CHAPTER V

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The General Elections of March 1962, exposed the dwindling popularity of the Congress Party, and China, hitherto a friendly neighbour attacked India unexpectedly. These two events of 1962 brought about far reaching changes in the Party and the history of India.

In the Third General Elections of March 1962 the Congress Party retained power at the Centre as well as in the States, but the success was not a spectacular one. The opposition parties though divided, polled an increased percentage of votes. Both the Congress Party and the Central Government came under severe criticism for growing poverty and price rise. The Party realized the growing anguish and dissatisfaction of the electorate. Eloquent opposition leaders accused the Party of the hollowness of its policies and programmes. ¹

The Chinese aggression of October 1962 was another blow to the Party and the country. Communist China, an ally of Panchasheel Policy of Nehru, attacked India, defying moral and international norms. For Nehru it was a personal shock and a setback to his foreign policy.

¹ Sundary Standard (New Delhi), 18th June 1963.
The miserable performance of the Indian Army and the lack of intelligence of the Defence Minister came under severe criticism. Nehru's Government was blamed for its inefficiency and complacency. "So much so that the Congress conservatives gathered courage to launch an open offensive against his policies. He was compelled to drop first V.K. Krishna Menon and later K.D. Malaviya and to make new ideological compromise".  

The dwindling prestige and prospects of the Congress Party became more pronounced during the May 1963 By-elections. The Party lost the prestigious Lok Sabha seats of Amroha, Rajkot and Farukabad. The three successful opposition candidates J.B. Kripalani, Ram Manohar Lohia and M.R. Masani had been consistent critics of the Nehru Government. "The election reverses sent a wave of despondency through the Party and baffled the leaders".

Nehru opined that the election reverses were due to the organisational weakness of the Party and the efficient canvassing of the rivals which were to the voters more important than the

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3 T.V. Kunhikrishnan, Chavan and the Troubles Decade (Bombay, 1971), pp.278-279.
policies. However, this defeat initiated a process of heart-searching and rethinking among all Congressmen all over the country.

Nehru had to face open resistance not only from the opposition but also within his own Party. J.B. Kripalani and H.V. Kamath demanded the resignation of Nehru on the basis of the defeat of India in Indo-China War. Many State Chief Ministers created troubles for him and the infighting within the Party became apparent. Nehru started to suspect the credibility and trustworthiness of his Cabinet colleagues.

Nehru was concerned about the future of the country and the Party. He admitted in an interview that "Congress needed some treatment if it were to live".

Like Nehru, Kamaraj also felt that Congress Party had lost the confidence of the masses all over the country, particularly in Tamilnadu. Inspite of his efficient administration and effective campaigning, the DMK emerged as a powerful opposition Party.

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4 Sunday Standard (New Delhi), 18th June 1963.
6 Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 16th June 1963.
7 P. Nedumaran, Bangalore Mudal Delhi Varai (Madurai, 1969), p.43.
8 Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 16th June 1963; Biju Patnaik, Kamaraj Plan (New Delhi, n.d.), p.2.
in Tamilnadu. The DMK which got only 15 seats in the 1957 elections, captured 50 seats in the 1962 elections. In the subsequent By-elections in the State for 3 Constituencies Congress won 2 seats (Bodinayakkanur and Nanguneri) and the DMK succeeded in getting one, and emerged as a strong opposition Party with 51 legislators.

Kamaraj was disheartened at the growing popularity of the DMK, a Party known for its regional and secessionist propaganda. He understood the reasons for the disillusionment of the people with the Congress Party. "Economic inequilibrium, growing poverty and prices, deplorable performance of our army in the Chinese War, sloth and stagnation in the programme implementation were some of the reasons for this plight".

For the maladies which plagued the country and the Party Kamaraj offered a remedy. He spoke to Nehru about it, and Nehru who had great faith in the sincerity and efficiency of Kamaraj, approved of a novel scheme propounded by Kamaraj. The Plan was called after Kamaraj as 'K' Plan.

10 Deccan Herold (Bangalore), 19th June 1963.
The 'K' Plan was introduced in July 1963 and it envisaged that, "Senior Congressmen who are in Government should voluntarily relinquish their ministerial posts and offer themselves for full time organisational work".  

The CWC called a special Session of the AICC on August 9th and 10th of 1963 to discuss various issues. This was the first time a meeting of the AICC was held on the basis of the requisition by its members.

Kamaraj placed his views and 'K' Plan before the CWC, the policy making body of the Congress Party. He stated that it was wrong to think that only by remaining in ministerial positions the senior leaders of the Party could serve efficiently. It did not also mean that leaving the ministerial position tantamounted to shirking the responsibility. He insisted that no one could perform efficiently in both the organisation and administration simultaneously however capable one might be.

The AICC passed the resolution adopting the 'K' Plan, on August 12, 1963. Nehru stated that the AICC resolution on 'K' Plan was 'unique' in history and added that no other Party

14 Ibid.
in any other country in the world would ever dream of passing such a resolution. This, in his opinion, reflected "the Party's essentially different approach to politics and public life".  

So it was resolved in the AICC that all the Chief Ministers should tender their resignations to the Prime Minister, expressing their desire to dedicate themselves for strengthening the organisation. The Prime Minister was empowered to use his discretion to accept the resignations and absorb them for the Party work.  

Kamaraj volunteered to resign his Chief Ministership of Madras State and there followed 42 resignations from Ministers and Chief Ministers of States and Union Ministers. Nehru himself volunteered to resign from the Prime Ministership but the CWC decided against it and placed the burden on implementing the 'K' Plan on him.  

