

## **CONGRESS SOCIALIST PARTY**

### **The Origin of the All-India Congress Socialist Party**

The formation of the All India Congress Socialist Party in 1934 was a very important chapter in the history of Socialism in India. The party was formed through the culmination of a series of events between the period 1931 and 1934. It was founded as a result of the feelings of grave resentment among the Congress Socialists and other radicals with the policies and programmes of the Indian National Congress. The failure of the Civil Disobedience Movements of 1930 and 1932, coupled with the failure of two Round Table Conferences created an atmosphere of dejection and depression throughout the country. Added to it, was the domination of the Gandhian Right Wing tendencies, which compelled the young radical Congressmen to give organisational expression to their feelings. These leftist Congressmen felt convinced of the need for giving a new orientation to the nationalist movement, alongwith a redefinition of its objectives and revision of its method.

The events which led to the formation of the All India Congress Socialist Party can best be analysed in the perspective of events immediately preceding 1934. In July 1931, a number of Congressmen imbued with Marxian-Socialism had organised a Socialist Party in Bihar under the leadership of Jaya Prakash Narayan. It was the first organisation in country, which was formed on an ideological basis of the future All India Congress Socialist Party. The Bihar Socialist Party soon became the spearhead of the Socialist Movement in the country. From its very inception, every member of the Bihar Socialist Party was required to be a member of the Indian National Congress. The persons, who played an important role in the formation of the party were: Jaya Prakash Narayan, Phulan Prasad Verma and Rahul Sankritayan, etc. The Party had set the following two main objectives before it:

- (i) Propagation of the Socialist ideas;
- (ii) Formation of labour and peasants' organisation.

An organising committee of the Party was established with Abdul Bari as President, Ganga Sharan Sinha and P. P. Verma as Secretaries and

**Ambika Kant Sinha as the Treasurer. The Provincial Party started well but soon the revival of the Civil Disobedience Movement in January 1932 and the arrest of most of its leaders crippled its activities.**

**Apart from Bihar, Socialists were also active in Benaras. Sometime in March 1930, their leader, Sampurnanand, had published a booklet entitled "When We Are In Power", which contained a comprehensive list of the Socialist programmes. The booklet was widely distributed and it even drew serious attention of the Government. The main programme as stated in it were as follow:**

- (i) Abolition of Zamindari with compensation;**
- (ii) Consolidation of holding;**
- (iii) Nationalisation of key-industries and principal means of transport;**
- (iv) Fixation of minimum wages and maximum hours of work;**
- (v) Provision of work or maintenance, also, old-age pension;**
- (vi) Every woman to have leave on full-pay, one month before and after accouchment;**
- (vii) Food and free elementary education to be provided by the State to every child whose parents cannot afford these;**
- (viii) Total prohibition;**
- (ix) No salt tax.**

**However, it was not till May 1934 that the Benaras group of Socialist could form a Socialist Party. Prominent among those who formed it were: Sampurnanand, Tarapada Bhattacharya, Kamlapati Tripathi and Paripurnanand.**

**Thus in Benaras, as in many other places, interest in Socialism was rapidly growing. The people mostly from middle class intelligentsia fell under the influence of Socialist ideas, and they believed that sooner or later, it is the ideology of Socialism which would relieve the Congress of the morass into which it had fallen.**

**Similar to the Bihar Provincial Socialist Party, the leftist minded Congressmen of other provinces also started organising themselves and soon Socialist parties were formed in U.P., Punjab, Delhi and Bombay. In U.P., as noticed above, a Socialist Party was formed in May 1934, under the leadership of Sampurnanand. In the Punjab, sometime in September 1933, leftist Congressmen thoroughly disgusted with the role of New Jawan Bharat Sabha, formed the Punjab Socialist Party, as a platform of the militant left Nationalists. The Party's headquarters was at Lahore with M. J. Lal Kapur and Feroz Chand as its first President and Secretary, respectively. The Punjab Socialist Party was completely under the Marxist ideas. The Party had set for itself the objective of the establishment of a new economic order in which the labourers would be**

entitled to the full benefit of their labour and there would be no exploitation of any class by another. The immediate aim of the Party, was nationalisation of land and of large-scale industries.

By the end of 1933, inspired by Jawaharlal Nehru, the Socialists in Bombay like, Yusuf Meharally, M.R. Masani, Achyut Patwardhan and Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya had formed the first Congress Socialist group in Bombay. Thereafter, on 25 February 1934, at the initiative of M.R. Masani, a meeting was held in Bombay, where the Bombay Presidency Congress Socialist Group was formed. Initially, the Party was started without any President, but with two Secretaries, M.R. Masani and Purshottam Das Tricamdas. After some time, the latter was replaced by Yusuf Meherally. The task before the party, as stated by Masani in his letter to Jawaharlal Nehru dated 19 December 1933, was to place before the people and Congressmen, "a programme—that would be socialist in action and objective". He wrote, "The group would do socialist propaganda among rank and file of Congressmen with a view to converting the Congress to an acceptance of Socialism." He added, "We would also carry on propaganda among the workers and peasants and at the same time participating in their day-to-day economic struggle."

Apart from the formation of these Socialist parties in some of the provinces, an All India Working Class Party was also formed at Jabalpur in 1934, by some of the politically conscious trade union leaders, who were under the influence of socialist ideology. The leading lights of the party were Shivrath Banerji, Hariharnath Shastri, Dr. V. Mukherjee, among others. As the name suggests, it was an ultra-Marxist Party and hence its object was the establishment of Socialist Republic by a complete overthrow of the capitalist system.

In U.P., besides the formation of a Socialist group, the Provincial Congress Committee was completely under the influence of the Provincial Congress Committee, passed a resolution in which they expressed the view that political freedom must be accomplished by social and economic freedom of the "exploited masses and the National programme and policy must be based on the transfer of political and economic power to the masses".

In the meantime, side by side with the formation of the Socialist Groups within the Congress, Swarajya Parties were also formed in Bombay and Madras in 1933, and the old Swarajya Party, which was in abeyance since 1930, was revived on an all-India basis. Its revival had a profound influence on both the nationalist and socialist movements of the country. The party was very influential from 1922-1930, but from 1930 onwards, it was more or less a dead party. After the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement, a move was made by some of the Congressmen, who believed in the Council-entry programme to revive an All-India Swarajya Party. With Gandhiji's blessings, on 31 March 1934, a Conference

of the like-minded Congress leaders was held in Delhi presided over by Bhulabhai Desai. After long deliberations and armed with Gandhiji's support, the Conference passed the following resolution:

"In the opinion of this Conference, the All India Swarajya Party, which has been in abeyance since 1930, should be revived in order to enable Congressmen, who are not offering Satyagraha to undertake through an organisation constructive programme as contemplated in the Poona Settlement."

Dr. M.A. Ansari, along with Bhulabhai Desai, later met Gandhiji, who spontaneously supported the revival of the Swarajya Party and promised to give his all assistance to the Party. Gandhiji also endorsed the decision of the Delhi Conference to take part in the forthcoming elections to the Assembly.

The Swarajists, therefore, called another Conference at Ranchi in the beginning of May 1934, which was largely attended by Congressmen of different ideologies. Among the Socialists, it was also attended by M.R. Masani, who put forward a resolution, which called upon them to undertake "the organisation of peasants and workers for the participation in the struggle against imperialism and Indian vested interest allied with them". The resolution, when put to vote, was defeated by a clear majority of 40 to 26 votes. It was evident from this that the party leadership was still in the old rut and was not prepared to adopt Socialist transformation of the Society.

The Congress Socialists and other radical-minded Congressmen considered the economic policy of the Swarajya Party, as essentially outdated and unprogressive. They believed that the goal of national independence was inadequate unless it was accompanied by a Socialist organisation of the Society. They ridiculed the Swarajists' 'Constructive-programme' and argued that it was the workers and peasants, who should be at the backbone of their struggle. Further expressing diametrically opposite view, the Socialists argued that instead of a "spinning wheel", we should go to the peasants with the "militant force of economic programme".

The younger nationalists bitterly opposed the carrying of the Nationalist struggle along constitutional and parliamentary lines as contemplated by the Swarajists.

Hence, the revival of an All-India Party with such a conservative outlook, ideology and programme, was considered by the Socialists as a challenge to them, and they now felt all the more convinced of the need of the formation of an All-India Socialist Party with a view to counteract such manœuvres of the Right Wingers. As already seen, various socialist groups had emerged in various provinces and now it was a question of their amalgamation into one single All-India Socialist Party.

In the meantime a group of Congressmen with Socialist leanings,

who had attended the Congress Poona Conference, out of utter disgust, met separately for the purpose of forming a Socialist Party. They bitterly criticised the Gandhian policies and programmes and described the Karachi Resolution on Fundamental Rights as 'halting and self-contradictory'. They stressed upon the need for further widening of the Congress base and with the active support of Nehru they wanted to convert the Congress into a Socialist ideology and programme.

While these developments were taking place outside, inside the Nasik Central Prison, where the convicts of the Civil Disobedience Movements were lodged, equally or perhaps more important development took place which proved to be a landmark in the history of Indian Socialist Movement. It was the formulation of the idea to establish Congress Socialist Party. In Nasik prison, there were a mixture of people—the Congress Socialists, the Communists, the Terrorists, and also the young radical-minded Congressmen. Most important among them were: Jaya Prakash Narayan, Asoka Mehta, Achyut Patwardhan, Yusuf Meherally, N.G. Gore, M.R. Masani, S.M. Joshi, M.L. Dantwala, etc. All of them were strong Nationalists as well as Socialists.

These Nasik prisoners prepared the blueprint of the Congress Socialist Party, which was to function within the National Congress. Unlike the leadership of the Communist Party of India, these leaders regarded the Congress as the main nationalist organisation in the country on whose platform the national struggle could be successfully carried on. They, however, at the same time, accepted that the Congress as it existed at that time, was not a mass political organisation in the proper sense of the term, as in their view it had no socio-economic programme for the exploited dumb millions of the country. As Masani remarked later, "The Socialists felt that the two Civil Disobedience Movements failed to achieve their objective because of inadequate mass response, not caused by a lack of ingredients of a revolutionary situation but owing to the restricted nature of the appeal made by the Congress. The call of the Congress was to the individual and not to the masses." Hence, their endeavour was to remove this ideological weakness of the organisation.

In the meantime, on 3 April, 1934, the next move in the direction came when a pamphlet entitled "A Tentative Socialist Programme for India", prepared by Sampurnanand, was circulated among the Congress Socialists. The following excerpt from the pamphlet is worthy of special mention here. It observed:

"It is a strange irony of fate that while there are a large number of socialists, many of them sincere Marxists, in India, there is no All India Socialist Party to organise and focus their activities with a definite programme known to the country. There are, no doubt, very active socialist groups in many provinces, but for various reasons, they have so far not been able to gain for socialism a place, which rightfully belongs

to it. . . . Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru rendered very valuable service by trying to popularise socialism in the eyes of politically minded people."

It went on: "The need for the organisation of a socialist group, an important section of which at least should be affiliated to the Congress, for the present, is being very greatly felt at this time. The capitalists, upper bourgeois are actively engaged in entrenching themselves behind various pseudo-national organisation. It is we alone, who are allowing our case to go by default."

The pamphlet contained a fifteen-point fulfilled Socialist programme to be the basis of the proposed party.

As was expected, soon after his release from jail, Jaya Prakash Narayan hurried to organise the first All-India Congress Socialist Conference at Patna on 17 May 1934. The Conference was significant as it met just a day before the All India Congress Committee was going to meet to formally call off the Civil Disobedience Movement and start constitutional and parliamentary activities. According to Yusuf Meherally, "It was in the fitness of things that the Left Wing also should organise its forces to prevent this drift to the Right."

The Conference met under the Presidentship of Acharya Narendra Deva, a celebrated Marxist theoretician. It was attended by over one hundred Socialist delegates from different parts of the country. All the prominent leaders attending the Conference expressed their concern at the revival of the Swarajya Party. Acharya Narendra Deva, in his address, said : "Socialism has come to stay in India. But most of us in the Congress today are mere intellectual socialists . . . We should avoid dogmatism and secretarianism. We must take out stand on scientific socialism or social reformism." Explaining the reasons for convening the conference, he remarked that it was convened, "to prevent an outright drift to constitutionalism and to put a more dynamic programme before the country." He continued : "The whole movement stands in danger of being deflected from its revolutionary path and if the Congress is again made to travel the old barren path of constitutionalism and reformism, it will turn itself into a morass from which it will not be possible for it to extricate itself."

The Conference decided to organise soon another All India Conference at which an All India Congress Socialist Party was to be formally inaugurated. A committee was appointed to draft a constitutional and programme for the Congress Socialist Party. The members of the drafting Committee were :

1. Acharya Narendra Deva as its President
2. Jaya Prakash Narayan as Secretary
3. C.C. Banerji
4. Faridul Huq

By other resolution, it was resolved that "Jaya Prakash Narayan be appointed the organising Secretary of the All-India Congress Socialist Conference to organise provincial congress socialist groups, where they do not exist on the basis of the programme adopted by the drafting committee and arrange for an All-India Conference to form an All-India Congress Socialist Party, immediately and prior to the next session of the Indian National Congress."

The drafting committee met twice, first at Patna and later at Benaras and drew the party's constitution and programme. According to the decision of the Patna Conference, Jaya Prakash Narayan, who was the organising Secretary, was entrusted with the task of organising provincial Congress Socialist units. He worked very hard, strenuously travelling from place to place, gathering together all leftist elements, setting up Congress Socialist groups everywhere. As a result of his relentless and untiring efforts rapid strides were made on organisational plane, so much so that at the time of Patna Conference, there were only three provincial parties and by the time the Bombay Conference took place, their number swelled to thirteen. This in itself was a big success as these provincial parties were to federate to form an All-India Congress Socialist Party.

Shortly after the first session of the All-India Congress Socialist Party was held in Bombay on 21 and 22 October 1934, where the party was formally inaugurated. The first open session of the party was attended by 150 delegates coming from all parts of the country. All the 13 provincial Congress Socialist Parties, from these provinces, namely, U.P., Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra, Bengal, Kerala, Bihar, Delhi, Berar, C.P., Utkal and Ajmer were amalgamated to form an All-India party. It was presided over by Sampurnanand, with Purshottamdas Tricamdas as the Chairman of the Reception Committee. All the prominent Socialist leaders took active part in it. The average age of C.S.P. leadership at the time of the Bombay Conference was only 30 years. Thus, youthfulness and exuberance characterised the leadership of the party.

