna convention.

The Patna convention took place as scheduled on 16 June. An Executive Committee consisting of Kripalani, Kiliwai, T. Prakasam, P.C. Ghosh and K. Kelappan was formed. The Patna convention brought into existence a new party known as Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPFP). Kripalani was made its first president. The convention approved the party constitution and a party manifesto. The main plank of the party's programme was the overhauling of the administrative machinery which "lacks efficiency, integrity and a spirit of service." The manifesto called for decentralisation of power, aid to the down-trodden, an austerity move to create the necessary capital to increase production, land for the tiller, encouragement to cottage industries, an

50. Hindu (Madras), 30 May 1951.
equitable distribution of wealth, basic education programme, rehabilitation of displaced persons and an independent foreign policy.  

Though Kidwai was one of the founders of the Congress Democratic Front and also one of those who supported Kripalani, his relations with the KMPF were not clear. Although he attended the Patna convention, he did not address it. In fact, he did not want to sever his relations with the Congress, for he was in the union council of ministers. In a press statement, at Patna, Kidwai said that he had not resigned from the Congress because he knew that the coming Bangalore session of the AICC was likely to consider the ways and means of purifying the Congress. He said, "I look to that meeting with hope. If the attempts that are being made by the Prime Minister and others to reform the Congress succeed, not only will I remain in the Congress but also many of those who have resigned will like to go back and rejoin it."

After the Bangalore session of the AICC was over, events moved rapidly. Nehru unsuccessfully persuaded Tandon to reconstitute the Congress Working Committee. So Kidwai

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52. Ibid., pp.24-32.
53. Hindu (Madras), 16 June 1951.
submitted his resignation from the Cabinet on 17 July; he
withdrew the same on 21 July at Nehru's instance. He submitted
his resignation again and Nehru accepted it. 54 On 3 August, in
a statement, Kidwai announced that he was resigning from the
Congress and joining the KMPP. 55

In the meanwhile, Nehru was elected Congress President.
He replaced Tandon who submitted his resignation at the AICC
meeting held at Delhi on 8-9 September. After he was elected
President, Nehru issued an invitation to all those who had left
the Congress to come back. 56 Kidwai took advantage of Nehru's
invitation and issued a statement that many of those who had
left the Congress and joined the KMPP were eager to strengthen
the Prime Minister's hands "if they are allowed to function
effectively in the State Congress organisations. Most of those
who had joined the KMPP were in agreement with the Prime
Minister's policy, but had to leave the Congress because they
were not allowed to function and to pursue those policies." 57

54. Ibid., 1 August 1951.
55. Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 3 August 1951.
56. Ibid., 15 September 1951.
57. Ibid., 17 September 1951.
Kidwai failed in his attempts to dissolve the KMPP.\textsuperscript{58}

Kripalani and other leaders of the KMPP expressed their unwillingness to dissolve the new party; this was the decision taken in the special Executive Committee meeting held at Calcutta on 28 September.\textsuperscript{59} Having failed in his attempts, Kidwai announced his decision to rejoin the Congress on 4 October.\textsuperscript{60}

Interestingly, the first general elections were to be held in 1952. There was little time left to prepare for the elections. The leading opposition parties were trying their best to fight the elections. The Socialist Party did not want too many opposition parties to be in the field. The party leaders were of the opinion that the newly formed KMPP should merge with their party to enable it to avoid the split of the opposition votes. Jayaprakash Narayan, Rammanohar Lohia and Ashoka Mehta, of the Socialist Party, were particularly eager for such merger. But Kripalani did not intend to merge his party with the Socialist Party. Kripalani made it clear that there would be no merger of the two parties. However he said

\textsuperscript{58} Hindu (Madras), 29 September 1951.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 5 October 1951.
that his party would work in cooperation with the Socialist Party in the coming elections.\textsuperscript{61}

Kripalani was of the opinion that the Socialist Party "... has failed to capture the imagination of the people ... The chief reason for this is that as soon as Gandhiji became an active force in Indian politics, his personality and political philosophy were the major deciding factors in the country's public life ... The psychological atmosphere created in favour of his philosophy is so great that it has made it difficult for the nation to accept the Socialist Party's outlook ... The average man in India ... gets confused about what actually the Indian Socialists stand for. The Socialists are still, more or less, a party of intellectuals ... Often their learned theses, full of technical words and phrases in vogue in the West, when translated into provincial languages, have little meaning for the unlettered masses ... The Socialist Party as at present cannot by itself succeed in forming a strong opposition (party) to the Congress within the legislature and in the country."\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 22 August 1951.