Nehru accepted the resignations of 6 Union Ministers and 6 Chief Ministers of State and announced that a few more resignations from both Union and State Cabinets would be accepted later. The list included

16 Times of India (Delhi), 13th August 1963.
18 Times of India (Delhi), 13th August 1963.
K. Kamaraj - CM of Madras
Biju Patnaik - CM of Orissa
C.B. Gupttha - CM of Uttar Pradesh
B.R. Mandoli - CM of Madhya Pradesh
B.N. Jha - CM of Bihar
Bakshi Gulam Mohammed - CM of Jammu & Kashmir
Morarji Desai - Union Minister for Finance
LalBahadur Shastri - Union Minister for Home
Jagjivanram - Union Minister for Transport and Communication
S.K. Patil - Union Minister for Food and Agriculture
B. Gopala Reddy - Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting
K.L. Shri Mali - Union Minister for Education

"No political Party in any democratic country in the world has acted in this manner in modern times and it was unusual and unique".  

The 'K' Plan evoked much criticism within India and abroad among the ruling and opposition parties. On August 16, 1963 the opposition parties emboldened by the situation, moved a 'No Confidence Motion' in the Parliament against the Government.


20 Leader (Allahabad), 27th August 1963.
of Nehru for the first time in the history of free India. It was defeated but it showed that the Congress was no longer monolithic and Nehru no more the supreme arbitrator of National affairs. It was the Kamaraj Plan which gave a temporary face lift for the Congress Party.\textsuperscript{21}

Severe criticism of the 'K' Plan came in from opposition leaders like C. Rajagopalachari, Jayaprakash Narain, S.M. Joshi and V.N. Gadgil. They pointed out that "with the exit of top Ministers, Nehru would assume dictatorial powers".\textsuperscript{22}

The foreign News media welcomed the 'K' Plan "as it gave Nehru a free hand and expected a valuable shake up to the Central and State administrations which are obviously suffering from a Plethora of old faces and a lack of new ideas".\textsuperscript{23}

Indian news media while marvelling at the 'K' Plan expressed their anguish and apprehension about the success of the Plan.

The Economic Times commented "as for Kamaraj's proposals themselves the whole issue lingers on two simple factors. First whether the Congress Party has enough talent in reserve to provide

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  \item \textsuperscript{21} T.V. Kunhikrishnan, \textit{Op. cit.}, p. 280.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Pakistan Times (Lahore), 27th August 1963.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} The London Economist (London), 17th August 1963.
\end{itemize}
a capable, decent and responsive administration, when the present incumbents leave. Second whether there will be a well thought out programme of work awaiting the ex-Ministers, which can revitalise the Congress organisation.\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{Free Press Journal} opined that Nehru deployed 'K' Plan to dispose of the old guards in his Cabinet like Morarji Desai and S.K. Patil, whose exit Hiren Mukerji and A.K. Gopalan were demanding for long.\textsuperscript{25}

Serious doubts were expressed about the implementation of 'K' Plan and the follow up at the organisational level. \textit{Search Light} expressed that "it is hardly possible to find important positions in the organisation for all such displaced persons. Some of them are really so utterly misfit that they will be a liability rather than an asset if placed in important positions in the organisational set up".\textsuperscript{26}

\textit{The Indian Express} commented that "Nehru was anxious to lighten himself of the burden of a few unwanted colleagues and achieved this objective by stressing the need for organisational reform in the Party".\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{24} The Economic Times (Bombay), 18th June 1963.
\textsuperscript{25} Free Press Journal (Bombay), 26th August 1963.
\textsuperscript{26} Search Light (Patna), 26th August 1963.
\textsuperscript{27} Indian Express (Madras), 27th August 1963.
Among the 12 leaders, whose resignations were accepted, Kamaraj's was one. He laid down his office formally on October 2, 1963 one of the two dates dear to him throughout his life, one being the Tamil New Year's Day and the other Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday. 28

M. Bakthavatsalam succeeded Kamaraj as the Chief Minister of Madras State. Kamaraj evinced more interest in organisational work after relinquishing his office. He became the guiding star of the TNCC and put forward various proposals to renew the mass contact of the organisation.

Thus Kamaraj made history with his Kamaraj Plan. He was the first Regional leader who was shot to fame by his shrewd diplomacy and administrative ability. His name and popularity spread all over the country. His policies and plans invariably reflected Gandhian ideology and Nehru's socialistic principles. He was prepared for any kind of sacrifice for Nehru and the 'K' Plan was an outcome of that spontaneous respect and affection he had for his leader.

Nehru wanted to make Kamaraj the AICC President since he hoped Kamaraj alone could hold the position at that time in a commendable manner. 29

The Jaipur Congress of 3rd and 4th November 1963 met under the Presidentship of D. Sanjivayya. The committee discussed for over 6 hours, the 'K' Plan, its implementation and implications.  

Nehru who spoke during the discussion appreciated Kamaraj and his Plan stating that revolutionary changes had taken place in the organisation by the 'K' Plan. He concluded with the proposal to elect Kamaraj as the President of the AICC. This was received with thunderous applause and Kamaraj was unanimously elected the President of the AICC. He was the third Tamilian who was elected to that post, Salem Vijayaraghavachariar (1920) being the first and S. Srinivasa Ayyengar (1926) being the second.

As the President of the AICC, Kamaraj organised the 68th Plenary Session of AICC in Bhubaneshwar, the Capital of Orissa. This was the first AICC meeting held in Orissa in the 80 year old history of the organisation. Kamaraj, who expounded 'Socialism' in the Avadi Congress of 1955 as the Chief Minister of Madras, declared Democratic Socialism as the ideology of the Congress in the Bhubaneshwar Congress in 1964.

31 Ibid., pp.203-204.
Both in his Presidential Address and the Valedictory address, Kamaraj kept the audience alive with his thought-provoking speech. His speech revolved around all the issues—organisational, national and international. He called upon the Congressmen to practise the virtues of Mahatma Gandhi in public life and be in touch with the masses. He requested the State Governments to dwell upon social welfare measures, like free education, free health care, creation of more employment opportunities, agricultural development and old age pension. He appealed to all Congressmen not to magnify their differences and not to encourage open criticism. He invited all the socialist minded leaders and people to join the Congress organisation.

After the Bhubaneshwar Congress meeting Kamaraj wanted to renew his relationship with the masses of India, and went on a whirlwind tour of the rural areas of Punjab, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra, Mysore etc. This tour was aimed at enlightening the people about the programmes and policies of the Government and to seek their support for the attainment of "democratic socialism".