In his welcome address, Purshottamdas Tricamdas described the Congress Socialists assembled there as those representing the elements, who after having fought for nearly three years, had fully realised both ideological and organisational weakness of the Indian National Congress, and who earnestly wanted to remove those weaknesses and limitations. He further said that in their analysis it were the weaknesses and the limitations of the National Congress, which were hampering the successful march of the national movement. He remarked: "Mistakes are made . . . even by the wisest and most foresighted, but wisdom lies in admitting and taking lessons from them. He further remarked that : "an ostrich-like policy of shutting your eyes and pretending that all is well have never done good to any body." He warned the participants against placing any faith in the bonafides of the imperialist Government. Sur-

prisingly enough, there was no presidential address from Sampurnanand and the Party adopted the revised constitution and programme.

The party was named as All-India Congress Socialist Party. The word 'Congress' which was prefixed to 'Socialist' signified the organic relationship which the party leadership felt the party should have with the national movement. In the aims and objects, the party was quite similar to that of the British Labour Party.

Regarding the membership of the party, it was provided that, "The party shall consist of the members of the Indian National Congress, who are members of a Provincial Congress Socialist Party, provided that they are not members : (1) of any communal organisation, (2) or of any other political organisation, whose objects and programmes are in the opinion of the party inconsistent with its own. It meant that no one could become a member of the Congress Socialist Party without first becoming a member of the Indian National Congress.

The Constitution provided for an affiliated Congress Socialist Party in every province.

It was provided that the "Executive Committee of the party shall be elected in the annual Conference and shall consist of one General Secretary, three Joint Secretaries and eleven other members."

The Party's programme was classified under three main heads : (i) Objective, (ii) Plan of Action, (iii) Immediate Demands. Under the first, it was further clarified what the Congress Socialist Party meant by the term complete independence. It said : "Independence must mean the establishment of an Independent State, where, in all, power is transferred to the producing masses, and much objective involves refusal to compromise at any stage with the British Imperialism." By another resolution, the Conference further elaborated what the term 'Swaraj' implied for the masses. It stated :

"The Conference is of the opinion that to enable the masses to appreciate what 'Swaraj' as conceived by the Congress will mean to them, it is desirable to state the position of the Congress in a manner easily understandable by them. In order to end the exploitation of the masses, political freedom must include the real economic freedom of the starving millions. The Congress, therefore, declares, that the future Constitution of the Indian States shall be based on the following fundamental principles :

1. Transfer of all power to the producing masses.
2. Development of the economic life of the country to be planned and controlled by the State.
3. The Socialisation of key and principal industries (e.g. steel, cotton, jute, railways, shipping, plantations, mines, insurance and public utilities, with a view to the progressive socialisation



- of the instruments of production, distribution and exchange.
- 4. State monopoly of foreign trade.
- 5. Organisation of cooperatives for production, distribution and credit in the unsocialised sector of the economic life.
- 6. Elimination of princes and landlords and other classes of exploiters, without compensation.
- 7. Redistribution of land to the peasants.
- 8. The State to encourage and control cooperative and collective farming.
- 9. Liquidation of debts owned by peasants and workers.
- 10. Recognition of the right to work or maintenance by the State.
- 11. To everyone, according to his means, is to be the basis ultimately of distribution on economic grounds.
- 12. Adult franchise, which shall be on a functional basis.
- 13. The State shall neither support nor discriminate between religions nor recognise any distinction based on caste or community.
- 14. The State shall not discriminate between the sexes.
- 15. Repudiation of the so-called public debt of India.

The plan of action called the party :

- 1 To work within the Indian National Congress with a view to secure its acceptance of the objects and programmes of the party.
- 2. To organise peasants and labour Unions.
- 3. To organise and participate in youth leagues, women's organisations, voluntary organisations, etc. for the purpose of getting their support to the programme of the Party.
- 4. To actively oppose all Imperialist wars and the utilisation of such other crisis for the intensification of the national struggle.
- 5. To refuse to enter at any stage into negotiations on Constitutional issues with the British Government.

In the immediate demands, there were about thirty items, which included political and economic demands and labour and peasants' demands, but there was nothing revolutionary about them. Thus, at its very first session, the party passed such wide-ranging resolutions which, as would be seen later, made their profound impact on the resolutions passed by the subsequent session of the Congress and the policies adopted by the future Congress Governments.

The Bombay A.I.C.S.P. Conference passed another important resolution, which stated as under :

"This Conference is of the opinion, that no member of C.S.P. should

become an office bearer in any Congress organisation, except where the organisation concerned has resolved to carry out the party's immediate programme of work as indicated in the draft programme of the All India Congress Socialist Party and the Executive Committee of the provincial Congress Socialist Party gives previous permission to accept office, and calls upon those Congress socialists, who are office bearers in any organisation, whose programme does not conform to that of the C.S.P., to give up their office."

An Executive Committee with Jaya Prakash Narayan as the General Secretary and M.R. Masani, Mohan Lal Gautam, N. G. Goray and E.M.S Namboodiripad as Joint Secretaries; the following were its members, namely : Acharya Narendra Deva, Sampurnanand, Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya, Purshottamdas Tricumdas, P.Y. Deshpande, Ram Manohar Lohia, S.M. Joshi, Amarendra Prasad Mitra, Charles Mescarnes, Naba Krishna Chaudhury and Achyut Patwardhan.

### **Brief Biographical Sketch of the C S P Stalwarts**

As some of the leaders of the party played a very important role in shaping party's ideology, programme and its subsequent evolution, it would be worthwhile to study the social origin and the political philosophy of some of the stalwarts of the party.

### **Jaya Prakash Narayan**

The most outstanding of them was undoubtedly Jaya Prakash Narayan. He was one of the founding fathers of the party and for many years remained its General Secretary. He was the most popular leader of the party and at that time a Marxist in the true sense of the term. He was born in Sitabdiara village of Bihar, in a poor peasant family and, by family background he was well suited to come under the influence of Marxian ideas. His meteoric rise into eminence from such a low social and economic level is really exemplary. In a very short span of his political career, he shot up into political prominence as the youngest front-rank leader of the national movement. Jaya Prakash Narayan began his educational career with natural sciences, but later changed to Economics and Sociology. Sometime in October 1922, Jaya Prakash Narayan went to the United States for getting higher education and it was there that he was first exposed to the Marxian precepts of class struggle. When he reached the University of California, he found that the University's session had not commenced. Hence he decided to work in fruit farms during spare time so as to earn his livelihood. During the course of his stay in America, he did all types of work. He worked very hard even on Sundays and other holidays. He was astonished to see "the prevalence of great wealth and grinding poverty side by side." Subsequently, when he came into contact with the American Communists, he

joined the American Communist Party. In America he also made a close study of the trade union movement. On his way back to India in 1929, while in London, he was disillusioned to know that the Indian Communist Party was just an agent of Moscow. Nevertheless, he started devouring the classics of Marxism and before long, but not without a powerful mental struggle, he became a confirmed Socialist. When he returned to India, Jawaharlal Nehru placed him in charge of the Labour Research Department of the Indian National Congress. At that time Jaya Prakash Narayan was a strong critic of Gandhism. He joined the Indian National Congress, but remained a thorough Marxist. For a considerable period, he believed in Marxian doctrines of class struggle and in revolutionary methods for achieving independence and socialist objectives. He elaborated his political ideology in a scholarly work, "Why Socialism?" which contained the political philosophy of the Congress Socialist Party. Like many other Indian Socialists, he was profoundly influenced by the Russian Revolution and its many sided achievements. Gandhiji wrote about him, "...It may be said that what he does not know on Western Socialism nobody else in India does."

Like A.O. Hume in 1885, Jaya Prakash Narayan in 1934, channelised the rising discontentment among the younger Congress leaders through the "safety valve" of the Congress Socialist Party, a group formed within the Indian National Congress. It was a great contribution of Jaya Prakash Narayan that he diverted the young radical nationalists from their bizarre revolutionary, destructive path to a constructive socialist opposition to both Congress Right Wing and Imperialist Government.

### **Acharya Narendra Deva**

Acharya Narendra Deva, though not a member of the original 'Nasik Group' of socialists was the grey eminence of the Socialist Party for more than two decades. It has been well said by a contemporary scholar about Narendra Deva that 'his erudition overwhelms you, his sweet reasonableness disarms you, his inexhaustible patience imprisons you, the chains of his silken logic captivates you almost without your being aware of it'. Narendra Deva was born in 1890 in U.P., his father, Babu Baldev Prasad, was a famous lawyer. His father wanted him to study law and follow his footsteps, but Narendra Deva from his very early age was tempted towards Indian history, culture and archaeology and had actually joined the Queen's College of Epigraphy at Benaras. However, as per his father's wishes, he did join Law. But soon he jumped into active politics in his home town Fyzabad and joined Home Rule League and attended various sessions of the Indian National Congress. Narendra Deva in his very young age admired National leaders like Ranade, Romesh Chandra Dutt, Lokmanya Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal. These stalwarts made deep impressions on him with their "Left" "Radi-

cal" ideology. Among the Western thinkers, who influenced him were Sydney Webb, Mazzini, Bluntschelli and Karl Marx. He also came under the influence of Russian Revolution and soon became well conversant with Marxian theories, Marxian dialectics and the materialistic interpretations of history. He was one of the great Marxist theoretician of the Socialist Party and was considered as one of the outstanding exponents of Marxism in India. He, along with Jaya Prakash Narayan, represented Marxian trend and tendency of the Party.

### **Sampurnanand**

Another luminary of the Party was Sampurnanand, who had written as early as 1930, a booklet : "When we were in power", which contained a comprehensive programme of the Socialist organisation of society. He was also one of the top-ranking leaders of the Party, who presided over the first Bombay Conference of the Party. In 1936, he wrote another book, called "Samajvad", which abounds in Marxist ideas and formulations. In his work, he called himself a Scientific Socialist and a fullfledged Marxist. Thus, he also symbolised the Marxian trends of the party along with Jaya Prakash Narayan and Acharya Narendra Deva.

### **Yusuf Meherally**

Yusuf Meherally was another important leader of the Congress Socialist Party. He was born in 1903. His father, Jaffer Meherally, was a wealthy businessman of Bombay, while his great-grand-father had founded the first Indian Textile Mill. Yusuf Meherally was brought up in a rich aristocratic family. The Meherally family was traditionally pro-British. When in 1930, Meherally was arrested and sent to jail for participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement; his family members resented for his being a "law breaker". Meherally never occupied any office but he was also among the top leaders of the party. He closely studied the history of revolutions and was deeply influenced by the writings of Mazzini and Garibaldi, and by the 'Sinn Fein Movement' of Ireland. He earnestly tried to radicalise the National Movement. He was the founder of the Bombay Provincial Youth League, which took very prominent part in the demonstrations against the Simon Commission. It was he who on 3 February 1928, gave the slogan "Go Back Simon", which was echoed in every nook and corner of India. He became very popular in the country and won the appreciation of even Mahatma Gandhi.

He was the moving spirit behind youth activities in his province and presided over a number of youth conferences. Meherally was Editor of an important Weekly called *Vanguard*, which was known for its bold nationalist publications,

### **Achyut Patwardhan**

Achyut Patwardhan, who is still alive, was a frontranking Congress Socialist leader. He was also a prisoner in the Nasik Central Prison and played an important role in the formation and subsequent development of the Party. Born in 1905, Patwardhan is a son of a wealthy theosophist father and was educated at Benaras Hindu University. He is more a Gandhian than a Socialist. He believed in "democratic socialism", and was influenced by the Gandhian concept of decentralisation and non-violent revolution. Patwardhan represents 'Gandhian strand in Indian Socialism as against Marxian Socialism. He has the distinction of becoming a member of the Congress Working Committee at the young age of 31 years in 1936.

### **Ram Manohar Lohia**

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia was the stormy petrel and highly controversial figure of the Indian politics as well as of the socialist movement. He was born on 23 March, 1910, in a Vaish family at Akbarpur in Faizabad District of UP. Lohia's father, Hiralal, was a Nationalist and was under the influence of Gandhiji. It is said that when Lohia was hardly ten years old, his father took him to Gandhiji for his blessings and from very early age he came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and work Khadi. In 1928, he attended a Youth Conference and came in close contact with Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose. For higher studies he went to the Berlin University from where he obtained Doctoral Degree in 1932 for his excellent thesis on "Satyagraha". He came in close contact with Dr. Schumacher, Brailsford and other social Democratic leaders. Like Patwardhan, he was not under the complete spell of Marxism and represented along with him Gandhian strand in the Congress Socialist Party. In 1936, he was placed by Nehru in charge of the newly created Foreign Affairs Department of the All India Congress Committee. He remained on the Secretaryship of the Foreign Affairs Department till September 1, 1938, when he resigned in the wake of the Congress decision debarring a member of the Congress Working Committee from occupying any office in other organisation. Nevertheless until 1948, when the Socialists severed their connection with the Congress, he alongwith Nehru played an important role in shaping the emerging foreign policy of the Congress and thereby of the post-independent India. Lohia was the founder of the Journal, *Congress Socialist*, first published from Calcutta and edited by him and later from Bombay. The *Congress Socialist* became the official organ of the Congress Socialist Party.

### **Asoka Mehta**

Another Socialist leader, who needs special mention is Asoka Mehta.

He was born in 1911 at Ahmedabad. Asoka Mehta's father was an outstanding literary figure in Gujarat. His father played an important role in founding many cultural and educational institutions, including the famous Gujarati Sahitya Parishad. Unfortunately, when Asoka was only eight years old, he lost his parents. He had his early education at Sholapur and for higher studies he moved to Bombay. It was here that he got attracted towards the rising wave of national movement and also trade union movement. It is said once Asoka, along with his other friends, stopped the car of Mohammed Ali Jinnah, who was wearing his usual suit and tie and asked him, "Why don't you discard this foreign dress and wear khaddar?"