\textsuperscript{62} J.B.Kripalani, \textit{Towards Sarvodaya} (New Delhi: RMPF., 1951), pp.5-6.
The KMPP leaders had a high expectation that their party
would be a grand success in the elections. The Socialists were
also equally optimistic. In spite of the earlier hopes the
There was a debacle for both parties in the 1952 general
elections. Kripalani himself was defeated from the Fyzabad
constituency in Uttar Pradesh. The KMPP won only 5 seats and the
Socialist Party only 12 seats in the parliamentary election.\footnote{India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, \textit{India: a Reference Annual 1953} (Delhi: Publications Division, 1953), p.28.}
Their strength in the Legislative Assemblies was 77 and 124
respectively.\footnote{Ibid., p.98.}

The election results made the KMPP leaders and the
Socialist Party leaders come closer. Steps were taken again
for the merger of the parties. By then, the Socialist Party
had come to have faith in Gandhiji's political, social and
economic ideas and policies. Kripalani agreed to the merger of
the two like-minded parties. Following the meeting between
Kripalani, Jyapraoksha Narayan and Ashoka Mehta, the two parties
issued a joint statement on 1 June 1952. Both agreed to form a
double parliamentary party to function with "a common leader and
a common discipline. Every effort is to be made to bring about a merger of the two parties."

The representatives of the two parties agreed to a common programme for an egalitarian social order, local initiative and village democracy, land for the tiller, decentralisation of industry, nationalisation of key industries, a free trade union movement, civil liberties, the spirit of austerity and Swadeshi, economic equality and social mobility, and a policy of neutrality and non-involvement of India in foreign affairs. The General Secretary of the Socialist Party, Ashoka Mehta, concluded that "the basic programme of the legislative party that was drawn up in May showed that on no material points did the two parties differ."

In a meeting at Lucknow, which ended on 25 August 1952, the two parties agreed to merge. Kripalani, on behalf of the KMPP, met Acharya Narendra Deva, Rammanohar Lohia and Ashoka Mehta and decided to hold a meeting of the representatives of both the parties in Bombay to complete the merger. Accordingly,

A joint session of the representatives of both the parties was held in Bombay on 26-27 September. The new party came to be known as Praja Socialist Party (PSP). Kripalani was elected its Chairman. Kripalani said that as far as the basic principles were concerned, there was complete similarity between the two parties. He added, "We both want a classless and casteless society free from social, political and economic exploitation. The Socialists call it the Socialist society. We call it the Sarvodaya society." 69

Jayaprakash Narayan said, "... it was good that ideological issues were kept out when we agreed to merge. This tided over a number of difficulties. There have been no doubt misunderstandings and other difficulties, but, I am sure, mutual trust, faith and forbearance will help us to get over these difficulties and this party will become the builder of a new India." 70 Ashoka Mehta felt that the "merger has isolated the Communists and opened up the prospects of weaning away the people from them ... The dangerous polarisation between the Congress and the Communists ends." 71

70. Ibid., p.24.
To Kripalani, the merger was a great event. He said, "In India, wherever there is a Sangam, the place is holy. I hope that soon this happy Sangam (merger) will be joined by other groups." 72

When the leadership of both the parties became convinced that a merger was desirable, the major problem was how to overcome the objections that might arise from the rank and file. Weiner writes, "In general it might be said that whenever attempts at a merger are made, the rank and file of the parties involved are more opposed than the leadership, and conversely, whenever the prospects of a split within a party occur, it is again the rank and file rather than the leadership which generally favours the move." 73

In this KMPP-Socialist Party merger attempt, there was no opposition from the rank and file of the KMPP. The main reasons for this were the weak organisational and party allegiances because the party was a relatively nascent party. 74 On the other hand, there were several objections from the side of the Socialist

72. Ibid., p.2.
74. Ibid.
rank and file. For instance, in U.P. alone there was considerable opposition especially from the student and ex-student members of the party who had joined the movement during the 1942 struggle.75

Kripalani continued to be the Chairman of the Praja Socialist Party till the mid-fifties. He presided over the Nagpur session of the RCP in November 1954. By this time, there had developed a difference of opinion between Kripalani and the other leaders. Therefore during the Nagpur session itself, Kripalani submitted his resignation as Chairman of RCP. Kripalani, in his resignation speech, complained that "he received almost no respect from either the leaders or the rank and file of the party; so long as his judgements were not being listened to, he felt that he could not continue as Party Chairman."76

Weiner analyses the reasons for the unhappy situation of Kripalani. He says,

"Kripalani found himself in this isolated position in both Congress and the Praja Socialist

75. Hindu (Madras), 23 June 1952.
76. Myron Weiner, op. cit., p.95, fn.50.
Party because he lacked the support of any major
group or faction in the country. As Congress General
Secretary for twelve years, he did not have the
opportunity to build any local support the way other
Congress leaders did. Then too, the fact that Kripalani
came from an area which is now part of Pakistan (Sind)
also precluded his having any local support. Without
the continuous support of any single group of followers,
Kripalani's position in any organisation he had been in
-- Congress and the Praja Socialist Party -- had always
been personally very frustrating.77

It is as well therefore that, after 1957, he was not
attached to any political party. He remained a leading figure
in the opposition till his last breath.

77. Ibid.