He also undertook an extensive tour in Tamilnadu, his home State. He visited all places, met all the Congressmen and addressed on public platforms. In each meeting he had a message for the people. During this tour he visited 300 places, travelled 2000 miles and met one crore people and addressed on an average 20 meetings a day. 37 These renewed contacts made him a leader of the masses, a worker among the leaders and leader among the workers.

On May 27, 1964 Kamaraj was informed from Delhi that Nehru was critically ill, and Kamaraj cancelled his tour and left for Delhi. 38 Nijalingappa, Chief Minister of Mysore and Athulya Ghosh, Member of Parliament and President of West Bengal Congress Committee also joined him at Bangalore. Before landing in Delhi, they received the news of the death of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. 39

Kamaraj was grief-stricken. The last of the leaders he loved and respected was gone and there remained the promises to be fulfilled and the pledges to be redeemed. The future of the country without Nehru appeared to be dark, but he had to do the needful as a responsible Party President.

37 Ibid., p.220.
Gulzarilal Nanda, the Senior Cabinet colleague of Nehru assumed charge as the Prime Minister. The next important question was who was to succeed Nehru. 40

In the last years of Nehru's life Congress leaders were not only concerned about his failing health but also with the question of selecting his successor. 41 Nehru had not let his successor grow and the field was so covered with bystanders that "it was a problem to discover the successor and any guess could at best be a bad guess". 42

In fact many in the west had predicted doom for Indian democracy. "They had warned that the Parliamentary system grafted onto a caste ridden society would wither away after the death of the western trained liberal Nehru". 43

India could have really torn to pieces; there were brewing regional and personal jealousies and a disintegration was not a remote possibility. It was, however, due to the diplomacy of Kamaraj and his National perspective that such a misfortune and wrangle among the leaders were averted. 44

40 Kuldip Nayar, India after Nehru (New Delhi, 1977), p.5.
Kamaraj thought it was possible to arrive at a consensus by talking to the members of the Congress Party individually and informally. The Congress Working Committee authorised Kamaraj to arrive at a consensus. 45

Many names were mentioned such as that of G.L. Nanda, Jagjivanram, Morarji, Shastri, Indira Gandhi, T.T. Krishnamachari, even Jayaprakash Narain and above all the name of Kamaraj, by the anxious people and political reporters of Delhi.

Instead of contesting as a candidate for the dignified office which he could have easily done, Kamaraj assumed the role of a 'king-maker' and used his rough and ready genius of getting things through by adopting the consensus method. 46

Ever since 1963 a group of Congress leaders used to discuss matters of common interest relating to the organisation and the administration. This coterie consisted of Sanjeeva Reddy, Nijalingappa, Athulya Ghosh, S.K. Patil and Kamaraj. It was this coterie which held a conclave in Tirupati during October 1963 where they succeeded in getting the consent of one among them meaning Kamaraj to accept the Party Presidentship. Later this group was called the Syndicate. 47 During October 1963.

47 The Statesman (Delhi), 16th June 1964.
when the name of the AICC President was finalised, the name of Lal Bahadur Shastri was decided upon for the prime Ministership by this Syndicate but was kept a secret.48

But Kamaraj acted wisely and discreetly while the watchful world doubted whether any smooth succession to Nehru would be possible. He consulted the Chief Ministers of the States, Congress Members of Parliament and other Congress Working Committee Members, individually and informally and had their opinion. What followed was the elimination process. The four names which became worth consideration were that of Morarji Desai, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Gulzarilal Nanda and Indira Gandhi.49

Indira Gandhi, who enjoyed the support of the Leftist group led by K.D. Malaviya, "was emotionally unprepared for a contest but was nevertheless prepared to become Prime Minister. The Syndicate was not in her favour, not in favour of Home Minister, and interim Prime Minister Gulzarilal Nanda, a willing candidate without much support".50 Therefore, the real contest was between Lal Bahadur Shastri and Morarji Desai.

Morarji Desai was backed by Biju Patnaik of Orissa,

48 Personal Interview with Nijalingappa at Chitradurg, on 30th December 1983.


D. Sanjivayya, former AICC President, Mohanlal Sukhadhia, Chief Minister of Rajasthan, and Jagjivanram who was himself a candidate but gave up the race midstream.\(^51\) But Shastri was known generally as the protege of Nehru, winsomely modest and loyal to the leader and the organisation.\(^52\)

Kamaraj cleverly managed the succession crisis and played the game of consensus so convincingly that Morarji Desai withdrew from the fray and offered to propose Shastri's name in the crucial Congress Parliamentary Party meeting. "But even this honour was denied to Desai, because acting Prime Minister Nanda insisted that he should have the privilege of proposing Shastri's name".\(^53\)

On June 2, 1964 at a meeting of the CPP, presided over by Kamaraj, Lal Bahadur Shastri was elected leader of CPP. His election was acclaimed by the press in India and abroad as a great success for democracy in India. "Few other nations in the then independent new world could have matched the political maturity that India showed. Still fewer could have managed such a peaceful transition".\(^54\)

\(^{51}\) Ibid., p.285.


"The succession drama was well managed by the Syndicate but it raised the principle of consensus to the pinnacle of all political virtues". 55 Political leaders all over the world welcomed the consensus principle. 56 The prestige of Kamaraj naturally rocketed high. He had succeeded in imposing his choice on the warring groups and on the ambitious strong heads of the Party.

He had managed things with consummate skill and had rendered service not only to the Indian nation at a critical period in her history, but to entire South Asia which was facing the menacing challenge from China. India with its democratic framework was the only answer to China and its continuity in strength was essential to the democratic forces of the world. 57

Shastri was not only a socialist but a Gandhian. He had learnt that co-operation was far better than conflict. So he avoided confrontation, and arrived at compromises wherever there was a possibility.

Like many Congressmen, Shastri did not believe in Nehru's pattern of large scale industrialisation, and nationalisation, but

believed in self-sufficiency at the village level and in hard work. "Shastri was opposed to giant mechanised enterprises because they cornered substantial investment, used little labour and delayed benefits".  