In 1932, he was arrested and imprisoned for a term of 2½ years for participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Asoka Mehta was also a member of the 'Nasik Group of prisoners' who took an active part in preparing the blueprint of the Congress Socialist Party. For a number of years he was the Editor of the Journal *Congress Socialist*. He took charge of the Journal after its office was shifted from Calcutta to Bombay and continued editing it till 1939, when it was finally closed down. Ashoka Mehta is a good example of Fabian or Social Democratic strand in Indian Socialism. He, too, has not been a dogmatic Marxist and was against pure importation of the Russian methods and techniques of revolution. Asoka Mehta took active interest in the trade union movement and organised unions in General Motors Ltd., Richardson and Cruddas and the Times of India. He also played a very important role in organising and strengthening the 'Hind Mazdoor'. It was, in fact, largely due to him that the Hind Mazdoor Sabha later developed into a powerful and a genuine trade union organisation in the country. Asoka Mehta was a voracious reader, a brilliant debator and a thinker. He has got several outstanding publications to his credit. In 1977, when Janata Party was formed, he also became a member of it and was associated with it till the time of his death in 1984.

### **M. R. Masani**

Then we come to M.R. Masani, whose career has spanned the gamut of political ideologies from Left to the extreme Right. Masani had his educational career at the famous London School of Economics. But, unlike his contemporaries, he was not much influenced by Harold Laski, who was at that time one of the pace setters of the London School of Economics. In his student days, he had been profoundly influenced by the Fabians and other theoreticians of the British Labour Party. From the very beginning, he was opposed to the Communists for their taking guidelines from Moscow and having extra-territorial loyalty. Masani, who was a very important leader of the Congress Socialist Party, later turned to Gandhism and still later joined the Right Wing Swatantra

Party, which he represented in Parliament for a number of years. He was also a member of the Constituent Assembly and had been a Mayor of Bombay.

### **Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya**

Lastly, we come to Mrs. Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya who among front-ranking Congress Socialist leaders, played an important role in making the Congress Socialist Party an effective instrument of national struggle. She was born in a well-to-do Saraswat family of Mangalore in 1903. Her father was a civil servant, for whom, like the typical bureaucrats of those days, national movement was an anathema. But, Kamala Devi was inspired by her grand-mother, who was a devout scholar of Sanskrit and Indology. In 1910, when Kamla Devi was just seven years old, her father died. She inherited from her mother strong qualities of head and heart. In her youth, she was extremely charming and had a passion for art and literature. She married twice but her married life was not so happy. When Kamla was hardly thirty years of age, she found herself in the thick of the national struggle for freedom. In 1927, she was elected to the All India Congress Committee (AICC) and also became an important member of the Hindustan Seva Dal.

She played a very important role in the 1930 Civil Disobedience Movement (Salt Satyagraha) and, like Aruna Asaf Ali in 1942 Movement, became quite popular in the country. She had the distinction of being the first woman to be arrested in that movement. She also took prominent part in organising the women's section of the Congress Volunteer Corps. By this time she had come under the spell of Socialist ideology and when the Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1934, she at once joined it and started taking important role in the activities of the party. She had the distinction of presiding over the most important Meerut Conference of the CSP. In the deliberations of the AICC, she, on behalf of the Congress Socialists, took prominent part in influencing the parent body, with the party's radical ideology and programme. In 1942, she was arrested for participating in the 'Quit India' Movement. In 1946, she was made a member of the Congress Working Committee by Jawaharlal Nehru. She also played an important role in several voluntary social and cultural organisations, especially for women welfare. She worked tirelessly for the political, socio-economic emancipation of the masses. Indeed, her life is a story of sacrifice, suffering and hard work.

### **The Congress Socialist Party and the United Socialist Front**

Right from its birth, the Congress Socialist Party, as an important left wing group in the country, strived hard to establish an United Socialist Party of India, by amalgamating within its fold all left wing elements. At that time, there were two other important left Parties, in

the country, the Communist Party of India, which exercised considerable influence on the left wing politics of the time and the other was the group of the followers of M.N. Roy, known as Royists. There were three leftist parties, which had formed an United Left Front from 1939-40, for vigorously pursuing an Anti-Imperialist struggle and, as well as, a counterweight against Congress Right dominance in the Congress. For a clear understanding of the role, the CSP played in furthering its objectives, the study of Party's relations with the Communists and Royists becomes inevitable. Hence we shall discuss at some length the role played by the Party in the successful working of the fronts.

After the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, as a ginger group within the Indian National Congress, International Communist policy took a sudden change as a result of the new strategy of the United Front announced by the seventh world Congress of the Communist International at its meeting in Moscow from 25 July to 20 August, 1935. The former, strictly sectarian policy, formulated by the sixth Comintern in 1928 had crippled and isolated the Communist Parties and their movements in most of the countries of the world. This ultra leftist line of Sixth Communist International, had brought about the total isolation and decadence of the Communist Party of India from the mainstream of the National Movement. In India, this accounts for a revision in their policy. However, in the West the concept of "United Front" was originated by the Communists in order to meet the challenge posed by the growing menace of Fascism and Nazism.

The full implications of this changed Comintern policy were not fully grasped by the Indian Communists until the two comrades of the Communist Party of Great Britain, namely, R. Palme Dutt and Ben Bradley, presented their thesis, under the caption "The Anti-Imperialist People's Front in India". The thesis declared that "The National Congress has, undoubtedly achieved a gigantic task in uniting wide forces of the Indian people for the national struggle. . . The National Congress can play a great and a foremost part in the work of realising the Anti-Imperialist People's front." It called for the unity of all left wing forces and stated that the rallying of the leftist forces in the Congress was to be attained only through the platform of the Congress Socialist Party.

Precisely, the thesis called upon the Indian Communists to come closer to the Congress Socialist Party for an onslaught on the Congress Right Wing leadership as well as the imperialists.

The Congress Socialist Party which was already sincerely looking forward at the prospect of forming an United Socialist Front, became very jubilant at the new orientation in the Communist policy. The Party had already acquired the friendship of Royists (the followers of M.N. Roy). The Party leadership now became quite confident of thrash-



ing out a real United Socialist Party of India, comprising all leftist forces—Communists, Royists, Trade Unionists. As such, sometime in January 1936, at its second annual conference at Meerut, the National Executive of the CSP by a unanimous resolution opened the Party's door for individual communists. It was an unilateral decision taken by the Congress Socialist Party on the advice of Jaya Prakash Narayan.

According to Jaya Prakash Narayan, the Meerut Conference of the CSP, anticipating a change in Communist tactics in view of the call given by the Comintern for the United Front, unconditionally stretched its hand of friendship and cooperation. In his account of the period, he writes that 'it was based on the belief that important elements in the Communist Party were in favour of forming such a Front.'

However, in response to the call given by the National Executive of the CSP for forming an United Front the Communists responded only by sending its sole representative to the Meerut Conference of the CSP to make a detailed study on this "left maneuver of the Bourgeoisie," as they termed it. But gradually, the Communists under the able, astute and energetic leadership of P.C. Joshi started applying for the membership of the Congress Socialist Party. But the real amalgamation of the two left parties was achieved at the time of the Lucknow Session of the Indian National Congress in April 1936 when the "Lucknow Agreement" was signed by which both parties recognised each other as bonafide socialist parties and declared that they would cooperate with each other with a view to an eventual merger.

Now the decks were thus cleared and the Communists, whose party was still outlawed, started entering not only into the Congress Socialist Party, but through it in the Indian National Congress and, also into the All-India Kisan Sabha. It was hoped that as a result of United Socialist Front between the two, the position of the Communist would be strengthened in the national and peasant movements, in which the Socialists had already gained a predominant position and in their turn the Socialists would improve their position in the Trade Union Movement. Nevertheless, as the subsequent events unfolded themselves, it proved to be a nauseating and very bad bargain for the Socialists.

In less than six months of Lucknow Agreement, the disturbing reports started coming to the National Executive of the Congress Socialist Party, regarding communists' practical activities, specially in Bombay, Calcutta, Kanpur and Andhra. Outside the party forum also there were frequent complaints of the communists' capture tactics in the labour and peasant movements and youth organisations. It was reported that the Communists were claiming that they would not allow any other party to entrench itself in the Trade Union Movement. It was also reported that the members of the CPI were obstructing joint work in the Labour Movement. The National Executive of the CSP which met in April 1937,

cautioned the local units of the Party to remain vigilant against such communist manœuvres. It also wanted the communist members against such fraction work.

But these warnings were practically of no use as the Communists were already controlling some of the provincial organisations of the CSP. In the South, the party affairs are completely in the hands of E.M.S. Namboodiripad who was joint Secretary of the AICSP and leader of the Kerala provincial organisation. As the chief mentor in the South, he had placed the Madras Unit of the CSP in the hands of P. Ramamurti and P. Jeevandam, the well-known communist leaders. Likewise P. Sundarayya was put in the charge of the Andhra Unit of the Congress Socialist Party. Thus in the South, the provincial organisations of the CSP were turned into the branches of the CPI. There were other members of the Communist Party, who were given important position in the CSP. Sajjad Zaheer was made Joint Secretary of the AICSP and a member of the AICC ; Z.A. Ahmad and K. Ashraf were members of the CSP Executive Committee and were also appointed by Jawaharlal Nehru to the important positions in the AICC. Besides this, the Communists through their sectarian tactics captured the leadership of the CSP units in the labour centres of the North.

Thus their association with the CSP served as a boon to them. It was through the Congress Socialist Party's strategic position and vote that the Communists were elected to the important posts in Provincial Congress Committees and even to the All India Congress Committee. The Communists became very active in the peasant movement also during this period. A number of Communist Party leaders, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, Sajjad Zaheer, Dr. Z.A. Ahmad, A.K. Gopalan, Dr. K.M. Ashraf, P. Ramamurti, P. Sundarayya and P. Jeevandam occupied important positions in the All India Kisan Sabha. It was the membership of the CSP that gave Communists a chance, an opportunity to entrench themselves in the mainstream of the national activities. Undoubtedly, it was the newly acquired label of "Congressmen" that gave the Communists, whose party was still tainted with illegality, an unprecedented respectability and influence.

According to the Socialist Party's documents, it was Communist tactics of factionalism and disruption within the party that the process "of organic socialist unity turned into a straight power tussle for the control of the party and other mass organisation of Anti-imperialist struggle. However, uneasy clam continued for some time amidst charges and counter-charges. The Communists alleged through their party organ against a "hearsay hunt" in the CSP. They complained that anyone who felt inclined to criticise the charged politics of National Executive was termed as "disrupter" and "disloyal" in the party. And, with this allegation the Communists were first to express that "United Action" is

practically impossible while the National Executive of the CSP was reluctant to do anything that might hamper the chances of Socialist Unity. The Bombay provincial CSP under the leadership of Masani and Meherally was the first to bell the cat, after showing great tolerance, the Comrade Soli Batliwala for his consistent disloyalty to the party. The Bombay CSP expelled him from the party. His record in the party was considered "chequered one" and detrimental to the interest of the party. Another known Communist member, who was suspended from the party, was K.T. Chandy.

Thus by August 1937, the relations between the two left parties began deteriorating and the CSP National Executive at its meeting held at Patna from 7 to 9 August 1937, was constrained to give another look at their profession of Socialist Unity. At this meeting a secret Communist Party document, which came in the hands of M.R. Masani was read. The exposure of the document, according to Jaya Prakash Narayan 'caused a painful shock and great indignation' to the socialists. The document clearly stated that the Congress Socialist Party was not a Socialist Party and the Communist Party was the only genuine Socialist Party. The document was a clear indication that the Communists wanted to capture and use the Congress Socialist Party as a legal forum for infiltration into the Congress. According to Jaya Prakash Narayan, the General Secretary of the Party, the document knocked the whole basis of the "Lucknow Agreement," in which both parties recognised each other as the sister Marxist/Socialist parties, which would cooperate to merge themselves ultimately into one single Socialist Party. The exposure of the several Communist documents completely belied their profession of unity and shook up the united front agreement.

The CSP leadership sharply reacted to the Communist charge and emphatically stated that the CSP is not a platform of left parties, it is a political party with its distinct ideology, programme of work and discipline, strives for Socialist unity. There were at that time four communist members of the National Executive of the CSP, who denying their communist allegiance "shammed shock and indignation at the discovery" of such a statement. But it was of no avail. The National Executive of the party took a very serious view of this development and unanimously passed a resolution stating that in future, no member of the Communist party would be allowed to enter into the CSP. However, no decision was taken to expel those Communists, who were already there. Thus a big jolt was administered to the growing United Socialist Front.

However, the above decision of the Executive was considered too lenient and unsatisfying by a group of CSP leadership. In fact, this soft pedalling of the Party leadership led by Jaya Prakash Narayan was owing to the Party's eagerness "to avoid doing anything to what might make the chances of unity more difficult. Jaya Prakash Narayan still continued to believe in the prospect of Socialist unity. It was based on his prepos-

rous belief that the Communists might rectify their mistakes and enter into genuine socialist front.

Thus by the end of 1937, the first ever Socialist Unity experiment of the CSP became very shaky and almost an impossibility. The Royist proposition to transform the CSP into a platform of "Left Unity" and reflection of the same view by the Communists tore into pieces the whole CSP efforts of forming an United Socialist Front.

After this, events developed as was expected and the relations between the two worsened day by day. While the Communists complained that by refusing admission to their partymen the Socialists who talked, 'Socialist Unity', the CSP leadership described the Communist tactics as "criminal", and felt convinced that there was no other alternative but to remove them from the party with bag and baggage.

Therefore, just prior to the Lahore session of the Congress Socialist Party, in a tactical move, aimed at appeasing the Socialist leadership, the Communists published a statement in the first issue of their Party organ, *National Front*, which asked the Communists to 'alter their attitude' and start working seriously inside the Congress. It called for the unity of entire left to develop the independent class organisation of workers and peasants with a view to form a United Socialist Party. Then coming to the Lahore session of the CSP, it stated that the CSP, must emerge at Lahore as a powerful United Socialist Party, welcoming into its ranks all genuine active anti-imperialists, all genuine Socialists and Communists.

### **The Lahore Conference of the CSP**

Then came the Lahore Conference of the All-India Congress Socialist Party, presided over by Minoo Masani in April 1939. At the Conference the Communists brought an amazing note before the Central Executive of the Party. The note reaffirmed the Communist allegiance to the "Lucknow Agreement." It stated that the "Communist Party considered the CSP to be a true revolutionary Marxist Party and that the United Socialist Front could be brought about only by the unity of the two parties." However, the Socialist hardliners dismissed this CPI overtures as fraudulent and patently insincere.

The Lahore Conference rejected the misleading slogan of "All Socialists in side the CSP" and reaffirmed its resolve to remain homogenous and disciplined party. It endorsed the Patna executive decision to ban the admission of the members of the "Red Groups" to the Party.