The ideological battle therefore started between the President of the Party and the leader of the Government but did not come to the surface. Shastri did not want to depart from Nehru's basic policies; at the same time he did not want to follow the beaten tracks. "He wished to be faithful to Nehru's vision and wanted to avoid the pitfalls".  

Kamaraj felt that no single leader could fill the void left by Nehru and that a collective leadership of persons who had worked under his guidance had to bear the responsibility of leading the nation.

His idea was to develop "a pattern where some top leaders of the Party would form a constellation around the Prime Minister, a sort of politbureau in a socialistic country", and wanted his Syndicate to be the apex body.

Though differences of opinion existed, Kamaraj played

59 Ibid., p.19.
60 Ibid., p.11.
his role coolly and safely. But Shastri did not consult Kamaraj, who helped him secure the Prime Ministership, while making the selection of his Cabinet colleagues. When the offer of Home portfolio to Morarji was withdrawn and Jagjivanram, leader of the Harijan was not taken into the Cabinet, Kamaraj did not protest openly. But, at the same time, Shastri on the insistence of Kamaraj, inducted Indira Gandhi as Information and Broadcasting Minister in the Cabinet.

To the idea of Kamaraj that a constellation around the Prime Minister like the politbureau, Shastri never agreed and he wanted to be the lone sun. Kamaraj was sceptic about the functioning of Shastri, who deliberately put various programmes of Nehru into cold storage, on the insistence of the rightist Congressmen. The economic condition of the country underwent strains and stress due to increased defence expenditure. The result was that the Plan outlay for the Fourth Plan was Rs.22,500 crores almost double the size of the previous one.

The term of office of Kamaraj as the President of the AICC (2 years) was nearing the end in 1965, and the question

61 Ibid., p.12.
62 Ibid., p.13.
of who should be the next President arose. By his versatile tactics and his genius Kamaraj had made an impact on the position of the AICC Presidentship and naturally many preferred his continuance in that office for another term. Even the Prime Minister Shastri liked the continuance of Kamaraj, inspite of their differences. 63

Since most of the leaders wanted the extension of term, the AICC Working Committee wanted to amend the resolution, that was passed on October 24, 1958 which prevented the AICC President and Secretaries to hold office for more than one term of 2 years. When the AICC met at Bangalore from 23rd to 25th July 1965 a proposal in the form of an amendment was brought before the Congress Working Committee. 64 Morarji opposed the proposed amendment in the Working Committee.

Morarji Desai, not only opposed the amendment in the Congress Working Committee, but made it clear that he would oppose it in the AICC also and recorded his dissent against the plea made by Lal Bahadur Shastri. 65 The attempts of everyone failed to convince Morarji and he spoke in AICC opposing the amendment. But no one supported him in the meeting.


Ultimately the resolution was passed.  

During the second term of his office Kamaraj virtually became a towering personality. He was able to keep the Party's internal feuds in several States at the lowest ebb. He called upon the partymen to keep alive the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru era by working for the people.  

The Prime Minister and Kamaraj were able to arrive at a working arrangement between them inspite of their disagreements on many matters. Unlike the previous Congress Presidents, Kamaraj took the liberty of speaking with authority on domestic and even foreign affairs. Shastri did not shun the Syndicate, nor did he woo it, but kept the Syndicate at arms length.  

Following the issue of a circular by the Home Ministry in 1965, the language issue rocked many of the States in India. The circular, quoted the constitution which read that Hindi in Devanagari Script should be the official language of India, and English would continue to be used as official language till January 26, 1965 and insisted upon the States to reply letters to the Union Government in Hindi. However, Nehru had given an undertaking in the Parliament on August 6, 1959 that it would

66 Ibid., p.226. 
be up to the non-Hindi speaking people to decide when the switch over should be. He had also passed the Official Language Act in 1963, legalising the continued use of English beyond 1965, for all the official purposes of the Union. 68

South India felt that the circular was a violation of Nehru's promise and the Official Language Act of 1963. The people of the south feared that they would have fewer chances of employment, if Hindi were to become the principal language. "Ironically the circular on language was issued on the Republic Day when a 31 Gun Salute welcomed a South Indian President S. Radhakrishnan to a colourful parade in New Delhi. But in Tamilnadu there were riots. The police used tear gas and batons to disperse the crowds protesting against the imposition of Hindi". 69

The DMK took up the issue and warned the people about the northern imperialism. Rajaji, former Governor General and the founder of the Swatantra Party also condemned Hindi imposition and joined hands with the DMK. The Communists ignited the spark of anti-Hindi violence. 70

The problem assumed emotional overtones in the South which distrusted New Delhi. Anti-Congress and anti-Central

Government attitude caught the younger generation particularly. The reaction in the Congress too was so high that C. Subramaniam and O.V. Alagesan, Union Ministers from Tamilnadu submitted their resignations.\textsuperscript{71}

To pacify the agitating South, Shastri announced in a broadcast on February 19, 1965 that Nehru’s assurance will be honoured in letter and in spirit without any qualification and reservation. The Ministers withdrew their resignation on the insistence of Kamaraj.\textsuperscript{72}

The language issue had become an acid test for Kamaraj, because he knew the attitude and aversion of the Tamils towards Hindi. Though a Tamilian, for Kamaraj, the Indian nation and the Congress organisation had been his two eyes, and he was prepared to harm neither.\textsuperscript{73} He was unhappy that the DMK made a capital gain on this issue, by instigating the students and the public, resulting in large scale arson, rioting and loss to life and property. While he condemned the DMK for this unholy practice, he also suggested to the Centre to arrive at an amicable solution.\textsuperscript{74}

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{71} Maniyan, C.S. \textit{Oru Kannottam} (Madras, 1976), pp.107 and 109.
\item\textsuperscript{72} Kuldip Nayar, \textit{Op.cit.}, p.48.
\item\textsuperscript{73} P. Ramachandran, “Congressum Desamum Kamarajin Iru Kangal”, \textit{Navasakthi} (Madras), 15th July 1988.
\item\textsuperscript{74} TNCC Minutes, Vol. 63-67, 19th February 1965, p.95.
\end{itemize}
He moved a resolution in the TNCC, requesting the Union Government to permit the students to write the UPSC examinations in English, Hindi and the regional languages also, so as to help those who were educated in the medium of their mother-tongue, and the resolution was passed and sent to the Congress High Command and Union Government for consideration.  