At the Conference the Communists made another bid to capture the Party organisation by presenting their own list for the composition of the new Executive Committee. Their list was in contradiction to the list, which Jaya Prakash Narayan had himself prepared. Jaya Prakash Narayan's list consisted of the old Executive members with some minor

changes. It gave Communists one-third of the seats with two out of four posts of joint Secretaryship. In the Communist list, except Jaya Prakash Narayan, all other members of old Executive were replaced by Communist members. The boldness and audacity of the move astounded many, writes Masani. Nevertheless, official list prepared by Jaya Prakash Narayan was approved. Thus, while the Communists talked from the top of their voices for unity, an open attempt was made to capture the Party apparatus.

The New National Executive of the Party comprised Jaya Prakash Narayan as General Secretary; M.R. Masani, Dinkar Mehta, E.M.S. Namboodiripad and Yusuf Meherally, as its Joint Secretaries. Its other members were: Nerendra Deva, Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya, Achyut Patwardhan, Ram Manohar Lohia, Asoka Mehta, Munshi Ahmad Din, Sibnath Banerji, Gunda Mazumdar, Satyavati Devi, Sajjad Zaheer, Seth Damodar Swarup.

After the Lahore Conference, the distrust and mutual suspicion grew with still faster speed and there were allegations and counter-allegations day out. Thereafter, towards the end of 1938, another secret Communist Party circular entitled "plan of Work" dated 9 May, 1938, came into the hands of Minoo Masani. It was meant for the Communist members only and dealt at length on the tactics to be followed by them for controlling the CSP. Masani published it in the month of September 1938 under the headline "Communist Plot against the CSP." The Communist circular noted with satisfaction their success capturing the Party organisation in the various provinces and in converting a number of persons to their sect. It entrusted the communists with the specific task in other provinces also.

Now the pretension of unity was completely exploded. It became absolutely clear to the CSP rank and file that while subscribing to Party's concept of socialist unity, they were simply using it as a recruiting ground for the membership of their own Party, whose separate identity they wanted to preserve. Undoubtedly, it was now high time for the CSP National Executive to stop this "policy of drift," which was daily delivering the party into the hands of the Communist Party. A few years later Jaya Prakash Narayan, who was the author of this policy, himself regretted this indecisiveness of the National Executive. He wrote:

"Now it was no longer the ideal of hope of unity that decided the Executive. It was reluctance to face an unpleasant task. Those were dark days for the party, when lack of decision created a good deal of confusion and weakness. The enemies of the Party did not fail to profit fully by it."

Even on the occasion of 1939 Tripuri Congress crisis, in spite of best efforts of Jaya Prakash Narayan the Communists refused to toe the line of CSP and adopted an independent policy. But the CSP high command

still lacked the courage to purge the Party of all bad elements. At the meeting of party's National Executive at Calcutta, Patwardhan and Ram Manohar Lohia in May 1939, and four leaders, namely, Minoo Masani, Asoka Mehta, Achyut tendered their resignations. They resigned in protest against the policy by which their party was being swallowed up. Their resignations were welcomed by the Communists and their fellow-travellers.

In December 1939, by the efforts of Subhas Chandra Bose a conference consisting of all leftists, Communists, Socialists and Forward Blockists was convened at Lucknow. At the end of the Conference, a seven-point "Common Programme of Work" was adopted to conduct the anti-war activities by the different left groups. But, surprisingly enough, within one month of their "Lucknow Agreement", the Communist Party (according to CSP document) once again declared their war against CSP. Socialists also retaliated through articles and pamphlets denouncing the Communists for their anti-congress and anti-socialist prejudices. "With that we were back in the primitive days of 1934, a lovely dream from which there is sure to be a rather rude awakening" wrote Jaya Prakash Narayan.

At long last in 1940, at the time of Ramgarh Congress Session, the National Executive of the Party, decided to drop its four Communist members and expelled all those who were either members of the Communist Party or its followers. Thus ended a tragic chapter in the history of the Indian Socialist Movement.

For the Communists the United Front was a big success. By 1939, they had gained substantially from their infiltration into the Congress Socialist Party and through it into the Indian National Congress itself. The Communists whose party was outlawed at that time not only made access into the Indian National Congress, but also, through the patronage given by Jawaharlal Nehru, occupied very high position there. However, for the CSP, it proved to be a disastrous experience. The policy of collaboration with the Communists and its undue long continuance just ruined the party. It was, in fact, a measure of their self-destruction. As noted earlier, the Communists by their strict sectarian tactics were able to take away with them a big chunk of party membership in Andhra, Kerala, Madras, Bengal and a large following in the Punjab and elsewhere. With the split, the party lost control over the substantial section of the AICSP and AISF. But their biggest loss was in Trade Unions, where the Communists maneuvered to get complete control of the All-India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). From Socialists' point of view, it was the CSP leadership's grievous mistake to have admitted Communists in the CSP and the party had to pay heavy penalty for it.

### **Royists and the Front**

The Royists had welcomed formation of CSP and many of its members had participated in the Patna Conference of the party. The party leadership later responded by inviting them to join CSP. It was hoped by the party leadership that the Royists would eventually merge with the party. In a couple of month's time, the Royists entered the CSP in large numbers, and naturally a hope was enlivened that atleast two of the three major Marxist parties would unite. The Socialist made every effort to "accelerate this process of absorption".

However, as the subsequent account will show, all attempts proved futile.

In the beginning, when the Royists joined the CSP, they were quite in harmony with the basic principles, policies and programmes of the party. But soon after his release from prison, Roy in some of his public utterances struck a different note altogether and their differences began to appear on the surface. These differences took a definite shape and appeared fundamental because of Roy's unfriendly approach towards the CSP. As a matter of fact, his activities amounted to disruption of the United Front and the sabotage of the task of building it up. At the outset, Roy expressed his total disagreement with the formation of a Socialist Party inside the National Congress. Royists' point of view was, that the CSP should "not at all be developed as a Socialist Party but as the left wing of the Congress". Royists went to the extent of saying that "the Congress Socialist Party should indeed be liquidated". In the words of Roy himself, "The Congress Socialist Party is either an organisation of the left wing of the Congress or a genuine Marxist Socialist Party. If it is the former, then it can not be a real Socialist Party. If it is the latter, then it must adopt the plan of action and the organisational form of a communist Party."

The main argument behind Roy's criticism was that CSP by talking Socialism inside the Congress, was doing more harm than good to anti-imperialist struggle, because the Congress as a multi-class organisation of the national struggle could not be expected to adopt socialism as its objective. According to Roy, the plan to convert the Congress as such to socialism was utopian. He was totally against the development of a left wing party inside the Congress. He contended that such a party should be formed outside the mother party, the Congress with the nomenclature of a Communist Party. Nevertheless, in spite of this formal accusation of the CSP by their god-father, the Royist continued to remain in the CSP. But the relations between two left parties started getting cooler and cooler day by day.

In the summer of 1936, an alleged Royist document came into the hands of CSP leadership in which Royists were exhorted to "liquidate" the party. It naturally produced a great consternation in the CSP leader-

ship. When such a Royist document of alleged condemnation of the CSP was placed before the National Executive at the time of the second annual Conference of the party at Meerut, the Royists completely disowned it. Two Royist members of the Executive, Rajani Mukherji and Charles Mascernes, even vociferously dubbed the document as spurious.

However, notwithstanding his such unfriendly acts, Roy, on his release from prison in November 1936, was extended by the CSP a "most hearty welcome" and it was hoped that "this veteran revolutionary" would utilise every opportunity to unify the anti-imperialist struggle and unite the Socialist movement in the country." Nehru also, as the leader of the left wing, whole-heartedly welcomed him. Nevertheless, within a few month's time some of the public utterance of Roy, such as, that there should be 'no party within the Congress, that 'abolition of Zamindari a remote issue', that 'there should be no organisation of the peasantry apart from the Congress Committees' began to disturb the CSP leadership. These statements of Roy were definitely against the party line and invoked hostility. Roy, however, allowed his followers to continue to remain in the CSP despite such accusations of the party. Even at the time of the third annual session of the All India Congress Socialist Party, which was held in December 1936, at Faizpur, the Royists en bloc voted in favour of the party resolutions.

Sometime in February 1937, the Bombay CSP was forced to expel three Royist members, Charles Mascernes, Dr. M.R. Shetty and Madan Shetty for sabotaging the election of CSP's own candidate in favour of the Congress candidate in February 1937 elections to the AICC and Bombay PCC. In the following month at the time of the National Convention, the Royists exhibited their open hostility on the question of office acceptance, and contemptuously spurned the well declared CSP's policy of outright rejection of office. It was just after this clash that Royists decided to smash up the CSP and the procedure adopted was mass resignations. These mass resignations were soon carried out amidst furious attempts to discredit the Party by a series of statements condemning the CSP's policies and programmes. Thereafter Masani and other CSP leaders charged Roy for breaking the Unity of CSP. Masani also wrote in his party organ, *Congress Socialist* :

"I am able to disclose that on the evening of 20th or 21st March at Delhi, Mr. Roy called a select band of his followers from different provinces including certain members of the Congress Socialist Party to a secret meeting in which he planned the disruption of CSP through the method of resignations in one province after another."

Accordingly in April 1937, twenty-six Royist members of the Maharashtra Provincial CSP resigned. This was followed by such resignations from other provinces: Sind, Gujarat, Bengal, etc. These resignations were duly attended by the allegations, counter-allegations, the



Royists' line of attack against the CSP being that Socialist ideology should be propagated, but the slogan of Socialist leadership should not be raised, the object being to develop the Congress into a real anti-imperialist organisation. This slogan of socialism had divided the Congress into two camps. The slogan of socialist leadership could be given only at a later stage of the struggle. The CSP's attempt to continue Socialism and Communism as one would harm the working class movement. However, the main change was that the CSP was not a true Marxist-Socialist Party.

Roy also considered the CSP's policy as misleading and erroneous in sponsoring the programme of collective affiliation of labour unions and Kisan Sabhas with the Congress Party. He also bitterly attacked the Socialist opposition of both contesting election and acceptance of ministerial offices under the 1935 Constitution of India.

The National Executive of CSP, which met at Patna in August 1937, accused Roy for contemplating secret parties and caucuses, probably turning round selected individuals and not open parties. "What Mr. Roy is really trying to organise is a secret party that will work within the Congress under his leadership. Our fault is that we do not design to hide our identity and sail under the false colours. . .", it remarked.

Thus CSP's reply of Roy's charges brought final break between the two parties. According to Jaya Prakash Narayan, "Thus after more than a year and half of close cooperation, our Royist friends, left us with a parting kick." He charged that, "the entire responsibility for disrupting the measures of unity that had been achieved must be laid at the door of Royists, and above all Shri Roy."

In spite of genuine efforts of the Socialist leadership, the Joint Front with the Roy group, failed to last long and in less than one-and-half-year's time, the Royists left the CSP. However, it has been said that the Royists made an important contribution to the formulation of the Congress Socialist Party's policies and programme in its formative years.

Thus, towards the end of 1935, all hopes of United anti-Imperialist Front were shattered. The Royists pulled in one direction, a section of the Congress Socialist Party took up anti-Soviet stand and the Communist Party of India completely isolated because it was critical of all other leftist parties. Thus they were back in the primitive days of 1934 of mutual jealousy, suspicions and disunity.

### **The CSP and the Unity in the Trade Unions**

The Congress Socialist Party since its very birth in 1934, strived hard to close the ranks of all anti-Imperialist forces to form a genuine United Socialist Front in the country. As a true Marxist Party, the CSP desired an unified trade union movement as an active instrument of anti-imperialist and capitalist struggle. So closely associated with the

problem of Left and Socialist parties unity was the question of unity in the Indian Trade Unions, which attracted the attention of the socialist leadership.

In 1934, there were three main trade union organisations in the country, each having its own political and ideological leanings: The All India Trade Union Congress, The Red Trade Union Congress and the National Trade Union Federation. The All India Trade Union Congress was dominated by the Royists; The Red Trade Union Congress was completely in the hands of the Communists and the National Trade Union Federation, at that time the biggest All India Trade Union Organisation, was in the hands of Moderate Nationalists. First, the CSP entered into an agreement with the AITUC. Then agreement provided that the All India Congress Socialist Party would strengthen the All India Trade Union Congress, so as to make it a more powerful All India Trade Union Organisation. The AITUC, welcoming the formation of the Congress Socialist Party, agreed to strengthen it as an anti-imperialistic bloc within the Congress. It was also agreed that the AITUC would 'use its influence to give facilities to the members of the Congress Socialist Party to work in the trade unions, and whatever trade unions the Socialist Party may form or control, will be affiliated to the Trade Union Congress'.

The CSP's choice fell on AITUC out of the three existing trade unions, as it was ideologically and politically nearest to the party. It naturally implied that the CSP considered the AITUC as the only central organisation of labour and, the latter promised to support the party as the political party of working classes. Soon many trade union leaders started joining the Congress Socialist Party. Prominent among those who sought the membership of the CSP were R.S. Rukar, Sibnath Banerji, Hariharnath Shastri, and R.A. Khadgikar. These leaders had a large following among the labour and exercised great influence in the All India Trade Union Congress. The result of the above agreement was that the CSP's position became dominant in the AITUC.

Encouraged with the above success, the Socialists started negotiations with the other two trade union organisations, and specially the Red Trade Union Congress through which the Communists were mainly functioning. After some time, the party's efforts bore fruits, and an United Front agreement between three all-India labour organisations and the CSP was signed. The agreement called for 'joint action by the All India Congress Socialist Party, the All India Trade Union Congress, the National Trade Union Federation and the Red Trade Union Congress on "specific issues" such as the danger of another war, Government repression, the joint parliamentary Committee Report and other issues, which may arise from time to time'. Joint action was to be for organising meetings, demonstrations, observance of "days", celebrations

of anniversaries and issuing of statements and literatures, etc. As a result of the agreement, the Communists, who had been continuously criticising the CSP since its very birth agreed to cooperate. The agreement, though limited, provided for joint Front in the Trade Unions and other activities.

However, not fully satisfied; Jaya Prakash Narayan, the General Secretary of the CSP, continued his efforts for the complete merger of atleast two labour organisations, namely, AITUC and the RTUC. He wrote to Harihar Nath Shastri, who later presided over the 14th session of the AITUC for the complete merger of the two organisations in the interest of the united trade unionism. Shastri invited Jaya Prakash Narayan for attending the AITUC session as it was widely felt that 'his presence would be very valuable for the trade union unity'. Thus, as expected, happened. In April 1935 by the efforts of Socialist leadership, the two organisations decided to merge themselves at the time of 14th session of the All India Trade Union Congress. The AITUC was recognised as the main central organisation of workers, and it agreed to establish closer relationship with the Congress Socialist Party.

Thus the idea of trade union unity got a further fillip and now the All India Trade Union Congress comprised the Congress Socialists, the Royists, Communists, and all other leftists. After a broad agreement had been arrived at between the Congress Socialists and the Communists, they started negotiations with the NTUF also for bringing the latter within its fold for a complete unity in the trade unions. In August 1935, as a result of negotiations between the AITUC and NTUF, an All India Joint Labour Board consisting of equal number of representatives from each organisation was constituted for the liberation of working classes from the imperialist-cum-capitalist exploitation. The members of this Labour Board were: V.V. Giri, as President; Ruikar as General Secretary and N.M. Joshi, Jamnadas Mehta, Aftabhi, R.S. Nimkar, R.A. Khadgikar and Dr. Shibnath Banerji as members.

The All India Joint Labour Board worked in close cooperation with the Congress Labour Committee and secured the support of the Indian National Congress. In this favourable atmosphere the Socialists began further its efforts for forming a single all India trade union organisation. The All India Trade Union Congress sent its proposal to the National Trade Union Federation for the formation of a joint organisation to be known as AITUC. The terms of the proposal were very much accommodating and they clearly showed the earnestness of the Socialist-dominated AITUC for unity. The NTUF also favourably responded and expressed its desire to merge itself in the AITUC. In the proposal known as 'Giri Proposal' the NTUF offered to affiliate itself with the AITUC, first provisionally for a year only, on the condition that the new AITUC adopted the constitution of NTUF in its entirety.

In May 1936, at the time of the fifteenth session of the AITUC in Bombay, an important step towards trade union unity was taken when the AITUC accepted the terms contained in the Giri proposal with minor modifications as the basis for structural unity with the 'National Trade Union Federation'. The Bombay AITUC session was notable as Jawaharlal Nehru came to attend it as a special emissary of the Congress. Nehru in his twin capacity as the leader of the Congress and chief spokesman of the Congress Socialists appealed to the different trade unions to compose their differences for the sake of unified trade unionism and join hands with the Indian National Congress. In the session, a complete harmony and growing urge for unity was seen among all participants, which included the Congress Socialists, the Communists, the Royists and trade union leaders.

In the meantime, another step towards the trade union unity was taken when the Congress Socialist Party entered into an agreement with the National Trade Union Federation for joint action on agreed political and economic activities. Subsequently, further encouraged by the prevailing cordial atmosphere, the leaders of the two central trade union organisations—the All India Trade Union Congress and the National Trade Union Federation—agreed to sort out their differences. By the beginning of 1938, they were able to remove all the obstacles and the provisional terms of the treaty were agreed. Consequently, in April 1938, a special joint session of the two organisations was held at Nagpur under the presidentship of Dr. Suresh Chandra Banerji, where the affiliation of NTUF with the All India Trade Union Congress was ratified. Thus the Socialist dream for trade union unity was realised at Nagpur, where the disastrous schism and drift in the trade union movement had taken place nine years ago. It was a moment of great success for the CSP leadership, which had been right from the beginning striving hard for the trade union unity as a major component of the United Socialist Front. The fourth annual Conference of the All India Congress Socialist Party held in Lahore in April 1938, expressed its great delight, and called it a 'milestone' in the history of the Indian Trade Union movement.

Two years later in September 1940 at Bombay, the National Trade Union Federation forsook its separate identity and completely merged with the All India Trade Union Congress. Thus the CSP's efforts bore fruits and AITUC again became the premier central organisation of the labour in the country.

During the period of the United Front, in the wake of unity atmosphere, the labour movement made rapid strides and spread to a large part of the country. In the year 1934 itself, there were 159 strikes involving 220,808 workers and resulting in the loss of 47,75,559 working days. Most of these strikes were in textile industry and affected

the industrial centres of Bombay, Sholapur, Ahmedabad and Madras. There was also a big increase in the number of unions during this period. The number of registered trade unions, which was the number of trade union strikes swelled to 379, which was highest since 1921. It resulted in the loss of 89,82,000 working days, which was highest since 1929 and it involved 6,47,802 strikers, which was again highest on record in the labour history of the country.

Another striking feature of the period was that the new upsurge in the trade union movement took place when the Congress Ministries were in power in six provinces. It was obviously due to the fact that the Congress Ministries adopted a very sympathetic attitude towards the labour and peasantry. The Congress Labour Committee also worked in close cooperation with the AITUC and it gave new strength to the Labour Movement.

The strike wave affected almost all industries, textile, jute, iron and steel, oil and railways. There was a tremendous increase in the number of unions, their membership and also the number of strikes, during this period. In 1934 the number of registered trade unions was 391, which rose to 667 in 1939-40.

Undoubtedly, the Congress Socialist Party made a singular contribution in uniting the scattered trade unions into one single trade union organisation with its ultimate objective of forming a genuine united anti-imperialist front.

### **The Socialists and the Indian National Congress, 1934-39**

The Congress Socialist Party from its very inception was faced with a severe criticism. In July 1934, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel warned the Congressmen against coming under the spell of socialist ideology, which he described as "remote idealism", a "vain academic discussion" and "mere learned talk". Similarly at the time of the formation of the Gujarat Provincial Congress Socialist Party, he wrote to Rohit Mehta, the leader of the Gujarat CSP: "The Socialists are not agreed even regarding the definition of socialism. . . It is a waste of time to speculate about social and political organisation in the future independent Government of India. . . Some (socialists) merely talk with such persons I shall never be able to get on..." Likewise Dr. Rajendra Prasad, another staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi, spoke time and again very disparagingly of the Socialists. In August 1934, in an indirect reference, Gandhiji, while speaking before the Zamindars, ridiculed the Marxist concept of class war. He averred:

"Class war is foreign to the essential genius of India. . . . Our socialism or communism should, therefore, be based on non-violence and on the harmonious cooperation of labour and capital, the landlord and tenant."

The Congress Socialist Party leaders also launched the counter-attack both offensive and defensive and the Congress Right Wingers for their lack of understanding of the socio-economic forces of the time. The first Bombay Conference (21-22 October 1934) of the CSP sharply reacted at the Congress working Committee's resolution, which it described as "uncalled for and misleading." It claimed that the participation in the class war and advocacy of expropriation of property, were not inconsistent with the Congress creed. The CSP Conference expressed its apprehension at "the concerted attempts" of the Congress Old Guard (right wing elements) to take back the Congress struggle to the path of constitutional agitation in which the Indian upper classes will have a leading role to play. The resolution adopted at this Conference declared its resolve to thwart all such attempts. It said :

"The Conference resolves to resist these attempts and to rescue the Congress from the hands of the right wing by educating and organising the rank and file on the basis of a clear-cut programme of national revolution and also resolves to carry on a consistent propaganda for the exposure of the reactionary aims, policies and programme of the right wing."

At the Conference, Purshottam Das Tandon accused the right wing leadership of the Congress for trying to "prejudice the un-informed section of the Congress against the socialists," by including in false and mischievous propaganda that the socialists wanted to split the Congress.

However, Jawaharlal Nehru, who though not a member of the CSP, gave a tremendous support to the party, and expressed his resentment at the resolution of the Congress Working Committee. Soon after his release from incarceration, Nehru giving full expression to his profound anger, wrote to Gandhiji on 13 August 1934 : "The resolution of the Congress Working Committee on the subject showed such an astounding ignorance of the elements of socialism that was painful to read it and to realise that it might be read outside India. It seemed the overmastering desire of the (CWC) Committee was somehow to assure various vested interests even at the risk of talking non-sense." Indeed, Nehru's strong protest to Gandhiji had a sobering effect on the official attitude of the Indian National Congress.

The underlying cause of the dissension between the Congress right Wingers and the Congress Socialists was due to both ideological and tactical disagreements in the pursuit of the national struggle though they both agreed that the basic and foremost task before them was the winning of national independence. The CSP set before it a four-fold task for the success of the national movement. The first was to help in building a powerful national front against the British Imperialists. The second was to link the programme of the Congress with the economic struggle of the exploited classes, i.e. to put the welfare of the labour and peasantry

in the forefront of that programme. The third was to check all drift towards constitutionalism, which was weakening the struggle of the national liberation. Fourth was to define Swaraj in terms of the urges and aspirations of the masses. It naturally implied the conversion of the Congress into a Socialist organisation. This conversion of the Congress was to be brought about through ideological conquest in a slow and peaceful manner. The Socialists also wanted the democratisation of National Congress and cutting off its ties with the Swaraj Party, whose leaderships, the Socialists thought, had no interest in organising the masses for their active participation in the national movement. The Socialists also desired that the parliamentary activities be brought wholly under the control of the Congress instead of being carried on by the Swarajists.

At the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress in October 1934, the Socialists made some futile attempts to influence the Congress resolutions through their amendments. Acharya Narendra Deva had moved an amendment for abandoning all parliamentary programmes. "Unless the parliamentary programme was useful to the masses, the Socialists could not support it," remarked Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya, another Socialist, while seconding the proposed amendment. The Socialists tried to alter the official Congress resolution, which expressed the party's belief in the methods of "non-violent non-cooperation" only. The Socialist amendment sought to commit the Congress to the methods and techniques of "mass direct action of a peaceful nature," which had a broad prespective and meaning. But their amendment was defeated. The Socialists also tried without success to oppose the Congress resolutions on "Labour franchise," "Khadi clause" and the proposed "Constitutional changes." The Socialists were in such a thin minority that all their amendments were defeated.

Jaya Prakash Narayan, who was against any division of the Congress into Socialists and anti-Socialists, said in a deep mental agony on 21 September 1935: "Congress as it is, at present cannot hold together very long. The more successful we are in pushing our programme, the nearer the day when a split will occur in it." He further emphatically stated that "the Congress at present is dominated by upper class interests and its leaders are uncompromisingly opposed to admitting into its objective and programme aimed at economic emancipation of the masses." He held the Congress constitution responsible for it. According to Jaya Prakash Narayan, because of the provision of individual membership, the Congress was not a true representative of the masses, but a handful of members and unless the party constitution is changed it could never become a direct representative of the people. He suggested that the primary committees of the Congress should represent tenants, farmers, labourers, merchants, the professionals and so on... For this he

emphasised on the need of organising these groups and classes of people. However, he made it clear that the first and the main task of the party was to develop the anti-imperialist movement. Similar sentiments were echoed by Sampurnanand, when he called his partymen through a circular letter in 1935, to concentrate on the "organisation of labour and peasantry," and "expose the follies and reactionary policies of the Congress High Command."

### **Meerut Conference of the CSP**

The second session of the All-India Congress Socialist Party was held at Meerut on 19-20 January 1936 under the presidency of Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya. In her presidential address, she justified the growth of the Socialist Party within the Congress and said that there was "growing alliance between foreign and Indian vested interests." At the conference, a number of resolutions concerning rejection of the new constitution, acceptance of office, demand for a change in the Congress constitution, which would facilitate the adequate representation of the exploited classes of peasants and workers in the party, were passed. Sampurnanand's resolution, among other things, demanded : (i) abolition of landlordism and other forms of intermediaries between the State and the cultivator, (ii) a minimum wage of not less than Rs. 30.00 per 40 hours week, (iii) freedom of speech and press, (iv) cancellation of all arrears of debt and revenue and provision of cheap credit was adopted in its entirety. Similarly, Mohan Lal Gautam's resolution asking the Socialist Parties to organise peasants in their territories and send the delegates to the forthcoming Lucknow Kisan Conference was unanimously adopted. Another important resolution passed by the Conference was moved by Jaya Prakash Narayan, asking the National Congress to elect Jawaharlal Nehru as the President for the ensuing 49th session of the Indian National Congress.

With regard to the CSP's role within the Indian National Congress, the party's thesis adopted at Meerut observed : "The party should take only an anti-imperialists stand on the Congress platform and should not in this connection make the mistake of placing a full Socialist programme before the Congress. An anti-imperialist programme should be evolved for this purpose suited to the needs of workers, peasants and the lower middle classes." The Meerut thesis asked the partymen to carry the Socialist programme from party's own platform. It reaffirmed that "Marxism alone" could guide anti-imperialist forces to their ultimate destiny, and said that the "party members must, therefore, fully understand the techniques of revolution, the theory and practice of class struggle, the nature of the state and the process leading to socialist society." The Meerut thesis also advanced the theory of an "alternative leadership" in place of existing liberal bourgeois leadership of the Indian



National Congress. It further said that "This task can be accomplished only if there is within the Congress an organised body of Marxian Socialists..." "Our party alone can, in the present condition perform this task," the thesis observed.

At the Conference, it was claimed by Jaya Prakash Narayan, the General Secretary of the Party, that the Party had increased considerably its influence in labour and trade union movement and many top-ranking labour leaders were members of the Congress Socialist Party. He claimed that their party included the largest number of peasants and workers in the country. Jaya Prakash Narayan also claimed that the CSP was responsible for organising an All-India Kisan Sabha to be held at Lucknow at the time of the next AICC Session there.

The Socialists, for the purpose of increasing their influence at various levels of the National Congress and for democratization of the Congress apparatus, asked partymen to press forward the following changes in the Congress constitution :

- (i) Provision of functional representation of workers and peasants in the National Congress in consultation with the All-India Trade Union Congress and Peasant organisations.
- (ii) Local organs of the Congress to be enlarged and given more powers of control, direction and initiative.

### **The Socialists and the Lucknow Congress**

The Meerut session of the CSP was followed by the 49th session of the Indian National Congress which was held at Lucknow from 13 to 14 April 1936, under the Presidentship of Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru's election as the President of the Congress was held at the behest of Mahatma Gandhi, his political Guru. Gandhiji believed that young Nehru would be able to bridge the gap between the Socialists and Rightist Congressmen and infuse the required spirit and dynamism in the National Movement. For the Socialists, it was a heaven sent opportunity for putting pressure on the Congress right wingers for the purpose of radicalising the Congress. The Congress Socialist Party's main thrust was to oppose the new constitution, office acceptance under it and opposition to India's participation in any imperialist war and for the setting up of a committee for the democratic revision of the Congress Constitution.