It was agreed in principle to permit all the languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution to be the media in competitive examination for recruitment. English, even though it was not mentioned in the scheme, was allowed to continue as one of the media. But UPSC and the Law Ministry expressed that a "polyglot examination is difficult to hold because the standardisation in marking papers is not possible". Thus for all intents and purposes English came to stay as the only medium of examination and as an additional language in official transaction. Kamaraj's timely intervention prevented the imposition of Hindi over the non-Hindi speaking States and succeeded in pacifying sentiments of the students in Tamilnadu.

Though Kamaraj felt that Shastri was not of the same stature and therefore not entitled to the same authority as Nehru, Kamaraj never let Shastri down. When Shastri returned from Sri Lanka

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77 Ibid., p.63.
after concluding the Shrimao Bandaranaika and Shastri agreement regarding the Tamils in Sri Lanka, a press correspondent asked him at Madras Airport what would happen to the agreement, if another Government came to power in Sri Lanka. Shastri was taken aback by such an hypothetical question, and was searching for words to answer.

Pat came Kamaraj’s reply in English “don’t go and print any such suggestions in the paper. This is an agreement signed by two democratic Governments. Just as any democratic Government in India would honour this agreement, we expect any successor Government in Ceylon to honour this agreement”. 78

From February 1965 tension mounted in the borders as Pakistan made incursions into the Rann of Kutch in Gujarat. Overtures between Shastri and Ayub Khan to avoid escalations failed; and soon Pakistan attacked India. Shastri ordered the Indian Forces to retaliate on September 1, 1965. 79

The entire nation rallied behind Shastri. All political leaders extended full co-operation. The people, press and parties involved themselves in the collection of War Fund and this apparent unanimity helped Shastri to face the war boldly.


Pakistani infiltrations were decisively countered and the Indian Army marched into Pakistani territories. India occupied considerable territory in Pakistan so as to exchange it with the area that Pakistan had grabbed in Kashmir. After this was accomplished on September 24, 1965 Shastri agreed to a ceasefire with Pakistan on the request of the UNO.\textsuperscript{80}

Kamaraj visited the soldiers on the battle field near Punjab and encouraged them. Soon he donated a huge amount to Lal Bahadur Shastri at Madras.\textsuperscript{81} Shastri paid glowing tributes to Kamaraj for his willing counsel and co-operation all through the war. He expressed his indebtedness to Kamaraj and to Tamilnadu.\textsuperscript{82}

The war was over and the UNO unanimously resolved that both India and Pakistan should withdraw "all armed personnel back to the positions held by them before August 5, 1965". The Soviet Union offered its good offices to bring Shastri and Ayub Khan together.\textsuperscript{83} Shastri accepted the Soviet offer for mediation and left for Tashkent.

After a number of meetings Shastri and Ayub Khan signed

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\textsuperscript{80}\textit{Ibid.}, p.56.
\textsuperscript{82}\textit{Ibid.}, p.233.
\end{flushright}
the Tashkent declaration. By the Tashkent declaration India ceded all the provinces captured in the battle. Yet, a firm guarantee from Pakistan that she would not resort to war could not be obtained. However, it was a personal triumph for Shastri. Ninety minutes after the signing of the declaration he passed away following a massive heart attack on the night of January 10, 1966.

G.L. Nanda, was sworn in as the interim Prime Minister for the second time within 2 years.

Again there was no clear choice, and all the eyes turned towards Kamaraj, the AICC President. Once again Kamaraj had to play the role of a king-maker. Selecting a new Prime Minister became his responsibility, and it proved to be a complicated and difficult task.

The possible contenders this time were reduced to four. Morarji Desai, Y.B. Chavan, G.L. Nanda and Indira Gandhi.

Kamaraj had made up his mind in favour of Indira Gandhi, even while he was travelling from Madras to Delhi after learning of Shastri's death. But he never made his selection public. "He observed his characteristic silence". He wanted the selection

to be unanimous. He was aware that leaders like S.K. Patil, Sanjeeva Reddy and Jagajivan Ram also desired to become the Prime Minister apart from Morarji Desai, G.L. Nanda, Y.B. Chavan and Indira Gandhi.\textsuperscript{87} He also listened patiently to the opinions of other colleagues.

The more determined claimant was Morarji Desai, who openly declared his candidature and started canvassing among the members of the Parliament. This troubled Kamaraj, who entertained an unreasonable fear that election of the Prime Minister by voting, would split the Party and lead to its disruption.\textsuperscript{88}

Kamaraj conferred with the Syndicate and revealed his idea of making Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister. The Syndicate did not accept it at first. Atulya Ghosh even suggested that Kamaraj could become the Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{89} Kamaraj explained why he favoured Indira Gandhi. Being the daughter of Nehru and having been with him for long, she knew the political situation well and could manage the affairs with tact and skill. Her experience in the Cabinet also provided her with the required experience about the state of affairs.

Kamaraj also explained that she would contribute most

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., p.86.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p.84.

to the maintenance of North and South unity and was the most trusted by the Indian minorities. In his opinion she would deal with the States ably and she was highly skilled in the realm of Foreign Policy.90

Above all Kamaraj thought that she was not likely to be rigid, and could be removed easily and would accept his idea of collective leadership. Further he expected that she would remain grateful and indebted to him by taking his advice and guidance.91

Nijalingappa, S.K. Patil, Krishna Menon and Veteran Congress leaders like P.C. Sen warned Kamaraj that she would one day turn against them all.92 But Kamaraj convinced them and made them support Indira Gandhi.