Apart from this, the Socialists wanted the linking of "the daily struggle of the exploited classes" as an integral part of the national struggle : organisation of workers and peasants as the main items of the constructive programme and "direct representation" of the toiling masses of workers and peasants.

However, in the Lucknow Congress session, the Socialists achieved only partial success. The presidential address of Jawaharlal Nehru was

a full-throated socialist exposition in its complete Marxist setting. In his address, Nehru said that the biggest problem before the Congress was how to forge a broad united front of all the anti-imperialists in the country so as to make the national struggle a mass struggle of peasants and workers. About socialism, he frankly declared :

“I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the problem of India and the world lies in socialism, and when I use this word, I do so not in a vague humanitarian way, but in the scientific, economic sense. Socialism is, however, something even more than an economic doctrine. It is a philosophy and as such also, it appeals to me.”

Nationalism for him was not merely throwing off foreign yoke, but it was something more than that. He said : “I work for it even more because for me, it is the inevitable step to social and economic change.” I should like the Congress to become a Socialist organisation and to join hands with the other forces in the world, who are working for the new civilisation.”

Nehru also raised his voice against the growing divorce from the masses. Referring to the role of the Princes and Zamindars, he emphatically declared, “they have long survived the day, propped up by an alien power and they will have to go. The Socialists were thrilled to find such a remarkable socialist exposition coming as it did from the President of the Indian National Congress. Indeed it was a moment of their great success. They fully acclaimed it and saw in it the vindication of their stand.

Evidently, it must be said that his speech was a complete break from the past Congress presidential addresses as it suggested Marxian Socialism as the only panacea for all the existing problems.

Among the socialist proposals, one for collective affiliation of trade unions and Kisan Sabhas with the Congress was accepted by the National Congress. Instead of collective affiliation a mass contacts committee was appointed consisting of Rajendra Prasad, Jairamdas Daulatram and Jaya Prakash Narayan. The inclusion of Jaya Prakash Narayan in the Committee was a big success of the Socialists. Another important Socialist success was adoption by the Congress, of the resolution on agrarian programme, which stated : “This Congress is of opinion that most important and urgent problem of the country is the appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness of the peasantry fundamentally due to antiquated and repressive land tenure and revenue systems . . .”

The Socialists also made futile attempts to associate the Congress movement with the struggle in the Princely States. The Socialists and Nehru also suffered a setback on the crucial issue of office acceptance under the Government of India Act, 1935. Nehru and his Socialist colleagues were vehemently against ‘office acceptance’ and they wanted an unequivocal rejection of office in advance.

However, the most outstanding Socialist success was Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya's amendment opposing the abolition of proportional representation in the elections to the AICC. This was the first Socialist victory in the open session. It was also Jawaharlal Nehru's victory as it vindicated his opposition to the abolition of proportional representation as against the views of the Congress Working Committee. This ensured the Socialists some representation on that body. Another important Socialist success was the inclusion of three CSP leaders in the next Congress Working Committee, which was constituted by Jawaharlal Nehru. The Working Committee now included among others Jaya Prakash Narayan, Acharya Narendra Deva and Achyut Patwardhan.

In the next three months immediately following the Lucknow Session, Nehru gave full expression to his Socialist views. Thus both at Lucknow and in the days that followed Nehru spoke and acted in a manner, in which he appeared to the Congress old guard as the god-father and the chief spokesman of the Congress Socialist Party. Alarmed by this, the six members of the Congress Working Committee led by Rajendra Prasad and Rajagopalachari tendered their resignations to the President. The old guard complained against Nehru's ideological alignments with the CSP and a tacit support to Socialists in their hostile campaign against them. These resignations were the high water-mark of the protracted ideological clash that was going on between the Congress Socialists and the right wingers for quite some time. However, these resignations were later withdrawn after Gandhiji's intervention.

Thus the grave crisis, which threatened split in the Indian National Congress passed off smoothly. It ended in the victory of Nehru and other Socialists over the entire right wing leadership. The right wing leadership was compelled to accommodate the Congress Socialists and their revolutionary socialist ideology.

### **Congress Election Manifesto and the Socialists**

The third important Congress document, which bore the impress of the socialism was the Congress election manifesto. It was heartily welcomed by Socialist leader, Acharya Narendra Deva, as a "revolutionary document" and he declared CSP's full support to the Congress in the elections. Undoubtedly, the manifesto due to its socialist orientation had the mass appeal and helped the Congress to win the general elections with a thumping majority.

### **Faizpur CSP**

The Third annual conference of the CSP was held at Faizpur on 23-24 December 1936, under the presidentship of Jaya Prakash Narayan. Jaya Prakash Narayan in his presidential address stressed on the need of broadening the base of the Congress. He said that the 'Congress

should identify itself with the struggling masses', and the entire masses should be roused to activity, then the national movement would itself rise to the "unprecedented height". The Conference also adopted a thesis, known as 'Faizpur Thesis' which was an extension and alteration of the earlier 'Meerut Thesis' of the party. The Faizpur thesis reiterated that "the chief task for the Socialists was the creation of a powerful National Front against Imperialism."

The Faizpur Conference adopted a number of resolutions on the danger of war, boycott of King's coronation, release of political prisoners, New Constitution, the Congress Election Manifesto and Bengal Nagpur Railway strike, etc.

### **The Faizpur Session of the Indian National Congress**

The 50th session of the Indian National Congress was held at Faizpur on 27 and 28 December 1936, with Jawaharlal Nehru as the President for a second term in succession. The Faizpur session of the Congress was in itself important as it was the first to be held in a village and was the result of the desire expressed by Gandhiji, and the mass agrarian consciousness created by the Congress Socialist Party, Jawaharlal Nehru in his presidential address with some minor alterations here and there repeated his earlier formulations such as that "Socialism seems to be the only remedy for India's ills", that Indian problem was deep seated and required a radical revolutionary remedy and that remedy was the 'Socialist structure of the Society'.

The Faizpur Congress in all passed 22 resolutions, some of which bear clear impression of Congress Socialist Party's ideology and programme. A resolution on war moved by Acharya Narendra Deva, declaring that India will not be a party to any imperialist war, was unanimously adopted. Jaya Prakash Narayan tried in vain to oppose the resolution for the postponement of the decision on office acceptance. However, the most important success of the Congress Socialist Party was in the passing of twelve-point full-fledged Agrarian Programme for rendering immediate relief to the starving peasantry. The Faizpur Congress was on the whole a notable success for the Socialists. Many of the other resolutions adopted by the Congress at this session were the products of the Socialists' influence, pressure and propaganda. The resolution on agrarian programme, the war, the mass contacts, the railway strikes were passed in the teeth of the Congress right wing opposition. Apart from these resolutions, several others which came from the Working Committee were amended in the manner desired by the Socialists.

It cannot be denied that in the period around Faizpur, the CSP was at the height of its success. The President of the National Congress twice in succession was a thorough-going Socialist, the Socialist ideology in its Marxian form was expounded from the tribune of the Congress.

Three radical documents showing a clear impress of socialism were passed in less than a year's time.

In 1937 elections, Congress swept the polls and captured 716 seats out of the 1161 contested. Out of the eleven provinces, in the five the Congress secured absolute majority. In four others, the party emerged as the single largest political party. This sweeping Congress victory at the polls was largely on account of party's identification with the struggle of the masses, and the credit for it, undoubtedly, goes to Jawaharlal Nehru and the CSP leadership.

### **Office Acceptance**

Right from the beginning the CSP was opposed to the Government of India Act, 1935, and the office acceptance under it. The CSP leadership was of the view that it would 'prevent the growth of revolutionary mentality' which was the bedrock of the anti-imperialistic struggle. But in spite of Congress Socialist Party's bitter opposition, the AICC met in Delhi on 17-18 March 1937 and decided in favour of office acceptance.

The Socialists regarded the sharing of power under the Government of India Act, 1935, as a blunder of the first magnitude. They formed an anti-Ministry Committee and continued a raging and teaching campaign against office acceptance. The Socialist members of the CWC (Narendra Deva, Jaya Prakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan) to register their protest, even resigned from the Committee. The Socialists along with other left wingers organised a protest day throughout the country on 1 April 1937, the day on which the new constitution was to start working.

### **CSP and Congress Ministries**

The Congress ministries were formed in seven out of the 11 provinces of British India. As soon as the Congress ministries were formed, the friction arose between the CSP and the Congress ministries. First, it arose over the provincial budgets. The CSP leadership wanted more relief for the peasants and workers. Other important issue on which the Socialists differed with Ministerialists was the question of civil liberty, that implied the release of the political prisoners. The Socialists complained that the official Congress viewpoint was to soft pedal the issue. On all these issues, in the estimation of the Socialists the Congress ministries fell much below their expectations.

### **CSP and the Peasants**

But the most important issue, which brought about bitter estrangement between the Congress Socialists and the Congress right wingers was the Kisan Movement, which was making rapid strides in those days. The conflict between Congress and Kisan Sabha and Socialist leaders

was especially acute in Bihar where the Congress Ministry had brought a Bihar Tenancy Bill. The provisions of the Bill were pro-landlord, the Bihar Kisan leaders severely criticised it as a 'surrender to the enemies of the Kisans by a Congress Government'. The growing ill-feeling between the two wings were further aggravated, when the Bihar Kisan Sabha leader, Swami Sahjanand Saraswati proclaimed the right of Kisans to carry 'Danda' with them as a necessary measure of self-defence. But it was not acceptable to Gandhi and other Congress right wing leaders. When the Bihar Congress Committee decided to take disciplinary action against Congressmen, who participated in peasant demonstrations, Jaya Prakash Narayan severely criticised the right winger. He wrote : "If the Congress authorities were to be so unwise as to take disciplinary action, the Kisan Sabhaites would have to part company with the Congress, just as Lokmanya Tilak had to do in the past".

The Socialists along with Kisan Sabhaites complained that the Congress policy was aimed at appeasing the landed aristocracy. In an unguarded moment, Jaya Prakash Narayan threw his challenge to the right wingers. He declared : "Gandhism has played its part. It can not carry us further and hence we must march and be guided by the ideology of Socialism. We may suffer political persecution at the hands of the Congress and even be driven out of it, but a day will come when the Congress will become ours."

### **The Socialists and the Haripura Congress**

It was in this hostile atmosphere that the 51st session of the Indian National Congress met at Haripura, Gujarat, from 19 to 21 February 1938, under the Presidentship of Subhas Chandra Bose. Hardly had the Haripura Congress begun its business, the most exciting news came regarding the resignations of Congress ministries of Bihar and United Provinces over the question of civil liberties.

It was a thrilling development for the Socialists as it vindicated their stand. The Socialists had deeply regretted that even after six months of Congress rule, the Statute Book still carried the anti-civil liberty laws. There were still a considerable number of prisoners behind bars, the Socialists had raised the slogan, not a 'prisoner behind the bars'. When one of the detainees died in jail, Jaya Prakash Narayan had thundered, 'release or resign'. Thus, though somewhat belated, the resignations were in complete accord with the CSP's well thought-out line of action. A few months later, the CSP at its Lahore Conference also praised the Congress for its bold decision.

An equally and perhaps more puzzling issue before the Haripura assemblage was that relating to the Kisan Movement, which was tending to take the form of Gandhism versus Socialism. However, a resolution that was passed at Haripura tried to end the prevailing hostile atmos-

phere between Kisan Sabhas and the Congress, when it described the peasant movement as an integral part of the National Movement and called the Congress in the main "a Kisan organisation".

Apart from this, there were two other issues on which the Socialists sharply differed from the Congress right wingers. These issues were the States' people's struggle and the proposed Federation. Nevertheless, at the Haripura session, the crisis that was looking so imminent between the two wings of the Congress was warded off, at least for the time being.

### **The Socialists and the Tripuri Congress**

The crisis that was brewing within the Indian National Congress for quite sometime came to a head at the time of the 52nd session of the Indian National Congress held at Tripuri in March 1939. The fresh trouble arose when the Congress President, Subhas Chandra Bose, following the footsteps of his predecessor, decided to contest the presidential election for the second time in succession. It was on 21 January 1939 that Bose had announced his candidature, subsequent to Maulana Azad's decision to withdraw his name. In his statement, Bose said that he had been receiving pressing requests from the Socialists as well as other left wingers from different parts of the country to contest the Congress presidential election. Here it will be important to note that though Bose was not a member of the Socialist Party, but for all practical purposes, like Nehru, he was completely aligned with the party.

For quite some time prior to the Tripuri Congress, Bose had been telling his countrymen that a "compromise over the Federal Scheme would be a suicidal folly" and it would mean the end of the struggle for independence. And, this was completely in consonance with the CSP's policy on proposed Federation. On 24 January 1939, in his reply to the allegations of the six members of the Congress Working Committee, Bose said it was "widely believed that there was a prospect of a compromise on the Federal Scheme between the right wing of the Congress and British Government, so the attempt to set up a rightist for the presidential office is full of great significance." He further said that the main issue of the presidential contest was the attitude to be adopted towards the "Federal Scheme". As mentioned earlier, the Congress Socialist Party was set against the Federal Scheme. The CSP leaders, through their speeches and writings, vigorously opposed the entire scheme when it was first announced.

On the eve of the presidential election, Bose stressed on the need of unanimity on the leadership question. However, he frankly stated, "I insist that for the coming year we should have as president a person, who will be anti-Federationist to the core of his heart, a person, who commands the respect and confidence not merely of the right wing but also of the left." He ended by saying that he was a candidate by mere

accident "as nobody else from the left had come forward to contest the election."

However, right wing leaders were determined to oust a leftist Congress President. The rightists were so much confident of their victory that they had turned down Bose's suggestion for electing such a non-controversial figure as CSP leader, Acharya Narendra Deva. On 29 January 1939, contrary to their expectations, Subhas Chandra Bose was re-elected President of the Congress defeating his only rival Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya by a margin of 205 votes. The final figures were : Subhas Chandra Bose—1580 ; Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramaya—1375. The socialists, the Communists, and Royists had all voted en bloc in favour of Bose, thus facilitating his smooth and decisive victory over the right wing candidate. It was not Bose's personal victory, but the victory of Socialists and entire left wing of the country. It was a defeat of the Congress old guard with their stand on issues like collective affiliation, civil liberties, peasant movement, and the Federal Scheme. Hence, it was a moment of great jubilation for the CSP. But that was the beginning of bigger crisis.