Kamaraj took most of the Chief Ministers, who were his old friends into his confidence. Thoughts about the forthcoming elections made the members of the Parliament join the band wagon of the Syndicate.


91 Personal Interview with K. Srinivasan at New Delhi, on 22nd April 1984.

92 Indian Express (Madras), 11nd June 1990.
On January 19, 1966 the Congress Parliamentary Party voted for the first time to elect the Prime Minister. G.L. Nanda proposed the name of Indira Gandhi and Sanjeeva Reddy seconded it. The name of Morarji Desai was proposed by K. Hanumanthaiah and seconded by T.R. Baliwal. 26 members who could not attend the election expressed their choice secretly. The results were as expected. Indira Gandhi scored 355 votes against 169 of Morarji. Her victorious election in the midst of opposition made Kamaraj the dominant figure in the Congress Party within two years. He became a powerful man and had a force in his own right to direct things. However he believed in collective leadership to govern the country. The Premier to run the Government and the Party President to look after politics was his policy.

Felicitating Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister, Kamaraj spoke that the country was facing a crisis and all should co-operate with her sinking their differences. He indirectly hinted that the collective leadership alone could prevail. Morarji assured his co-operation though he was defeated. While thanking all, Indira Gandhi publicly stated that she considered Kamaraj as the leader and would have his guidance in administering the country.

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In this connection it is necessary to understand why Kamaraj declined the Prime Ministership, though it was offered to him by the Syndicate. Kamaraj himself explained the reasons for his refusal to become the Prime Minister.

According to Kamaraj, had he become the Prime Minister, the electioneering work for 1967 General Elections would have had a setback. If some one amenable was in power he could advise and point out the mistakes boldly. Further he was aware of his own shortcomings. Kamaraj said, "no Hindi, no Parliament, no Prime Minister". 96

His decision in electing Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister proved his ability to feel the pulse of the people, parties and press. At that time the old guards who made Indira Gandhi the Prime Minister were blissfully satisfied with their choice. 97

Indira Gandhi, who owed her elevation to Kamaraj, remained more restrained in the face of the CPP elections and stated "I will do what Kamaraj wants me to do". 98 But she began to reveal her real nature during the selection of her Cabinet colleagues.

Indira Gandhi, a shrewd lady realised her position and the strength of the Syndicate. She did not like Kamaraj's idea of collective leadership and thought that unless she strengthened her base in the Party, she might be losing all the prerogatives of the Prime Minister. At the same time she did not want to annoy anybody when she had yet to find her feet in the Prime Minister's office and when the General Elections were only a year away. She took decisions both in political and economic fronts without consulting the Party President.

To widen her base in the Party, she encouraged large scale defections from other parties to Congress in Bihar.

The first major issue on which Kamaraj differed openly with Indira Gandhi was her pro-American stand and devaluation. Since 1962 the economic condition was not satisfactory and two consecutive wars had cost heavily to India. Further the continuous failure of monsoons and the inefficient food policy followed in different States resulted in scarcity of foodgrains. The Soviet Union too could not help at that juncture and India sought the help of the USA to overcome the crisis. The US administration also wanted to strengthen the Indo-American friendship. There

99 K.T.J. Mohan, Independence to Indira and After (New Delhi, 1977), p.64.
was a possibility of huge USA and World Bank Aid in cash and grains in case India accepted to devalue the Indian rupee to improve the economy.

The Syndicate resented the dictates of the USA and advised her that "we can and shall do without US assistance and in any case we will not debase ourselves to get it". Kamaraj argued with Indira Gandhi that devaluation might help industrialised countries by augmenting industrial productions. But for an agrarian country like India devaluation would cause further damage. He further advised her to get the advice of the economists and not the politicians. But Indira Gandhi firmly answered that she could not go back from her commitment.

"Devaluation, when it came on June 6, 1966 surprised the country and the Cabinet, which was consulted only after the decision had been taken".

Kamaraj's prophecy came true. Devaluation did not bring in the expected results. The economy became further sick, prices


103 Personal Interview with K. Srinivasan at Delhi, on 22nd April 1984.


were rising, and there was no suitable system of distribution. There were lay-offs and shut-downs. 106

The bitter experience of devaluation taught a good lesson to Indira Gandhi. Now she decided to improve her influence both in the Government and Party by adopting the socialistic policies. 107

In July 1966, Kamaraj went on a tour to East European Socialist countries for 23 days. He started on July 22, 1966 and came back on August 15, 1966. He visited the Soviet Union, German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. He met prominent leaders like Brezhnev and Marshal Tito. 108

Completing his Soviet and East European tour, Kamaraj returned to Madras on August 15, 1966 and thenceforth his attention was drawn towards organisational work so as to face the forthcoming General Elections. 109 Since the Party had to face the elections after a disastrous devaluation, Kamaraj insisted upon

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the implementation of the socialist ideologies adopted in the
Bhubaneswar Congress. As a first step he wanted the Nationalisation
of Banks to be incorporated in the Election manifesto. But Indira
Gandhi refused stating that the business magnates and the
industrialists might be offended and without their support it
would be too difficult to win the elections.\textsuperscript{110}

Differences cropped up during the finalisation of the Fourth
Five Year Plan outlay. Even in the selection of candidates for
the Fifth General Elections 1967, the Prime Minister differed with
her Party President. Kamaraj admitted later, "I was proved
wrong. She wanted all power for herself and allowed nobody
to come anywhere near her".\textsuperscript{111}

The year 1967 started with hectic electioneering by all
the parties. The Congress organisation had to work hard to
clinch a victory. Price rise and food shortage were the major
factors before the electorate. As the President of AICC, Kamaraj
had to answer the electorate for the organisation's sins of
omissions and acts of commissions. Hence Kamaraj undertook a
nationwide election tour, which was acclaimed by the press in
India and was well received by the public.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{110} F. Nedumaran, \textit{Op. cit.}, p.44.
\textsuperscript{112} The Hindu (Madras), 5th February 1967.
But despite the hard labour and hectic efforts, the Congress Party met with reverses and setbacks. It secured only 282 seats with a working majority of 22 in the 518 member Lok Sabha, and barely managed to win half of the State Assembly seats in the country (1688 out of 3483). The Party lost the majority in eight States - Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa, Tamilnadu, Kerala, Rajasthan and Punjab and the two Union Territories of Delhi and Manipur. Congress was routed in Tamilnadu, the home State of Kamaraj where it secured only 49 out of 234 seats and the DMK captured power. 113

The defeat of Kamaraj in his own assembly constituency Virudhunagar, came as a shock. He lost to an unfamiliar student P. Srinivasan of the DMK. The following was the result of election of February 1967 in Virudhunagar:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total electorate</th>
<th>82,606</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Votes polled</td>
<td>69,593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Srinivasan (DMK)</td>
<td>33,421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Kamaraj (Congress)</td>
<td>32,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. Palanisamy Nadar (Ind)</td>
<td>579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Periyakaruppan (Ind)</td>
<td>838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid</td>
<td>2,619</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kamaraj was defeated by just 1285 votes.\textsuperscript{114} Commenting on the election results, Kamaraj stated "The results have come as a surprise to me as I believe it has been to others. It seems obvious that people wanted a change and this is reflected in the pattern of voting. Be that as it may, the verdict of the electorate has to be respected. My defeat cannot itself be a matter of great regret when the Congress Party in Tamilnadu has sustained this big defeat".\textsuperscript{115}

Though the poor performance of Congress all over India was however expected, what surprised all was the total rout in Tamilnadu. In the editorial 'The Hindu' wrote "All the pre-election forecast, have been utterly confounded by the sensational and sweeping reverses that the Congress has suffered in Madras. While results are bound to cause deep heart searching within the Congress leadership, the rest of the world will wonder how such a debacle could occur in a State in which by and large, the Congress Ministries' record of achievements was outstanding and significantly better than in many other States".\textsuperscript{116}

C.N. Annadurai, the leader of the DMK who became the Chief Minister, was also shocked at Kamaraj's defeat. In an

\textsuperscript{114} The Hindu (Madras), 24th February 1967.

\textsuperscript{115} The Hindu (Madras), 25th February 1967.

\textsuperscript{116} The Hindu (Madras), 24th February 1967.
interview Annadurai stated, "he was (CNA) really shocked at the reverse the Congress President suffered at the hands of an unknown student". But Kamaraj took the election verdict magnanimously and opined in a dignified manner. "Let us accept the verdict of the electorate, and honour it. At the same time let us strive hard to regain the confidence of the people". Though Kamaraj accepted his defeat as a feature of democracy, many of his followers and general public could not compromise with the defeat of their great leader.†

Unmindful of his defeat, Kamaraj started for Delhi, where another task was waiting for him, as the President of the AICC. To run the Congress Government at the Centre the Prime Minister had to be elected and as usual he became the king-maker for a third time within 3 years. When he reached Delhi, he was accorded a warm welcome by the Prime Minister and all the Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament and many others, indicating that he was still the king-maker.†

117 The Hindu (Madras), 25th February 1967.


† When his followers wept over his defeat, Kamaraj consoled them stating that "I too could be defeated, that is democracy" - The Hindu, 28th February 1967.

119 The Hindu (Madras), 27th February 1967.
As expected, there was contest again. Morarji again threw his hat into the ring for the Party leadership. Kamaraj really felt embarrassed, but handled the situation with consummate skill. The date for the election of Prime Minister was originally scheduled to take place on April 7, 1967. But the date was advanced to March 12, 1967. It was to prevent the Morarji group to have sufficient time to canvass the members of Parliament.

Many Chief Ministers and Members of Parliament by that time started openly supporting Indira Gandhi, who had considerably enhanced her base in the organisation. But this did not deter Morarji from insisting on his right to contest. Morarji strongly felt that Kamaraj would support his claim, based upon his past bitter experiences with Indira Gandhi.

But, then the position of the Party organisation became very weak and Kamaraj felt that unlike the succession issue of 1966, a contest then would be dangerous to the Party and Government. He did not like any division in its ranks, particularly when the Party enjoyed only a small majority in the Lok Sabha. The supporters of Indira Gandhi openly threatened to resign, in case she was not elected as the Prime Minister.


Hence all heads turned towards Kamaraj who alone could work out a compromise.

Kamaraj played the game skilfully. Though he was aware of the overtures of Indira Gandhi and her attitude towards the Syndicate, he was equally sure that Morarji was a man with a very strong mind and would not allow to be controlled by anybody. So naturally his choice was for Indira Gandhi. He spoke to Morarji and shared his concern about the future of the Party, in case of a contest. Morarji reciprocated and agreed to withdraw. This made the election of the Prime Minister unanimous in favour of Indira Gandhi.\(^{124}\)

Though Kamaraj succeeded in averting a split in Congress by making Indira Gandhi the Prime Minister, he was still afraid of her attitude and persuaded her to include Morarji Desai in the Cabinet. He wanted him in the Cabinet to be a check to her.\(^{125}\) Accordingly Morarji Desai was inducted in the Cabinet as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister.\(^{126}\)

Kamaraj felt relieved as the selection process went on smoothly. He was happy that he could balance the Cabinet by

\(^{124}\) Ibid., p.236.

\(^{125}\) *Personal Interview with K. Madhulimaye* at New Delhi, on 24th April 1984.

putting Morarji as a check to the moves and designs of Indira Gandhi whom he was not prepared to believe.\textsuperscript{127}

Indira Gandhi, by then had good support from the young Turks, and former CPI members who had defected to the Congress. They warned her that the Syndicate was firmly in the saddle and this was very bad for her and the Party. And they suggested that she should combine the offices of Prime Minister and Party President as Nehru did once.\textsuperscript{128}

Indira Gandhi liked the idea and she made up her mind to get rid of Kamaraj who was still powerful as the Congress President. Research and Analysis Wing, a new branch created by her, had reported that he was very critical of her and the Government.\textsuperscript{129}

She had her open confrontation with Kamaraj, when the question of presidential candidate came before them in May 1967. While Kamaraj favoured extension of another term for S. Radhakrishnan, she did not accept it because S. Radhakrishnan persuaded her to retain G.L. Nanda as number two in her Cabinet in 1966.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{127} Personal Interview with K. Madhubimaye at New Delhi, on 24th April 1984.