Gandhiji and his colleagues were completely perturbed by Bose's decisive victory. Gandhiji is reported to have remarked : 'The defeat is more mine than his (Sitaramayya)'. He frankly admitted : "It is plain to me that the delegates do not approve of the principles and policy for which I stand." He advised Bose to choose his own homogenous cabinet and enforce his radical ideology and programme. But behind these plain words, there was a open threat of "non-cooperation" from the right wingers. Bose understood the implications of this rightist reaction. Hence with a view to avoid a showdown he tried to pacify Gandhiji and other right wingers. On 15 February 1939, Bose went to Wardha and met Gandhiji, but nothing came out of it. Soon to precipitate a grave crisis, twelve members of the CWC, tendered their resignations, leaving Nehru, Sarat Bose and Subhas Chandra Bose in the Working Committee.

Jawaharlal Nehru was faced with a dilemma. Politically and ideologically, he was closer to Bose and CSP leadership, but was emotionally attached to Gandhiji. In the whole tragic drama, he desperately tried to preserve the unity of the party.

It was in this tense atmosphere that the Tripuri Congress met on 8-12 March 1939. On 12 March, the right wingers struck their blow through a resolution moved by Govind Ballabh Pant, which reiterated its faith in the Gandhian leadership and policies followed during the last 20 years and asked to Bose nominate the new Working Committee 'in accordance with the wishes of Gandhiji'. The Pant resolution was passed by 218 to 133 votes in the Subjects Committee and by an overwhelming majority in the open session. The resolution was indeed a vote of censure against the President for his opposition to the Gandhian policies in the conduct of national struggle. It eventually led to Bose's resignation from



presidentship on 29 April 1939, at the Calcutta session of the AICC and his later forming of Forward Bloc. The Congress Socialist Party, the main architect of India's Socialist Movement, decided to remain neutral and hence abstained from voting on the Pant Resolution. Explaining this 'volteface' of the Party, Jaya Prakash Narayan averred :

"Our party voted for Subhas Chandra Bose ... because we preferred him to the other candidate, namely Dr. Pattabhi. We then never expected that it would lead to schism in the Congress. Our party does not and will not participate in this quarrel."

The attitude of the Congress Socialist Party has been severely criticised by its own party men and other left-wingers. In view of the fact that it was the neutrality of the CSP that enabled the rightists to eventually succeed. Subhas Chandra Bose also complained that if the CSP had supported him and voted against the Pant resolution, it would have been certainly defeated. He even called it a big "betrayal of CSP". But the most scathing criticism of the CSP came from M.N. Roy, who wrote :

"They have soiled the red flag of revolution, which they hoisted with quixotic fervour and stupid fanaticism. They have hauled down the flag of revolution and with a misconceived notion of national unity, capitulated abjectly before the flaunting banner of victorious reaction."

Undoubtedly, the CSP's policy on the Pant Resolution had a paralytic effect on the growing Indian Socialist Movement. Jaya Prakash himself, later, accepted that the Tripuri crisis 'hit our party very hard'. However, in defence of the CSP's policy of neutrality, it could be easily argued that the party considered the winning of Independence as the foremost important task before the country. And, if the Pant Resolution had been defeated, it would have led to a split in the National Congress, which would have been disastrous for the Indian National Movement. Hence, the CSP rightly trode the path of neutrality.

### **The Socialists and the 'Quit India' Movement**

Since the outbreak of the Second World War, the Socialists had been harping on the Congress high command to take full advantage of the international situation for furthering the cause of India's independence.

The Socialists were against India's participation in any imperialist war. They were convinced that the imperialists would not leave their vast colony on their own unless they were forced to do so. Hence, they were critical of the Congress involvement in the constitutional activities and parliamentary parleys which, according to them, were imperialist devices to hoodwink the national leadership and sidetrack the main goal of the national movement, the complete emancipation of the country.

By 1942, the European war theatre had moved to India's doorstep with the fall of Singapore in February and Rangoon in March (1942) in Japanese hands. This compelled the then British Prime Minister Winston

Churchill, the each arch enemy of India's independence, to send in March 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps, a Cabinet Minister, with fresh proposals to be settle the Indian political deadlock. The Cripps Mission soon proved to disappointing to the Congress leadership and the Congress Socialist Party bitterly opposed it. Congress Socialists even condemned Cripps as an agent of British reaction and his mission, the Socialists felt, was 'the result of American pressure...' Even Nehru felt that it was sad beyond measure that a man like Sir Stafford Cripps should himself become the 'Devil's Advocate'. Gandhiji is reported to have remarked on the Cripps proposals: 'Why accept a post-dated cheque on a bank that is obviously falling'. The Cripps Mission, however, further stimulated the separatist and communal policy of the Muslim League.

The failure of the Cripps Mission further augmented Congress disgust and distrust towards the British, who now felt fully convinced that the British Government had no intention to grant independence to India. The CSP leadership had already been stressing that the British were not going to relinquish their power as a reward for Indian cooperation in the war. They regarded Britain's war against Germany as an imperialist war and called upon the people to launch direct opposition to the British war efforts through every conceivable methods including defiance of the ordinances and Defence of India Act and clamoured for the organisation of peasants' agitations, general strikes, etc. The Socialists also stressed the need for direct, mass militant action programme for ending the imperialist hold on India.

However, the party was not prepared to force the issue and waited till 8 August 1942, when the Congress passed the "Quit India" resolution at its Bombay AICC session. Gandhiji declared, "I have pledged the Congress and Congress will do or die". In a sense of deep personal anguish, Gandhiji is reported to have remarked, "The voice within me tells me I shall have to fight against the whole world...Even if the whole of India tries to persuade me that I am wrong, even then I will go ahead...I can not wait any longer for Indian freedom. I can not wait until Mr. Jinnah is converted...If I wait any longer, God will punish me. This is the last struggle of my life." At the conclusion of the AICC, Gandhiji gave his blessings to his partymen in memorable words: "Here is a *Mantra*, a short one, that I give you: you may imprint it in your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The *Mantra* is: 'Do or die'. We shall either free India or die in the attempt. To some, it sounded un-Gandhian and a call for open rebellion. Truly, it was a serious departure from old Gandhian tactics of non-violent, non-cooperation. In passing such a bold radical resolution, undoubtedly, the Congress High Command had been largely influenced by the Congress Socialist Party and other left-wing elements in the country.

The news of the 'Quit India' resolution moved the Government

machinery with lightening speed and in the early hours of 9 August 1942, Gandhiji and all other members of the Congress Working Committee were arrested under the Defence of India Rules. Gandhiji was kept in Agha Khan palace in Poona, Nehru and other leaders in Ahmadnagar fort. The arrest of top Congress leaders invoked immediate and spontaneous reaction from the people. There were demonstrations and processions everywhere. Public life came to a standstill. Congress was declared an illegal organisation and its leaders arrested. When the 'Quit India' movement was at its crest of rising national wave, it lacked leadership and organisation to guide and control it. Thus in eight years after CSP's birth, an opportunity came, which placed the party at the helm of the national struggle. It gave the CSP a chance to prove the effectiveness of its theory of direct militant struggle against the British. It was both a challenge and an opportunity for the CSP, which had all along been condemning Gandhian method of non-violent non-cooperation as tactics of the national struggle. Even the passing of the 'Quit India' resolution by the Indian National Congress during the difficult war times signified a compromise with the tactics and programme of the Congress Socialist Party. Thus, by force of circumstances, the CSP was called upon to perform the historic task of leading the August Movement. But by the time the 1942 Movement started, most of the Socialist leaders were behind bars. On 9 November 1942, Jaya Prakesh Narayan, the Party's General Secretary, who had been in jail since 1940, in a most heroic feat, managed to escape from the Hazaribagh Central prison, and he, along with three other Socialist leaders Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan and Aruna Asaf Ali took up the task of organising and directing the 'Quit India' movement. For this purpose, they set up a Central Directorate in Bombay and a parallel guerilla organisation known as Azad Dasta, with its branches all over India, for carrying sabotage operations and other violent activities. The Central Directorate worked in the name of the Indian National Congress. But as Gandhiji was not prepared to allow sabotage and other violent form of activities under the banner of the Congress, this was done by the secret organisation, Azad Dasta. Apart from these two organisations those who strictly adhered to the creed of non-violent, non cooperation formed a separate committee called the 'Satyagraha Samiti' headed by Sucheta Kripalani.

The 1942 movement surpassed all previous Congress-led struggles in its militant tone and character. The movement soon developed into an open revolt. The revolt was spearheaded by Congress Socialists, students peasants and workers. There were hartals in colleges, schools, post offices, stations and factories. Everywhere British authority was challenged. Peasants threatened withholding of rents and Government dues. At several places telephone wires were cut and Government property burned.

In 16 districts of U.P. and Bihar normal communication was completely disrupted. Sabotage operations were conducted on all vital points. Government resorted to Martial Law, which was proclaimed in several parts of the country. Thousands of men and women were mercilessly attacked, tortured, arrested and shot down. Even women and children were not spared by the guardians of law and order. The mounting police repression and 'Ordinance Raj' further infuriated the people to rise in open revolt. The main storm centres of rebellion were in Northern and Western Bihar, eastern U.P., Midnapur in Bengal and some parts of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Orissa.

Most of the CSP leaders went underground and guided the movement from their hidden cells. Jaya Prakash Narayan organised and led the movement in Bihar, Bengal and Nepal, Aruna Asaf Ali in other parts of Northern India, and Achyut Patwardhan in Bombay. By the heroic part played by Socialists and other revolutionaries, the 'Quit India' movement soon spread thick and fast throughout the country. A secret radio station known as 'Azad Hind Radio' was set up at Bombay, which was operated by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. British authorities were challenged and uprooted at several places; parallel 'National Government' were set up at Satara in Bombay presidency, Midnapore in Bengal, Ballia in U.P., and many other places. Out of these, the National Government set up at Satara, named as 'Prati Sarkar' was most well-organised, and it had all the semblance of an independent Government and it lasted for quite sometime.

The success of the movement soon brought a shiver of disquietude in the bosom of the imperialist Government, which tried to crush it by all possible means. The Congress Socialists led underground movement posed a serious challenge to the British authorities. The Government considered the CSP as its worst enemy. A prize of several thousands of rupees was announced for the arrest of CSP leaders like Jaya Prakash Narayan and Achyut Patwardhan. Official law, enforcing machinery tried its best to lay its hands on these leaders, but on each occasion, they outwitted Policy and CID personnel.

Jaya Prakash Narayan, the main architect of the 'August Movement' saw in it the possibility of a complete overthrow of British power. His two secret letters entitled "To All Fighters of Freedom" clearly indicated the direction, which he wanted to give to the movement. He was averse to any talk of compromise, either with the British or with the Muslim League. "Pay the oppressor in his own coin", was the dictum of his movement. Jaya Prakash Narayan had categorically told all the fighters for freedom: "We have declared ourselves independent, and also named Britain as an aggressive power. We are, therefore, justified within the terms of Bombay resolution itself, to fight with arms."

After initial success, when the movement showed a gradual decline,

Jaya Prakash Narayan exhorted the freedom fighters not to get panicky. In a pamphlet bearing A.B.C. of dislocation, which proves him to be a great revolutionary, he averred:

“The upsurge, which marked the first phase of our Revolution has now declined. This should cause no undue anxiety. It is in the nature of mass upheavals—that they do not remain for long at the height of their intensity. Either a mass rising must secure within a short time its objective or its intensity must wane. The waning of its intensity, however, does not mean that all is over with it. In a revolution ups and downs are natural. The masses move forward and retreat and they move forward at one tremendous leap. For certain reasons, they failed to reach their objective and retreated. It is certain that they shall advance again.”

According to an official estimate, 91,836 people by the end of 1943, had been put behind bars, with 24,416, the highest number coming from Bombay Presidency, followed by 16,796 and 16,202, from U.P. and Bihar, respectively. 208 police stations, 322 railway stations and nearly 945 post offices had been destroyed or damaged. There were about 664 cases of bomb explosions in which Bombay recorded the highest figure of 447. One thousand and sixty people had been killed in the police firing and nearly 2,000 seriously injured.

Unfortunately on 19 September 1943, Jaya Prakash Narayan, the hero of ‘August Movement’ was arrested, while travelling incognito in a train to the Punjab, and kept in Lahore Fort. Similar fate followed on Lohia and other Congress Socialist leaders. Later, Jaya Prakash Narayan along with Lohia was put in Agra Central Prison. However, the underground movement with sporadic guerilla activities continued till 1944, when it came to an end.

The ‘Quit India’ movement though failed to wipe out the British Government from India, the movement, at least for a time, swayed and shook the Imperialist Government, while it gave the national movement a new thrill of life, hope and activity. Indeed it marked the culmination of Indian freedom struggle. After the ‘Quit India’ movement, the attainment of Indian freedom was no longer in doubt; it remained only a question of time when the power was to be ultimately transferred to the Indian hands. On the other hand, the 1942 movement clearly demonstrated before the national leadership the futility of clinging to the hackneyed tactics of non-violent civil disobedience and called upon them to keep pace with the time spirit. Obviously, the credit for it goes to the Congress Socialist Party and its leadership. The Party by its magnificent and heroic role became the most prominent in the country. Even during the years of its banishment, when it was outlawed by the Government, the CSP remained very popular and its leader, Jaya Prakash Narayan, became almost a legendary figure.

Undoubtedly, by its role in the ‘Quit India’ movement, the Congress

Socialist Party has left an undelible mark in the annals of national struggle for freedom.

As we have noted, the whole country was convulsed by the mass uprising of the people. Though the Government had been able to crush the 1942 rebellion, it had convinced them that they could no longer indefinitely rule over India. The saner section of the British Government had definitely come round to the view that soon the modalities should be worked out for granting independence to India.

Meanwhile, outside India, the world pressure had been maintaining on such a diehard conservative as Churchill to take steps for bringing about a solution of the Indian deadlock. In 1984, he was compelled to order the release of Mahatma Gandhi and by the middle of June 1945, Lord Wavell, the Viceroy, released all the members of the Congress Working Committee. The Viceroy called a Conference of Indian political leaders at Simla, for ending the Indian political impasse. The Simla Conference proved a total failure as it could not arrive at a workable solution. In fact, it could satisfy none. However, the outcome of the conference further confirmed the suspicion of Nehru and the CSP leaders of the intentions of the British Government, as Lord Wavell had acted as a total partisan of the Muslim League.