\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., p.95.

Indira Gandhi proposed the name of Zakir Hussain as the presidential candidate. Kamaraj did not agree with her, not because of any enmity with Hussain, but based on the political situation prevailing at that time. He was doubtful of the advisibility of fielding a Muslim as a presidential candidate, when the strength of the Party in Parliament was thin and many States were under the opposition rule. Instead of running a risk, Radhakrishnan, a candidate acceptable to the opposition also, could be brought in unanimously.131

But she not only persisted but also succeeded in getting Zakir Hussain elected as President of India, defeating Subba Rao, the Supreme Court Judge who resigned to contest as the candidate of the opposition. She was then able to go against the opinion of Kamaraj that too successfully and pose as a saviour of the minority rights. Soon she embarked upon other activities to gain the support of the leftist parties and encouraged her men to criticise the rightist old guards in the Congress Party.132

Indira Gandhi diplomatically won over the DMK to her side, by passing the official Languages Amendment Act in December 1967. "This act gave statutory shape to the assurances given

132 Personal Interview with Chandrashekhar at New Delhi, on 23rd April 1984.
to the people of non-Hindi States by Nehru and Shastri. The act ensured a prolonged phase of bilingualism at the Centre by providing the continued use of English in addition to Hindi until non-Hindi States themselves wanted a change. The role of Kamaraj in bringing this legislation was notable but Indira Gandhi became popular.

Meanwhile a handful of active, young Congressmen with leftist views, started demanding radical changes and progressive policies by the Government and they were patronised by Indira Gandhi. These young leaders were members of the Congress Socialist Forum, which was set up as early as 1957 by K.D. Malaviya and S.N. Mishra and consisted of Chandrashekhar, Mohan Dharia, R.K. Sinha, Chandrajit Yadav and Krishna Kant who were known as "Young Turks". Indira Gandhi in her attempt to depopularise the Syndicate, encouraged the Young Turks to put forth radical ideas, which the Syndicate would naturally oppose.

When the CWC met in Delhi, early in March 1967 to discuss the cause of the Congress debacle in the General Election and to decide upon a broad based relationship between the organisational...
and governmental wings of the Party, two resolutions were adopted. The first resolution stated that it was the responsibility of the AICC to enunciate Congress policies and it was the obligation of Congress Governments to implement them. This was a clear warning to the leaders of the organisation that their function was only to frame policies.

The second resolution consisted of a Ten Point Programme to be implemented by the Union and State Governments:

1) Social control of banking institutions.

2) Nationalisation of general insurance.

3) Commoditywise Progress in State trading in imports and exports.

4) State Trading in foodgrains.

5) Expansion of co-operatives.

6) Provision of minimum needs to the community.

7) Regulated removal of monopolies.

8) Regulation of unearned increments in urban land values.

9) Rural Works Programmes, land reforms etc.

10) Abolition of Privileges of Ex-rulers.

135 Ibid., p.702.

136 Ibid.
The first resolution was adopted without any amendment by the AICC during the last week of June 1967. But the first charter of 10 point programme of the second resolution came under severe criticism. The Young Turks wanted immediate nationalisation of banks and insurance institutions, instead of a social control over them. 137

The position of Kamaraj was precarious. He had been emphasising bank nationalisation ever since 1963 even when Nehru was alive. But some of his Syndicate colleagues opposed bank nationalisation on the ground that the industrialists and business people would oppose it. Therefore Kamaraj could not insist upon nationalisation during the AICC Session. 138

At the CWC meeting at Jabalpur in October 1967 once again the question of nationalisation of banks and insurance institutions was vociferously insisted upon by the "Young Turks". Kamaraj also supported the immediate nationalisation but Morarji reiterated his claim for social control and a study of its working for two years, before resorting to nationalisation. Chandrashekar, a leading member of the "young Turks" severely criticised Morarji and his supporters for their conservative views and obstructing

137 Ibid.
the March of the nation. Indira Gandhi endorsed the view of Morarji Desai for the social control over banks.

Kamaraj's second term of Presidency of AICC was nearing the end and Indira Gandhi wanted to counter any move to make Kamaraj again the Party President. His friends wanted that he should continue for another term to serve the Party and the country.

But Indira Gandhi wanted U.N. Dhebar to replace Kamaraj and when U.N. Dhebar declined the offer she favoured G.L. Nanda. Syndicate felt alarmed about the covert activities of Indira Gandhi. S.K. Patil volunteered to contest and so G.L. Nanda refused to contest. To avoid a contest in the Party elections, Indira Gandhi and Kamaraj met several times and she went on suggesting new names. Mohanlal Sukhadhia and Sanjivaiah were the other names to which Kamaraj did not agree because both of them were her men. Names of some senior leaders were referred to like that of Morarji, Jagjivanram and Y.B. Chavan.

Eventually there was an agreement on the selection of Nijalingappa, then Chief Minister of Mysore. Nijalingappa


expressed his acceptance on December 7, 1967 and he was unanimously elected as the President of AICC to succeed Kamaraj. Even in the election of his successor the choice of Kamaraj prevailed, and till the end of his term Kamaraj remained a powerful and dynamic personality.

Kamaraj had dominated the national politics since the Kamaraj Plan and had played a decisive role in the succession battles after the demise of Nehru and Shastri. He was instrumental in introducing the Congress programmes of Democratic Socialism and averted calamities to the Party by successfully solving the three succession issues.

Indira Gandhi accepted Nijalingappa as Kamaraj’s successor with the hope that though chosen by Kamaraj, he could be won over later. Little did she realise that he would be one of her bitterest opponents in the years to come.¹⁴²

¹⁴² Ibid., p.111.