The Congress Socialist Party, on account of its active participation in the 'Quit India' movement was the worst sufferer. The Party was outlawed and most of its leaders and party workers were put behind the bars. Even after the release of the majority of Congress leaders, the Congress Socialist Party leaders remained in jail as they were considered the most dangerous by the British Government. Hence, the CSP remained moribund till the beginning of 1946. It was revived by the middle of 1946, when Jaya Prakask Narayan was released on 12 April 1946, and the ban on the party was lifted by Congress Ministries.

### **CSP and the Demand of Pakistan**

Before we proceed further to study the final act of the peaceful revolution leading to the transfer of power in Indian hands, it would be worthwhile to pause a little to examine what was the attitude of CSP at the Muslim League's demand of a separate 'Homeland for the Indian Muslims' and how they differed with other left wingers—the Communists. The CSP leaders right from the beginning repudiated the two-nation theory, which they considered as Imperialists' stratagem to divide the country. They held that both Hindus and Muslims had been living in this country for centuries together and religion alone could not be accepted as the sole criterion for creating a sovereign new state. They further argued that the artificial creation of Pakistan would not solve the problems facing both the communities; instead, it would rather complicate problems and worsen Hindu-Muslim relations. CSP leaders—Ashok

Mehta and Achyut Patwardhan in their small booklet, *The Communal Triangle in India* remarked, "We find the extreme demand of Pakistan, to be fraught with incalculable mischief. They open a perspective of hate and fear that will end in disintegration of India and an intensification of her political and social malaise."

The Socialist leaders expressed their fear that how such a mass transfer of population could take place? They held that the fundamental task before the country was how to achieve freedom of India and to preserve the political integrity of the Indian sub-continent. The Socialists believed that the economic backwardness was the main problem before both the communities and not the communal question. CSP regarded the Muslim League as a rabid communal and reactionary organisation pampered by the imperialists to divide the country. On the other hand, the Communist Party of India, roundly supported the demand of Muslims for a separate State of Pakistan. They held that the distinct linguistic communities in India did constitute separate autonomous or completely free States. Certainly this amounted to giving support to the communal and divisive forces of the country as against India's national unity and territorial integrity.

In August 1945, World War II came to an end and in Britain a Labour Party Government under Attlee was installed in office. In India, it aroused great enthusiasm as the Labour Party during its election campaign had declared its pledge to grant independence to India in the event of its coming to power. However, the British Government decided for 'nothing doing' till the elections were over in early 1946. Meanwhile, the British Government in India committed another serious mistake to rouse the public sentiments when it ordered the trial of Indian National Army (INA) leaders. Throughout the country mass demonstrations were held to demand the release of INA leaders on trial. Nehru and the Socialists bitterly opposed the trial decision and actively helped the INA men. Even the Indian Navy rose in revolt in February 1946. The Royal Indian Navy Ratings' strike along with the Indian Air Force strike rocked the British Government, while it created unprecedented enthusiasm in the people. In this the Socialists and other left wingers played an important role by spreading anti-British feelings in the country.

All this further compelled the British Government to announce in February 1946 that a Cabinet Mission consisting of three Cabinet Ministers would proceed to India in order to negotiate with the leaders of Indian opinion, in association with the Viceroy, and to work the modalities for the framing of a Constitution for India. Great hopes were roused in the Congress circles, when the British Prime Minister, Attlee, on 15 March, assured the Congress leaders that "a minority this time shall not be allowed to obstruct the advance of majority towards freedom." Attlee's announcement of 20 February was a milestone to the transfer of power

in Indian hands.

### **Cabinet Mission and the CSP**

The Cabinet Mission comprising Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Pethick Lawrence and A.V. Alexander arrived in India on 24 March 1946. The Congress Socialist Party at that time was still suffering from illegality and its front-ranking leaders like Jaya Prakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, etc. were still behind bars. Aruna Asaf Ali was the only CSP leader, who had been openly working among the people. The Congress leaders were willing to negotiate with the Cabinet Missions; the Socialists were, however, of the opinion that nothing good was to result from the talks. Jaya Prakash Narayan just after his release from jail in April 1946, averred : "I refuse to accept that the Cabinet Mission now in Delhi is out to concede full Independence to India. It is just possible that the negotiations going on in Delhi may break at any moment at any stage". Thus though bitterly opposed to the policy of constitutionalism, the CSP leaders decided not to put obstacles in the Cabinet Mission negotiations with the Congress leaders. On 5 May, a Tripartite Conference between the leaders of the Indian National Congress, the Muslim League and the Cabinet Mission along with the Viceroy, began at Simla. The Conference came to an end on 12 May 1946, followed by the announcement by the Secretary of State for India on 16 May of the proposed plan to resolve the Indian political deadlock. It contained proposals for the future Constitution of India and also envisaged the setting up of an interim Government.

These proposals were welcomed by M.A. Jinnah, on behalf of the Muslim League, as they 'conceded the substance of Pakistan' in the form of compulsory grouping of provinces. The attitude of the Congress Socialists was somewhat different from that of the right wing Congress leadership, who believed in the sincerity of the intentions of the British Labour Government to transfer power to Indian hands. While the Socialists in accordance with the Marxian theory of revolution held that the British would not transfer power to the Indian hands on their own and that the negotiations that they were doing now were the byproduct of the nationwide upheavals of 1942 movement. The CSP rejected the Cabinet Mission proposals as quite inadequate for granting complete independence to country. The Party also considered them to be British device to perpetuate communal division of India. The Congress also expressed its resentment, but was not prepared to follow the CSP's hard line of outright rejection of the proposals. On 20 May 1946, Jaya Prakash Narayan, the General Secretary of the CSP, expressed his Party's reaction in the course of a public meeting at Bombay, in the following words :

"A bitter struggle is ahead, the interim Government contemplated under the Cabinet Mission proposals should make a declaration of inde-



pendence for India, the Viceroy should no more have a voice in the affairs of the country and the interim Government should demand an immediate withdrawal of the British troops from India."

Jaya Prakash Narayan also met the members of the British Cabinet Mission, and apprised them of his party's viewpoint on the matter. His stand was fully ratified by the CSP, when on the eve of Congress Working Committee's meeting, a joint statement was issued by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, Achyut Patwardhan, Aruna Asaf Ali and Jaya Prakash Narayan from Bombay on 18 June 1946, for further clarifying the Party's stand vis-a-vis, the Cabinet Mission proposals. The Socialists were against holding of Constituent Assembly prior to the departure of British troops from India. They held that such an Assembly would not have full sovereign powers. With this conviction, the Socialists decided to boycott the elections for the Constituent Assembly. The Socialists further demanded that the powers exercised by the Viceroy, both as the Governor-General and as the Crown Representative, must end with the interim period itself. They held that it would be useless to have a Central Government, which does not have sufficient independent power to exercise. The Socialists even censured the British Labour Government and charged that Socialism at home does not imply liquidation of Imperialism abroad.

Attempts were made by Congress High Command to win over the Socialists. Jawaharlal Nehru, as the Congress President, offered Jaya Prakash Narayan a seat in the Congress Working Committee. But it did not make any impact on the CSP, which stuck to its ground firmly. The Socialists criticised the Congress leadership for giving up the revolutionary path and for resorting to constitutionary activities. When the AICC met at Bombay on 6 July to ratify the Congress Working Committee resolution for accepting the Constituent Assembly, the CSP bitterly opposed it. On behalf of the CSP, Jaya Prakash averred: "The 'Quit India Movement had been launched to rid India of British imperial power, but that struggle did not achieve its end, though it released new forces, which have taken the country far towards its goal. The question today before the country was not whether to accept the the so-called Constituent Assembly scheme sponsored by British Imperialism, but how to utilise the new forces to drive the British out of India." He further argued that the Constituent Assembly proposed by the Cabinet Mission could never bring complete freedom for the people of India. Jaya Prakash Narayan held that Cabinet Mission had come only to exploit the differences that existed between the Congress and the Muslim League. In his opinion, the Muslim League was the creation of the British policy of 'divide and rule'. Jaya Prakash Narayan advised his partymen (Congressmen) to work among the Muslims instead of negotiating with the League, as the representative of the Muslims. He

further exhorted his partymen to utilise the forces that had been generated as a result of the 1942 Movement, to drive the Imperialists out of India. He wondered how the CWC had accepted such a defective proposal and requested the AICC not to ratify it.

In the midst of vehement opposition of the Socialists and other left wing parties, the All India Congress Committee endorsed the decision of the Congress Working Committee by 204 to 51 votes, which stated that the Congress would participate in the Constituent Assembly, but not in the proposed Interim Government. However, soon after the departure of the British Cabinet Mission from India, the decision not to join the Interim Government was reversed at Wardha meeting of the Congress Working Committee. Thereafter when the new decision was put before the AICC in September 1946 for its ratification, the Socialists made a futile attempt to obstruct that by their amendment. Here it is interesting to note that when in the AICC meeting the Socialist amendment was ruled out of order by Nehru as Congress President and the official resolution seeking the Congress participation both in the Constituent Assembly and the Interim Government was put to vote, the CSP decided to abstain from voting. Thus, despite its disapproval of the entire scheme of the Cabinet Mission, the CSP leadership was not prepared to go to the length of discrediting their parent organisation and it was here that it differed with the Communists and other left-wing parties. Jaya Prakash Narayan described his party's stand as policy of positive neutrality. Justifying the stand taken by the party, Jaya Prakash Narayan held that if they had voted against the resolution, it would have struck a severe blow to the Congress prestige as the party had already joined the Interim Government. Conversely, the Socialists' vote for the resolution would have meant the party's support for the forces that stood for communalism and constitutionalism. Hence, they decided to remain neutral. Thus, when their party's stand came on the verge of splitting the Congress or seriously discrediting it, the CSP decided to adopt a policy, which can be termed as a policy of 'splendid neutrality', that is, allowing the Congress to have its way without seriously impairing the party's (CSP's) own principles, tactics and programme.

Thus the Socialists refused to join either the Constituent Assembly or the Interim Government. However, there was a section in the CSP, which was against this policy and was inclined to join the Constituent Assembly. The first national Interim Government led by Jawaharlal Nehru was formed in August 1946. At first, the leaders of the Muslim League refused to enter into it. Later, when they did join it, they put all sorts of obstacles in the successful working of the Government in order to prove to the British Government that any practical cooperation and working between the Congress and the League was not possible. Hence the need for the partitioning of the country and the creation of separate

**Muslim State of Pakistan.** In consonance with the League's strategy, the representatives of the Muslim League withdrew from the Interim Government of Nehru as well as from the Constituent Assembly. The League's sectarian and obstructive policy soon had the desired result when on 3 June 1947, the British Government announced the 'Mountbatten Plan' which provided for the Transfer of Power in Indian hands and for the vivisection of the country.

On behalf of his Party, Jaya Prakash expressed deep shock at the attitude of the Muslim League and accused it for stabbing at the back. He did not spare the Congress leaders either and charged them for their compromising policy. According to him, the Congress, by sacrificing the revolutionary goals of the national struggle, was falling step by step into the trap of Imperialist-Communist combination. The Socialists were so much disappointed and disillusioned with the Congress attitude that, at their party's 5th Conference at Kanpur in March 1947, they decided to drop the prefix 'Congress' from the name of the Party, which thenceforth became merely the 'Socialist Party'. It was now no longer obligatory to join Congress for becoming a member of the Socialist Party.

The Kanpur Conference of the 'Socialist Party' thought it desirable to give timely warning to the Congress to ensure socio-economic justice to the masses after Independence. It said : "Every care must be taken that power passes not merely into Indian hands but into the hands of toiling masses. It has become urgent duty of Socialists now to create adequate sanctions so that authority that takes power from British hands is not other than a Government of the toiling people of this country."

In these momentous days events followed quickly. The failure of the Cabinet Mission and the widespread communal riots were followed by Prime Minister Attlee's announcement in Parliament on 20 February 1947, that the British authority of India would be withdrawn not later than June 1948. The climax was the Mountbatten Plan of 3 June 1947, by which the power was to be finally transferred to responsible Indian hands on 15 August 1947. The price was to be the partition of India.

As on many previous occasions, when the 'Mountbatten Plan' of 3 June 1947, already approved by the Congress Working Committee, came up before the AICC, the Socialists, though opposed tooth and nail, to it and especially its partition plan, could not decide what course to adopt. The National Executive of this party, at its meeting held on 10 June 1947, had expressed in no uncertain terms, its disapproval and shock at the proposed division of the country. The resolution, which was adopted at the Conference censured the party leadership for its act of omission and commission. It read *inter alia* :

"Each act of surrender, perhaps not of much importance by itself, but of great effect as a link in the chain, and the refusal of the Congress leadership to prepare a position and hold on it have brought us to this

fateful situation. The Socialist Party must also record its failure and that of wider revolutionary movement in working out an alternative and positive policy."

Yet, the Socialists remained wavering in the AICC and finally decided to abstain from voting. It was thus that the 'Mountbatten Plan' got the approval of the AICC on 14 June 1947. The final voting was 157 to 20.

Regarding the CSP's policy of neutrality, it can be argued, and not without good reason that had the Socialists rallied around themselves all those elements, who were against the division of the country, vigorously pursued their policy, and strengthened the hands of Mahatma Gandhi, the partition of India could have been averted. Mahatma Gandhi, against any vivisection of the country, was seemingly willing to support the Socialists and other left wingers, had they been prepared to launch a nation-wide campaign against the acceptance of 'Mountbatten Plan'. He had clearly told the left-wing parties: "The Congress have signed on your behalf. You can disown them, but you should do so only if you can start a big revolution." However, he was not hopeful that the leftists would launch such an agitation. "I do not think you can do it," he desperately remarked.

Thus, the policy of neutrality, which the CSP adopted twice during the last two years preceding the Independence, when there were critical moments to act, could hardly be said to be beyond reproach or criticism. As such, the party could not be fully absolved from its share of responsibility for the partition of the country.

Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the CSP in just over a decade of its existence, played a vital role in the struggle for national liberation. It was largely owing to efforts made by the Party that the Congress base was broadened. It became a mass party of workers, peasants and other revolutionary classes, with a progressive ideology, which enabled it to win the 1937 general elections to the Provincial Assemblies with a thumping majority. Again it was largely owing to the heroic part played by the leaders of the CSP that the Congress had successfully launched the 'Quit India' Movement on a country-wide scale, and with such a militant tone and character that it rocked the British power in India and compelled it to think in terms of early transference of power to Indian hands. Surely, the party played a remarkable role in accelerating India's march towards freedom.